

## Early Career Academics Network Bulletin

February 2010 – Issue 2

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## Introduction



Welcome to the Early Career Academics Network's second bulletin. As the politicians have started to rush headlong toward the General Election, we, at the Howard League feel now is the time to start, publicly at least, ensuring the issues and values that we hold dear are addressed and adopted by prospective parliamentary candidates and their parties.

As part of our very own general election campaign, we want all our supporters and members to help us to promote our campaign centred on the phrase: "**Less crime, safer communities, fewer people in prison.**"

In the next few weeks I will email you with information about supporting our general election campaign – Take Action 2010. The first thing you will do is download the card (I'm holding it in the picture above!) and take your photo – as well as photos of your students, friends and colleagues and email them to me ([anita.dockley@howardleague.org](mailto:anita.dockley@howardleague.org)). Your photos will be put on a photo gallery on the Howard League website. As an added incentive I will send the first five people who send me their photos a free copy of *ASBO: Wrong turning – Dead end* written by Chief Superintendent Neil Wain with a foreword by Elizabeth Burney from Cambridge University.

There is also a special offer on some of our books especially for ECAN members. More details are on the news pages.

Happy snapping

**Anita Dockley**  
**Research Director**

## News

### Essay writing competition for undergrads

The Howard League for Penal Reform has launched its first ever student essay competition. It will be judged by Eric Allison, prisons correspondent for the Guardian newspaper. The winning essay will be published in The Howard, the newspaper of the Howard League for Penal Reform, which is read by over 30,000 people. It will also be published on [www.howardleague.org](http://www.howardleague.org)



Full information about the competition can be found at <http://www.howardleague.org/essay-competition/>

We are looking for 1000 words which address the title 'Why Prisons Don't Work'. Entrants must be undergraduate students based at a university in the UK. Closing date: 5pm, Friday 30th April, 2010. The entries should be sent to [hannah.mcfaul@howardleague.org](mailto:hannah.mcfaul@howardleague.org)

Please encourage your students to enter.

### Phil Wheatley to retire

A message has been circulated to Ministry of Justice and NOMS staff announcing the retirement of Phil Wheatley, Director General of NOMS. He will continue until his replacement has been appointed, towards the middle of the year.

### Crime and Security Bill



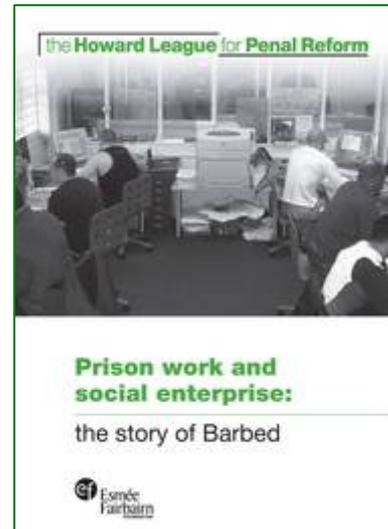
The Crime and Security Bill is currently in the committee stages in Parliament and taking evidence from a range of interested parties from the Police Federation to the Liberty and the Standing Committee on Youth Justice. The Howard League for Penal Reform has concerns about various aspects of the Bill and has produced a briefing that it has sent to parliamentarians. A copy of our briefing can be found at [http://www.howardleague.org/fileadmin/howard\\_league/user/pdf/Parliamentary\\_Briefing\\_on\\_the\\_Crime\\_and\\_Security\\_Bill.pdf](http://www.howardleague.org/fileadmin/howard_league/user/pdf/Parliamentary_Briefing_on_the_Crime_and_Security_Bill.pdf)

### New data source

A new Government statistical website [[data.gov](http://data.gov)] has been launched that, *inter alia*, includes 127 "data feeds" on crime to allow individuals and groups to do their own analysis.

## Social Enterprise

The Howard League for Penal Reform is an ardent supporter of social enterprise within the penal system, and has a particular view about how they should be developed. Our own social enterprise, a graphic design studio, Barbed, in Coldingley prison showed what could be achieved, but also the problems and barriers to success. An evaluation by Professor Penny Green, *Prison work and social enterprise: the story of Barbed*, can be found at <http://www.howardleague.org/online-publications/> We are continuing to campaign for the introduction of real work particularly in the long term prison estate. Look out for more developments during our Take Action 2010 election campaign. NOMS and the Cabinet Office have recently published a report on social enterprise in the penal system. Their work focuses on the contribution that social enterprises may have to reducing re-offending. A summary of the report can be downloaded <http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/docs/social-enterprise-prison-probation.pdf>.



