

Early Career Academics Network Bulletin

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Introduction



This is now the third academic year that the Howard League's Early Career Academic Network has been running, publishing its bulletins and running occasional events. I really hope that this network is providing you with some support and information that is valuable to you. I know this is a busy time for academics with new students and courses to bed in, but I want to make sure that the Howard League is really engaging with the academic community effectively. So I will be adding to your workload shortly. In the next month or so, look out for an email guiding you to a short survey about the Howard League's research output and its engagement with the academic community. Please take the time to complete it and help me to improve what we do for you.

It is certainly a busy time for the Howard League. In the next few weeks we are planning to publish new research and really start to identify research that is aimed at quelling the numbers of people who are sucked into the penal system. This will be characterised by work at the Howard League around the theme of 'stemming the flow' – look out for more information about this early next year. But we are already beginning to engage with this theme as we are taking a look at policing with research about children held in police cells due to be published in December.

We are also just about to launch a new series of events, in partnership with the Mannheim Centre at the London School of Economics, called What if ...? a series of challenging pamphlets. Information about them can be found at: <http://www.howardleague.org/what-if/> The first challenge is to the role of the police. It will be delivered by Professor Robert Reiner with Sir Denis O'Connor and Baroness Hamwee as discussants. It looks set to be a lively discussion. After the discussion Robert will, possibly, revise his argument and the pamphlet will be published at the beginning of next year. If you look at our website you will see that we are keen to hear your ideas for future pamphlets. I look forward to hearing your ideas ...

Anita Dockley
Research Director

News

AGM – Chief Inspector of Prisons speaking

The Howard League's AGM this year is on 23rd November at the King's Fund in central London. Our guest speaker is Nick Hardwick, the Chief Inspector of Prisons. If you would like to come along and hear what he has to say, please reserve yourself a place at: <http://www.howardleague.org/agm2011/>



Voice of a child: raising the profile of prisoners' children

In September, Frances Crook joined with NGOs, academics, campaigners and prisoners' children at the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Day of General Discussion on the needs of prisoners' children. The Howard League published research, Voice of a Child, which draws on interviews with children whose mothers were imprisoned in Holloway. It showed that last year more than 17,000 children in England and Wales were affected by the imprisonment of their mother. The report tells the children's stories: how the imprisonment of their mother affects their daily life – especially the simple things like their mum

cooking their dinner or tucking them up in bed. More information about the research can be found at: <http://www.howardleague.org/publications-families/>

Why do people stop offending?

Professors Fergus McNeill, Shadd Maruna and Stephen Farrall are currently engaged in making a film about why people stop offending. More information about what they are up to can be found at: <http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/> The project is funded by the ESRC.

Summer riots

Over the summer, the Howard League was at the forefront of providing comment and a little bit of a counterbalance to some of the media output. We drew particularly on our work supporting young people via U R Boss and our legal team.

Campaigns Director, Andrew Neilson, did a whole host of interviews both for domestic and international audiences back in August. Even now and with a vast majority of the appeal cases having been rejected, his comments still resonate: "While it is understandable that the courts have been asked to treat the public disturbances as an aggravating factor, this should be balanced against a key principle of criminal justice, that of proportionality. The danger is that some of these sentences are disproportionate and indeed devalue our response to more serious crimes." Examples of our comments about the riots can be found at <http://www.howardleague.org/howard-league-in-the-media/> including one from the Guardian, see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/sep/08/uk-riots-rise-in-jailed-children>

Women in prison

The Prisons, Probation and CPS Inspectorates recently published its thematic on women offenders which echoed many of the Howard League's concerns.

Commenting on the report Frances Crook said, "Despite the last and current government recognising that short sentences are completely ineffective and often have a catastrophic effect on women in particular, the number of women serving short sentences or recalled to prison has increased disproportionately. The number



of women in prison serving 6-12 months has increased by 6 per cent from June 2010-June 2011, and those recalled to prison have increased by 11 per cent.

"Nothing meaningful can happen to a woman in custody for a couple of months to encourage her to turn her life around, but it is enough time for her to lose her home, job and children. All of the inspectorates have jointly criticised

the number of women serving short prison sentences for breaches of community orders imposed for offences which would not normally have attracted a custodial sentence."

We are currently conducting research with women serving short prison sentences which we will be looking to publish early next year. The research will focus on the women's day to day experience of serving a short prison term.

Supporting new thinkers

The Howard League is committed to supporting new thinkers, not least through this network. We also award a small number of bursaries and fellowships each year. We are now able to announce the recipients of two of these awards.

