# Female prison officers’ illicit relationships with inmates expose systemic flaws in UK jails



Today’s narrative unfolds in a prison on the Isle of Portland, where the boundaries of control and chaos have been dramatically blurred. A recent, perplexing case involving a female prison officer has once again highlighted the ongoing issue of inappropriate relationships between staff and inmates within the UK penal system. This incident, featuring Cherri-Ann Austin-Saddington, has captivated public attention for its bizarre and troubling details.

Austin-Saddington, aged 29, worked as a prison officer at HMP The Verne, where she began an affair with inmate Bradley Trengrove, who was serving a substantial 13-year sentence for rape and related offences. The nature of their relationship reportedly included sexual encounters up to 40 times, often in secluded areas of the prison, such as workshops. In a disturbing turn, after Trengrove was transferred to another facility, she attempted to artificially inseminate herself using a Calpol syringe and sperm he had smuggled to her. This case, which led to her receiving a suspended sentence, raises serious questions about the recruitment and oversight of prison staff.

Historically, this is not the first instance where female prison officers have crossed hazardous lines to initiate relationships with inmates. In 2009, a case involving Kelly-Anne McDade drew attention when she was sentenced to 30 months in prison for engaging in a sexual relationship with inmate Nelson Delgado, which also resulted in a pregnancy. Like Austin-Saddington, McDade’s misconduct included attempting to smuggle mobile phones into the facility. This pattern of behaviour reflects systemic issues within prison management regarding the supervision of staff and inmate interactions.

Similarly, Gemma Farr, another prison officer, was sentenced to 32 months in prison after being found guilty of smuggling steroids and mobile phones into HMP Dovedale, having engaged in a romantic relationship with a convicted killer. The stark reality of these cases illuminates the vulnerabilities present within correctional institutions where personal relationships can compromise security and ethics.

Austin-Saddington’s case is striking in its absurdity and raises critical questions about the appropriateness of female officers in male-dominated environments. Critics argue that such arrangements can lead to breaches of professional integrity and security. The notion that her behaviour is a mere anomaly is challenged by a systematic inclination among some female staff to engage in relationships with inmates. This is echoed by an article identifying several female officers who faced similar legal consequences, including attempting to smuggle contraband for their partners.

The legal repercussions these women face vary dramatically. For instance, Rachel Stanton, a prison guard who engaged in a relationship with inmate Edwin Poole, was spared jail despite the gravity of her misconduct. This inconsistency in sentencing has stirred public outrage and debate over fairness within the judicial system, particularly when contrasted against the severe penalties imposed on their partners.

The root causes of such disgraceful behaviour extend beyond individual cases to encompass broader systemic flaws within the prison system. Critics have voiced concern that policies aimed at equality within staffing do not adequately account for the complexities of human relationships, arguing that female officers should not be placed in environments where they could be unduly influenced by inmates. The suggestion that male prisons could become breeding grounds for romantic entanglements is particularly troubling given the nature of the individuals housed within them.

This ongoing saga is a reflection of a much larger narrative regarding the operational standards of the UK prison system. As society grapples with evolving views on gender, equality, and justice, the issue of relationship dynamics between staff and inmates remains particularly risky. The realisation that such interactions have not only personal but institutional ramifications is crucial for the future management of correctional facilities.

As we continue to scrutinise and discuss these issues, it becomes clear that the conversation must not only revolve around individual culpability but also address the structural changes necessary to prevent such incidents from recurring.

### Reference Map

1. [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14716215/RICHARD-LITTLEJOHN-prisons-female-guards-affairs-criminals.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
2. [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2009/nov/13/prison-officer-jailed-inmate-baby)
3. [[3]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-stoke-staffordshire-46810937)
4. [[4]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/07/24/prison-guard-affair-with-armed-robber-spared-jail/)
5. [[5]](https://listverse.com/2018/11/03/10-times-inmates-got-prison-guards-pregnant-and-vice-versa/)
6. [[6]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-67124131)
7. [[7]](https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/women-prison-officers-whose-affairs-29303062)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14716215/RICHARD-LITTLEJOHN-prisons-female-guards-affairs-criminals.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2009/nov/13/prison-officer-jailed-inmate-baby> - In 2009, Kelly-Anne McDade, a 31-year-old prison officer at Aylesbury Young Offenders' Institution, was sentenced to 30 months in prison after admitting misconduct in public office. McDade had a sexual relationship with inmate Nelson Delgado, resulting in a pregnancy. She attempted to smuggle mobile phones into the prison for Delgado after his transfer. The judge described her behavior as 'disgraceful.'
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-stoke-staffordshire-46810937> - Gemma Farr, a 37-year-old prison officer at HMP Dovedale in Staffordshire, was sentenced to 32 months in prison for smuggling steroids and mobile phones into the facility. Farr had a romantic relationship with an unnamed convicted killer inmate and provided contraband items hidden in her underwear. She admitted to conspiring to supply these items into the prison.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/07/24/prison-guard-affair-with-armed-robber-spared-jail/> - Rachel Stanton, a 31-year-old prison guard at HMP Five Wells, was spared jail after admitting wilful misconduct in public office. Stanton had a sexual relationship with inmate Edwin Poole, resulting in a child together. The affair was discovered when intimate photographs and a love letter were found in Poole's cell. Stanton was sentenced to nine months in prison, suspended for 18 months.
5. <https://listverse.com/2018/11/03/10-times-inmates-got-prison-guards-pregnant-and-vice-versa/> - This article lists several instances where prison guards became romantically involved with inmates, leading to pregnancies. Notable cases include Kelly-Anne McDade, who had a child with inmate Nelson Delgado, and Alison Sharples, who attempted to smuggle a convicted kidnapper's sperm out of prison to impregnate herself. The article highlights the complexities and consequences of such relationships within correctional facilities.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-67124131> - Amy Hatfield, a 38-year-old mental health nursing assistant at HMP Lindholme, was involved in a significant prison drug smuggling ring. Hatfield had a sexual relationship with inmate Joseph Whittingham and smuggled drugs into the prison for him. Their affair was central to the largest prison drug smuggling operation uncovered in the UK, leading to multiple convictions and sentences totaling over 80 years.
7. <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/women-prison-officers-whose-affairs-29303062> - This article details several cases of female prison officers engaging in inappropriate relationships with inmates, leading to various convictions. Examples include Joanne Hunter, who smuggled cannabis into Forest Bank prison for an inmate, and Stephanie Smithwhite, who had a relationship with drug kingpin Curtis Warren. The piece underscores the challenges and consequences of such misconduct within the prison system.