

# Time to Think

## Open University Journeys in British and Irish prisons during the years of conflict, 1972-2000

### Oral History interview clip transcript

Name of Interviewee: **Austin Treacy**

Interviewed by: **Jenny Meegan**

Date of interview: **11/01/2019**

#### **Important**

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## Austin Treacy Clip

**Clip title:** Taking a step back, being more reflective

**Duration:** 00:02:00

**Clip start point in full interview:** 00:19:20

**Clip end point in full interview:** 00:21:20

**Interview identifier:** 114\_O\_01

### Description:

Austin Treacy, Director of the Northern Ireland Prison Service, describes attending an Open University Summer School for a Social Science module (D102) in the 1980s while he was working as a Prison Officer in Crumlin Road Gaol and how the reflective skills he learnt there helped him in his career as he progressed through the Prison Service.

### Transcript:

And I did that, the Social Science module. And I suppose I was a bit naive in trying to do it alongside work. And I remember going to a summer school in Stirling University, and I remember, I have spoken about this since, because whenever you get into the more senior management positions you're running a business as well. And also I remember in the summer school, doing an economics case review of Shelton Bar. And Shelton Bar was a British steelworks, a smelting plant, and it produced high tensile steel from scrap and it made a profit in all but two years and they had invested in it, and British Steel decided to close it down. The industrial relations were good, and this was during the '70s and industrial relations in the UK were poor, productivity was low, there was rationalization, there wasn't a lot of capital investment. And so whenever the lecturers to all the students in that summer school asked you to make a comment on the basic facts, of course we all said it was nuts. Why would you close it? And then as layer after layer of further information came before you, you actually realised that actually British Steel made the right call.

*Right.*

So I suppose aspects of that, and if you like, taking a step back, being more reflective, trying to get behind the headlines, trying to get into the bones of an argument or a rationale, I think has helped me immensely in my career as I progress through the Prison Service.