First, Sophie Rowe has been selected as the final recipient of the bursary to study for an MA at Birmingham City University. Sophie intends to undertake research at Grendon prison for her dissertation.

Second, Marianne Colbran becomes the second recipient of the Howard League's post-doctoral fellowship at the Centre for Criminology at Oxford. Marianne's PhD focussed on policing and the media. She plans to spend her fellowship piloting some research which will focus on the decision making of news media editors when it comes to coverage of penal issues. Marianne has said, "I am hugely grateful to the Howard League and to the Centre for Criminology to give me this opportunity to develop my skills as a researcher and am very excited about being given the chance to initiate research in this key area."



Finally we are publishing, in this bulletin, a paper based on the presentation given by the recipient of our British Society of Criminology post graduate bursary. Jake Phillips has based his paper on his PhD research on probation managers.

Features

Justice for Girls in Sierra Leone

Marianne Moore

Sierra Leone has received a great deal of interest in the last decade following its civil war. However, girls in conflict with the law have received little or no attention. While many members of Sierra Leonean society know that there is a large population of girls in conflict with the law and involved in the sex trade, it is a fact that is shrugged off. No action is taken.



In November and December 2010, Justice Studio¹ carried out research in collaboration with three NGOs: AdvocAid; the African Prisons Project (APP); and Defence for Children International Sierra Leone (DCI – SL). We interviewed 24 girls between the ages of 13 and 18 in adult prisons, juvenile remand homes and centres for street children. The subsequent report, *Justice for Girls? Girls in conflict with the law and sexual exploitation in Sierra Leone*, launched in June 2011, gives a voice to these girls.

The majority of girls in conflict with the law and girls who are sexually exploited have experienced neglect, abuse and abandonment, yet they are treated as criminals. Although these children fit the category of being ‘in need of care and protection’ under the Sierra Leone Child Rights Act 2007, the main agency that deals with these children is the police, and their involvement often leads to criminalisation. In turn, although the Sierra Leone government has ratified international protocols against child prostitution, the principles contained in this protocol have not been carried through into domestic law. As such, sexually exploited girls have little or no legal protection. Instead they are often penalised for the offence of ‘loitering’ and left to continue to be exploited. Out of the cohort of 24, ten girls told us they were sex workers and the majority were living on the streets or in slum areas. The majority had started working in the sex industry at a young age, for example one girl, aged 17, had started at the age of 13 when her father died and her mother left her.



With no training on child rights, or girls’ rights, the police are alleged to have treated the majority of girls interviewed harshly and arrest can be arbitrary. Girls who were sex workers reported being propositioned, or raped, and three girls reported being beaten by the police. One girl reported that she was taken to the central police station in Freetown, beaten, fined 25,000 Leones and raped, another that she was forced to “pump” up and down on the spot and given ‘five beats with a shoe’ on her hand.

¹ Justice Studio is a consultancy and research organisation specialising in child protection, juvenile justice, prisons and detention.

Girls' vulnerability factors

	Age	Category	Location	Crime	Living situation	Away from family?	Sex work?	Lived with aunty?	Orphan	Street trading
1	16	At risk	Makeni	Larceny	Streets	√	√	√	-	-
2	18	At risk	Makeni	None	Streets	√	√	-	-	√
3	13	At risk	Bo	None	Aunty	√	?	√	-	√
4	18	Arrested	Freetown	Loitering	Renting/ streets	√	?	-	√	-
5	17	Arrested	Freetown	Loitering	Boyfriend	√	√	-	-	-
6	18	Arrested	Freetown	Loitering	Streets	√	√	-	√	-
7	15	Arrested	Makeni	Larceny	Streets	√	√	√	-	-
8	14	Arrested	Makeni	Loitering	Streets	√	√	√	√	-
9	18	Arrested	Makeni	Loitering	Renting/ streets	√	√	√	-	-
10	16	Remand Home	Freetown	Abusive language	Parents	-	-	-	-	-
11	18	Remand Home	Freetown	Escape from detention + larceny	Aunty	√	-	√	-	√
12	17	Remand Home	Freetown	Wounding	Parents	-	-	-	-	-
13	13	Remand Home	Freetown	Larceny	Parents	-	-	-	-	√
14	16	Remand Home	Freetown	Wounding	Parents	-	-	-	-	√
15	14	Prison	Freetown	Larceny	Streets	√	√	-	√	-
16	18	Prison	Bo	Larceny	Streets	√	-	√	-	√
17	16	Prison	Makeni	Murder	Parents	-	-	-	-	-
18	18	Prison	Makeni	Larceny	Streets	√	√	-	√	-
19	17	Prison	Kenema	Wounding	Sister	-	-	-	-	-
20	17	Prison	Kenema	Murder	Renting/ streets	√	-	-	√	√
21	17	Prison	Kenema	Debt	Renting/ streets	√	√	√	√	√
22	17?	Prison	Kenema	Abducting a child	Aunty	√	-	√	-	-
23	16	Prison	Freetown	Larceny + house breaking	Parents	-	-	-	-	-
24	16	Prison	Freetown	Murder	Boyfriend	√	-	-	-	-
Total						17	10	9	7	8

Source: Justice Studio (2011)

The majority of girls interviewed that had been to court had lawyers, however despite this, some girls felt unable to state their side of the story to the court and we found that girls were sent to custody frequently for petty crimes such as larceny and 'loitering'. There are two remand homes and one approved school for sentenced children in Sierra Leone. However girls are also routinely detained in adult jails. The facilities in the detention centres are basic, although generally, all of the juvenile establishments appear to have undergone improvements in relation to their treatment of children in conflict with the law in the last ten years. Indeed, three out of six girls at Freetown Remand Home felt it offered them a safer environment than the outside world. One said *'now I feel like I have a home because out there I don't have a permanent place to stay - I have to go out in the evening. Here I can sleep without*

needing to go out and find money. Nevertheless, there was a need for greater and more effective separation of girls and boys in the remand homes, particularly in Bo Remand Home. Historic cases of officers abusing the female children in Bo Remand Home during 2006 had apparently been dealt with effectively. However, we spoke to a girl who had formally been detained in the home who reported that she had been scared she would be abused by the boys as the facilities at the remand home mean that boys and girls mix freely unless locked in their dormitories at night. The eight girls we talked to who were found in, or had experienced, adult prison did not appear to be suffering from harsh treatment and generally appeared to be being looked after by the older women detained with them.

There was little or no educational or vocational training for girls who were detained. The Matron at Freetown Remand Home admitted that education was the area that the home struggled with the most. Indeed, the girls said they had been taught how to present their case at court, maths, science, and English, but this did not appear to be regular - one said that there had been no class for a month. The girls partook in chores such as scrubbing clothes, washing the cups and dishes, and sweeping and were able to play games such as Ludo and ball. In the adult jails three of the girls were acutely missing school. One said she felt she was wasting her time in jail, another said she did *'not feel fine'* as she missed school. Indeed, in the majority of adult prisons there was apparently very little for the women and girls to do.

Mariama, aged 17, came from Guinea to Sierra Leone to stay with her 'aunty' and go to school. However her 'aunty' did not pay her school fees and so Mariama took money from her. Her 'aunty' complained to the police and Mariama was arrested in March 2010. She was detained at Makeni Female Prison, as there was no remand home in Makeni for juvenile offenders and there was a dispute about her age. Although Mariama was 17, the police had written down that she was 18. She had to prove she was sitting her school exams before the Magistrate agreed that she was in fact 17.

AdvocAid's paralegal tried to mediate and solve the issue with Mariama's 'aunty' however she refused to come to court and so the case could not progress. The Magistrate refused to discharge the case until a lawyer was involved, and yet there were very few legal services available in the provinces. Makeni had just one lawyer in the region. After much enquiry, AdvocAid's paralegal was finally able to obtain the services of the pro bono lawyer who managed to have the case discharged. Mariama was released in July 2010 and provided with post prison support from AdvocAid which enabled her to travel to see her mother. AdvocAid's partner, EducAid, agreed that Mariama could study full time at their school for vulnerable girls in Rolal, Port Loko. AdvocAid assisted Mariama with items to begin her studies. She is now at school and progressing well.

The Sierra Leonean environment is one that continues to be an unequal one for girls, despite recent legislation to enshrine female equality. They are vulnerable to discriminatory and sometimes harsh treatment and are less likely to receive schooling than boys. The recently approved United Nations *Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders* otherwise



known as “the Bangkok rules” establish the international expectations of how girls in detention should be treated. However, the majority of the detention centres were unable to provide the level of care stipulated by the Bangkok rules. In particular it is clear that psychological services for girls who have been sexually exploited need to be developed. As there are no reintegration programmes run by the juvenile remand homes or the adult

prisons, the majority of girls who had been detained were simply released back into their original environment.

The pathways of girls through the justice system show that the girls detained in Sierra Leonean prisons are in need of care and protection rather than criminalisation. Big steps need to be taken to safeguard girls in conflict with the law and ensure their rights are recognised and upheld.

*Marianne Moore is the Director of Justice Studio. She designed and led the research on which this article is based. The full report, *Just for Girls? Girls in conflict with the law and sexual exploitation in Sierra Leone*, is available at www.justicestudio.org*

The exercise of discretion in the probation service and Bottoms' model of compliance

Jake Phillips

Compliance is an important area of study in the probation service, especially since the advent of national standards in 1992 which have, over the years, encouraged probation officers to enforce compliance ever more stringently (Hedderman and Hough, 2000). Besides this technical importance, compliance is significant in other ways: firstly as Canton highlights, 'an unenforced community penalty is indistinguishable from 'getting away with it'' (2011: 123). Secondly, a defining characteristic of a community penalty is that an element of active participation by the offender is required and so a Community Order cannot be carried out satisfactorily without compliance. This article considers the way offender managers² (OMs) improve compliance by looking at the issue through the lens of Bottoms' model of compliance (2002) and Hawkins' conceptualisation of discretion (2003). The article is based on data collected toward a PhD in which I conducted observations and interviews in two probation teams to explore the practice and practice ideals of OMs.



Offender managers described how, 'when I first started [in 2006] it was enforcement, enforcement, enforcement but now it is compliance, compliance, compliance' (PSO, Interview). This shift was put down to a combination of financial reasons, prison population pressures and the idea that it is politically beneficial for probation to have more offenders complying with orders. Some OMs suggested that the move towards compliance was about improving relationships between offenders and officers, a concept which has regained currency in recent years (Burnett and McNeill, 2005), although others suggested that improved relationships were a result of this move. Nevertheless, there was consensus that relationships between officers and offenders had improved and that there was a link with the move towards compliance. Examples of this shift in policy include changes in National Standards in 2007 (Ministry of Justice, 2007) which allowed OMs to take an investigative approach in cases of non-compliance and are hence linked with an increase in the discretion given to OMs.

Although the move towards compliance was seen positively amongst OMs in my study, I noticed that increased compliance was being achieved through managerialist means such as targets which stipulate that "70% of orders and licences must be successfully completed". This meant that OMs 'just have to get [offenders] through' the Order (TPO, Fieldnotes). In attempting to work out how this managerialist

² The term offender manager refers to probation officers (PO), probation services officers (PSO) and trainee probation officers (TPO). Where relevant I distinguish between the three.

inspired move to compliance manifests in practice, it is useful to start with Hawkins' argument that 'decisions can only be understood by references to their broad environment, particular context, and interpretive practices: their surrounds, fields and frames' (2003: 189). In the context of probation, the surround is the political climate which led, for example, to the 'toughening up' of probation following the 'nothing works' claims of the 1970s. The fields are the policies which are put in place and direct decisions around when an offender might be in breach. The frame is 'a structure of knowledge, experience, values and meanings' (Hawkins, 2003: 189) and so in this case could be the OM's aims and goals they seek to achieve in their work.

As part of my fieldwork I observed OMs would frequently *alter the decision field* in order to improve or increase the likelihood of an offender complying with an order. OMs would:

- Make the field more *flexible* by, for example, arranging appointments on days that were convenient to the offender.
- *Move* the field on an *ad hoc* basis by conducting appointments on the telephone or by conducting home visits.
- *Pre-empt* the field, effectively making a decision less likely using appointment cards or texting offenders about appointments.
- *Use* the field by exploiting ambiguities in the rules.
- Change the *conditions* of the field by, for example, having conditions removed if the offender was unable to comply with them.
- *Extend* the field by gathering information from sources beyond the offender so that more reasons for non-compliance could be drawn on.

Altering the field is used primarily to avoid an instance of non-compliance. Once an offender has failed to comply, an OM has to make a decision as to whether to initiate breach proceedings or to 'let it go'. Such decisions might be framed by a desire not to send offenders to prison unnecessarily or the offender's prior compliance:



'if someone comes in at 9.20 and says they have missed their UPW [unpaid work] 'cos my bus was late and usually they haven't missed any sessions or their Order has been fairly good then you would use your own discretion and excuse them.' (PSO, Interview)

Other frames include: what would happen if a serious further offence were to occur; whether the offender has particular issues like mental health or drug use; what type of appointment was missed; or workloads. What is key about both methods of avoiding breach is that they tend to happen behind closed doors with little or no input from the offender.

Bottoms' (2002) well-known model of compliance posits that compliance can comprise four key mechanisms: *instrumental/prudential compliance*; *normative compliance*; *constraint-based compliance*; and *compliance based on habit or routine*. OMs' tendency to alter the field does not fit neatly into any of these mechanisms. It

bears a resemblance to *constraint-based compliance* but it needs to be turned on its head to fully explain this way of encouraging compliance. Rather than restricting access to targets of non-compliance (i.e. by imposing curfews), OMs expand the opportunities for compliance. I suggest, therefore, that there is room within Bottoms' model for an extra mechanism: *offender manager-constructed compliance*. This mechanism allows compliance to be achieved with very little input from the offender because altering the field and the frames used when deciding whether to initiate breach proceedings occur almost exclusively behind closed doors. The mechanism also depends on the presence of managerialism because absence or attendance is the sole factor which defines compliance.

Although the mechanism is evidence of OMs using discretion that had previously been curtailed, three significant issues arise. Firstly, OMs explain that a core part of their work is to make offenders take responsibility for their actions but because this way of exercising discretion takes responsibility away from offenders, it is possible to argue that the micro-management of probation has militated against the achievement of more constructive kinds of compliance. Secondly, OMs argue that motivating offenders to change is key to the supervisory process and, although, *offender manager-constructed compliance* might be used to motivate offenders it can also remove autonomy by taking decisions out of their hands. Thirdly, this technique is short-termist in scope whereas the desistance process can be lengthy. Therefore this type of compliance might create a disjuncture between the compliance created by the Probation Service and the kind of compliance which actually signifies a desisting offender.

In conclusion, therefore, although the move towards compliance was seen positively by OMs and there is evidence of them exercising discretion after a period of very limited discretion, the fact that the move thus far has been set within a managerialist framework means that the kind of compliance achieved is short-termist and might work against normative compliance as proposed by Bottoms. This may change with the introduction of new, scaled-back National Standards (Ministry of Justice, 2011) as well as in light of the findings from the offender engagement programme but only time will tell how such changes will manifest in practice.

Jake Phillips is a PhD student at the University of Cambridge. He was the recipient of the Howard League's 2011 post-graduate bursary to attend the British Society of Criminology conference.

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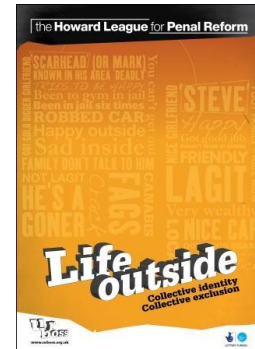
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Life Outside: collective identity, collective exclusion

Jenny Chambers

With a 72 per cent reconviction rate within a year for children and young people leaving custody (Ministry of Justice, 2011a), it is little surprise that resettlement has been the hot topic of youth justice in recent years; initiatives have been launched, consortia have been invested in, payment by results piloted. However, in the flurry of activity no one has thought to ask young people themselves how to fill the gaps in this failing system.

The Howard League for Penal Reform's U R Boss project has worked with children and young people who have recently been released from custody to develop the participation-led policy report *Life Outside: collective identity, collective exclusion*. This process has given them the opportunity to share their experiences of returning to their communities, being on licence, routes back into custody and recommendations for change.



Approach

Between April and July 2011 the U R Boss team worked intensively with over 30 children and young people across five cities: Birmingham, Leeds, London, Rotherham and Sheffield. The young people ranged in age from 13 to 22, stated 12 different ethnic backgrounds and, collectively, had been incarcerated in at least 18 different settings across the secure estate. Thus, a broad and representative range of experiences was drawn upon to develop *Life Outside*.

The U R Boss team worked with each group across a number of participation sessions, providing the opportunity to build trust, understanding and confidence in who the Howard League is, why we believe their opinions matter and what we would do with what they told us. Working across a number of sessions also allowed the time for all of the children and young people to express their views and experiences.

Overarching findings

The key theme that emerged was young people's perceptions of themselves as separate from the rest of society. In particular, their view that the conditions and restrictions that are imposed on them when they leave prison criminalise and exclude them further and the importance they place on positive relationships with professionals, their families and communities. The subtitle of the report 'collective identity, collective exclusion' epitomises their perceptions and experiences. In the main, children and young people in the youth justice system come from backgrounds of social and economic disadvantage. Their experiences within the system reinforce their perceptions as a 'collective other', furthering their feelings of being disenfranchised and detached from society and eroding their hopes of positive futures.

Implications

The principal purpose of the youth justice system in England and Wales is the prevention of offending or reoffending (Crime and Disorder Act, 1998). The first two years of U R Boss have explored the barriers to leading positive lives that children and young people face from the moment they enter custody to when they complete

their licence or, more often than not, are reconvicted of further offences. Taken together, *Life Inside* (Howard League, 2010) and *Life Outside* show that the current youth justice system is a failure of justice and society.

Although those within government continue to applaud themselves that there have been recent reductions in the number of children and young people sentenced to custody in the last couple of years, they overlook the fact that they cannot explain why this trend occurred, that numbers are once again rising (Ministry of Justice, 2011b), that reconviction rates have not fallen or, indeed, that in a longer view the child custody population increased by 795 per cent from 1989 to 2009. In context, these 'achievements' are highly questionable.

The Detention and Training Order (DTO) is a sentence of between four and 24 months, half of which is spent in custody and the other on licence in the community, which was introduced by the Power of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000 as part of the wider scale youth justice reforms. It accounts for 81 per cent of those who are sentenced to a period of incarceration and on licence. In 2002, an evaluation of the DTO stated: 'Inevitably, the main way in which the Detention and Training Order will be judged is in terms of whether it reduces reoffending in young people.' It has failed. As one young person aptly stated: *'The system's not working because people are reoffending.'*

Compounding failure: the government's plans for children and young people

It has been estimated that the total costs to the UK economy of offending by young people could be up to £11 billion a year (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2011). This does not even take into account the human costs to our communities and the wasted potential of children and young people.

However, in the current financial crisis it is children and young people who are disproportionately impacted. Central funding for youth offending services (YOS) has



been slashed by an average of over 19 per cent (Youth Justice Board, 2011) and this is in the context of cuts already announced this year to other YOS funders, such as local authorities, police and probation services.

These budget cuts are not happening in isolation; children's services have been slashed by 13 per cent in this financial year alone and there are plans to reduce the budget given by central government by 28 per cent in the next four years (Higgs, 2011). The third sector, which the government expects to pick up the pieces of these cuts, is also suffering: already more than 2,000 charities and community groups are facing budget cuts as local authorities have reduced or completely withdrawn their funding (False Economy, 2011). In an evaluation of the DTO in 2002 the YJB said that:

'addressing offending behaviour has been hindered by the limits of existing intervention programmes and the provision available in the community. This is not for failure of effort by any parties involved, rather it is a case of a real limit on what is available at present. However, until we move on from simply

designing provision around what is available rather than what is necessary, children's' needs will not be met'.

Nearly a decade on from these findings, the government is drastically cutting back what is available.

It has been argued that in effect each society gets the youth justice system it deserves, as how a society defines and reacts to the behaviour of children and young people 'ultimately tells us more about social order, the state and political decision-making than it does about the nature of young offending and the most effective ways to respond to it' (Munice, 2004). Until children and young people are invested in, included in society and decriminalised, the youth justice system will continue to fail us all.

Jenny Chambers is the Howard League's Youth Policy Officer. She is part of the U R Boss team. More information about U R Boss can be found at <http://www.howardleague.org/u-r-boss/> and <http://www.urboss.org.uk/>

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Do homes make the difference?

Hazel Cheeseman

For the last five years, the St Mungo's Trust has provided a housing advice service at Feltham Young Offenders Institution. This article seeks to provide some background information about that service, but also highlight the research evaluation opportunity that is currently being offered by the St Mungo's Trust.

Prisons matter to homelessness services

If you've heard of St Mungo's, it's probably because you know about one of our hostels or our outreach services supporting rough sleepers off the streets. Since our inception over 40 years ago, our mission has always been to tackle street homelessness and put a roof over the heads of the most vulnerable.

So it may come as a surprise for those who do not work daily in homelessness or offending that, while we house over 3,000 people a year, in the same period we work with over 10,000 individuals in prisons. For those with experience in prisons, hostels or probation services the connection between our mission to end street homelessness and prisons, young offending institutions and community anti-social behaviour teams will be more obvious. Homelessness and offending are very closely linked with many individuals locked into a cycle of offending, homelessness and often ill health which can sometimes seem impossible to break.

For instance, ex-offenders are 2.5 times more likely to re-offend if they are released from prison without a place to live. The aim of our work in prisons has been to step in before this happens, to prevent homelessness becoming another hurdle for ex-offenders to jump before they can move on with their lives. We support our clients to access stable housing that will enable rehabilitation and help them re-integrate into their community. We provide all sorts of housing support from general advice and guidance to helping those on short term sentences sustain their tenancies while in prison, as well as brokering new accommodation for those on longer sentences. We will also help people to rebuild their connections with their families for those who wish to return home and help others to access education, training and employment in the community.



Floating support service

Over the last five years in particular, we have been developing a service at Feltham Young Offenders Institute for 18-21 year olds, which has been supported by the Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales. Eighteen to 21 year olds are among the most forgotten and disadvantaged groups of offenders, and have access to few support services that would help prevent them re-offending. Unlike 15 to 17 year olds, they are not supported by the Youth Justice Board and are no longer classed as in priority need for housing.

For many of the young men at Feltham, traditional stand-alone housing advice is not sufficient to enable their successful reintegration into the community. In response to this, we have developed a specialist floating support worker. This post is not only a dedicated expert but also operates “through the gate” support for clients in the community after they are released with a range of needs which relate to their ability to maintain stable housing.

Of the 101 young men supported by the floating support worker last year, only 11, or 11%, returned to custody against a target of 18% and compared to the national average of 78%.

One of the key reasons for this, we believe, is that all those who were supported found stable accommodation:

101 of 101 clients found secure accommodation:

- 38 Returned to their family home
- 19 Placed in supported accommodation (hostels, foyers etc.)
- 27 Placed in private rented accommodation with ongoing support
- 10 Placed in local authority accommodation
- 1 Placed in specialist accommodation and rehab
- 6 Maintained previous tenancy

Who the project has helped

“James” was referred to St Mungo's shortly after receiving a custodial sentence for arson and wounding. The wounding took place after James had an altercation with a partner who he had met online. He then returned home and started a fire in an attempt to kill himself.

James had been in care, had a history of alcohol abuse and had previously attempted suicide. He had also been the victim of sexual exploitation, meeting older men on line.

Housing James was challenging due to his arson charge, and the fact that the fire had occurred at supported accommodation. Social Services said little that could be done prior to release and that James’ charge would be a bar to most accommodation. This was not good enough for the floating support worker who saw that James was vulnerable.

He contacted the head of supported accommodation in James’ home borough and explained the situation and the progress James had made while detained – he was a prison diversity representative, had engaged with a substance misuse worker, and had won the Anne Frank Award, a national award recognising the work of young people challenging discrimination and overcoming hardship (this is not a prison specific award). As James was unable to attend the award ceremony at the House of Commons a ceremony had been held in the prison library.

Acting as James’ advocate the support worker successfully convinced the council that accommodation could and should be found for James and he was given a place

in supportive accommodation. Ahead of his release the support worker secured a community care grant to set up a home, supported James to get a place at college to begin studying for his A levels, and on the day of release accompanied James to probation, social services and the job centre.

It has been almost two years since James's release. He is progressing well at college, has continued to access counselling and substance misuse support and will soon be moving into his own flat.

Finding out how it works

Looking at the top line figures this model has proved extremely successful. However, we want to go further and work with a researcher to find out more about how this project has delivered outcomes, why the small minority have reoffended and what lessons can be learnt for wider services from the approach taken in this project.

If you are interested in working with St Mungo's on this project please contact Dan Dumoulin, Policy and Research Officer, St Mungo's daniel.dumoulin@mungos.org or call 020 8762 5699. We are looking to produce a report in early 2012. We would be keen to support any further academic work in this area where we can.

Hazel Cheeseman is the Policy and Research Manager at the St Mungo's Trust

Member Profile

Kate Gooch, University of Birmingham



I'm a Lecturer at Birmingham Law School, University of Birmingham. Prior to being appointed as a Lecturer in 2011, I was a Teaching Fellow (2010-2011) and Postgraduate Teaching Assistant (2006-2010) here at the University of Birmingham. I currently teach undergraduate Criminal Law and Child Law as well as a postgraduate course entitled 'Sentencing and Penal Policy' which features in our LLM Criminal Law and Criminal Justice programme.

Broadly speaking, my research interests concern aspects of youth justice, penology and in particular, the use and experience of imprisonment. My interest in youth custody was stimulated whilst undertaking project work for a national charity with children remanded to local authority care. In the years that followed, I combined postgraduate research with ongoing 'frontline' work with children and young people who were identified as at risk of, or who were actively engaged in, criminal behaviour. Gradually, I became more involved in child protection, generating an interest in child law and its application to juvenile offenders.

I am currently approaching the completion of my doctoral thesis, which is due to be submitted for examination in December 2011. My doctoral research examines the attitudes and experiences of juvenile offenders in custody and those of the staff who work alongside them. The original aim was to offer juvenile offenders, a disadvantaged vulnerable group, a 'voice' exploring their self-narratives regarding their life before, their life in custody and their attitudes towards their release and resettlement. This involved empirical research in an English young offender institution accommodating remanded and sentenced young people aged 15 - 18 years old. As the project evolved, three key themes began to emerge: the ability to 'cope' and adjust; the experience of victimisation; and, the negotiation of power between staff and young people. These three themes were connected by ideas concerning the construction and accomplishment of agency, identity and masculinity. Following the submission of my PhD and the dissemination of its findings, I intend to build on the themes identified during my doctoral research. I am particularly keen to develop my empirical research skills and experience, engaging in further prison ethnographic research.

The Howard League's Early Career Academic Network offers an exciting opportunity to initiate and develop networks with a view to collaboration in the future. As a lawyer, the potential for inter-disciplinary links is especially important. The Early Career Academic Network also provides an invaluable platform for the exchange of research ideas and the dissemination of research findings. As an early career researcher, I hope that this will assist and inspire the development and refining of ideas, ultimately leading to the development of future publications and research projects.

Members' noticeboard

Glanville Williams Conference: School of Law, King's College London Saturday 3rd - Sunday 4th December 2011

To mark the 2011 centenary of the birth of Glanville Williams, Q.C., LL.D. F.B.A., the School of Law, King's College London will host a major international conference: The Legacy of Glanville Williams: The Sanctity of Life and the General Part of the Criminal Law Conference

Speakers:

- Lord Justice Toulson, Court of Appeal, England and Wales, (former Chairman of the Law Commission for England and Wales)
- Professor Andrew Ashworth Q.C., D.C.L., F.B.A., Vinerian Professor of English Law, All Souls College: University of Oxford
- Professor Joshua Dressler, Frank R. Strong Chair in Law: The Ohio State University
- Professor George P. Fletcher, Cardozo Professor of Jurisprudence: Columbia University Law School
- Professor Michael S. Moore, Charles R. Walgreen, Jr. Chair: College of Law at the University of Illinois
- Professor Paul H. Robinson, Colin S. Diver Professor of Law: University of Pennsylvania Law School
- Professor Antony Duff F.B.A., F.R.S.E., Department of Philosophy, University of Minnesota
- P. R. Glazebrook, Fellow, Jesus College, University of Cambridge
- Professor John Keown, Rose F. Kennedy Professor in Christian Ethics: Georgetown University
- Professor Penney Lewis, Faculty of Law, King's College, University of London
- Professor A.T.H. Smith, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Government Relations) and Dean of Law, Victoria University New Zealand
- Professor Andrew Simester, Faculty of Law, National University of Singapore and Fellow Wolfson College, University of Cambridge
- Professor William Wilson, Faculty of Law, Queen Mary College, University of London
- Dr. John Stanton-Ife, Faculty of Law, King's College London
- Dr. Antje du Bois-Pedain, Faculty of Law, University of Cambridge

Inspired by Williams' famous and controversial 1958 book, Sanctity of Life, which centred on such topics as euthanasia and abortion, and his classic criminal law treatise, Criminal law: the general part, all of the speakers at the conference will focus on those topics about which Williams wrote. This conference aims to make a significant contribution to the current debate in these areas.

Booking details can be found at the following link:

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/law/glanvillewilliams/index.aspx>

Guidelines for submissions

Style

Text should be readable and interesting. It should, as far as possible, be jargon-free, with minimal use of references. Of course, non-racist and non-sexist language is expected. References should be put at the end of the article. We reserve the right to edit where necessary.

Illustrations

We always welcome photographs, graphic or illustrations to accompany your article.

Authorship

Please append your name to the end of the article, together with your job description and any other relevant information (e.g. other voluntary roles, or publications etc.).

Publication

Even where articles have been commissioned by the Howard League for Penal Reform, we cannot guarantee publication. An article may be held over until the next issue.

Format

Please send your submission by email to anita.dockley@howardleague.org.

Please note

Views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect Howard League for Penal Reform policy unless explicitly stated.