## Justice Reinvestment

The Howard League for Penal Reform welcomed the findings of the “excellent” Justice Committee report; *Cutting crime: the case for justice reinvestment*. The ‘Cutting Crime’ report recognises that ‘prison is a relatively ineffective way of reducing crime for other than serious offenders’ and that the Committee was convinced that more prison building will prove a ‘costly mistake’. The Justice Committee champions the need to reinvest the public’s money directly into communities. Our full news statement can be found [http://www.howardleague.org/fileadmin/howard\\_league/user/pdf/Press\\_2010/Justice\\_Committee\\_14\\_Jan\\_2010\\_web.pdf](http://www.howardleague.org/fileadmin/howard_league/user/pdf/Press_2010/Justice_Committee_14_Jan_2010_web.pdf) and to read more about our views on localism have a look at what our Commission on English Prisons today had to say about these issues (<http://www.howardleague.org/commission/>).

## Special offer for ECAN members

ECAN members can purchase three of our recent reports for just £15 and make a saving of £10. The reports we are offering are:

- Punishing Children: A Survey of criminal responsibility and approaches across Europe (2008)
- Out for Good: Meeting the resettlement needs of young men (2006)
- When big brother goes inside: The experiences of younger siblings of young men in prison.(2006)

To take advantage of this offer, click on this link:  
<http://www.howardleague.org/ecan-publications/>

## Features

### Section 30 Dispersal Powers: Emerging Findings from Merseyside

**A team of researchers from Liverpool John Moores University, Rachel Evans, Janet Jamieson, Dave O'Brien, Steve Tombs and Joe Yates, gives ECAN bulletin readers a first look at some of the issues emerging from their research.**

#### Introduction



Arguably regulating incivility and nuisance has borne the burden of three successive New Labour governments' efforts to appease public concern and secure electoral gain (Jamieson and Yates, 2009). In particular, these efforts have witnessed the extension and intensification of

interventions to exert control over young people's 'troublesome' behaviour (Goldson, 2008). One of the more controversial measures in the government's anti-social behaviour arsenal is the dispersal powers provided under Section 30 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 (Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI), 2003). This paper reflects on the emerging findings of a research study undertaken in Merseyside to highlight some concerns with regard to the imposition, implementation and impact of these dispersal powers.

#### Section 30 Dispersal Powers

Section 30 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 allows for the '*Dispersal of groups and removal of persons under 16 to their place of residence (or to a place of safety)*'. The Act introduced powers to disperse groups in designated dispersal zones. Importantly these groups can be dispersed if '*any members of the public have been intimidated, harassed, alarmed or distressed as a result of the presence or behaviour of groups of two or more persons in public places*' (Section 30(1a)). In terms of practicalities, it is important to note that the focus is upon 'presence' rather than 'behaviour' within a designated zone and failure to disperse can result in arrest and summary charge. Additionally, any young people under 16 years in a designated zone subject to a 9pm to 6am curfew should be supervised if they are out during this period. If not, they can be returned to their place of residence (Section 30(6b)).

## **The Research Study**

There has been relatively little research undertaken with regard to dispersal powers, and notably no government-funded evaluation (Crawford and Lister, 2007, House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2007). In view of the considerable variation in the take up and use of dispersal powers (Crawford and Lister, 2007), and the absence of any research in the immediate locality, our research sought to critically assess the imposition, implementation and impacts of the use of dispersal powers on Merseyside. The research project incorporates a case study element focusing on three localities where the powers have been used; this includes one neighbourhood chosen because of the higher density of black and minority ethnic (BME) groups in residence. The research is now entering its final stages and to date has involved 70 interviews with key stakeholders (the police, the youth service, local residents, and representatives from social housing providers) and young people (both those targeted for the use of dispersal powers and those who have not been dispersed).

## **Emerging Findings from Merseyside**

Inevitably echoes of the limited research on the issue of dispersal powers are apparent within our findings and with specific regard to young people our study, like the few which have preceded it, highlights the exclusionary potential of dispersal for young people residing in localities subject to Section 30 powers and young people's negative experiences of how the police exercise their powers to disperse (see also Cavanagh, 2007, Crawford and Lister, 2007; Smithson, 2004). However, in this paper we would like to focus our attention on some of the issues which we have found particularly striking in our interviews with the young people.

### **Lack of information and awareness**

At a legislative minimum the grounds for an order and its boundaries should be publicised via a local newspaper or by notices displayed in the area (OPSI, 2003: Section 31(3a&b)). However, Crawford and Lister assert that more extensive forms of communication are necessary in order to 'limit public confusion, manage expectations and avoid conflict' (2007:18).

Notwithstanding a clear recognition and commitment to communicating effectively with local communities and to maximizing media exposure on the part of Merseyside Police, a common feature of our interviews with young people was their lack of clarity with regard to the process of authorization, the practical implementation of dispersal powers and the nature and extent of the powers actually permitted. It appears likely that this lack of information and awareness contributed to the majority of young people in our study viewing dispersal powers as unjust and unfair.

### **Dispersal and the Prospect of Disproportionality**

Young people's lack of clarity in relation to dispersal was also reflected in descriptions of their interactions with the police. Indeed, many of the young people we interviewed, particularly BME respondents, reported that they found it hard to differentiate between their experiences of the use of Section

30 (dispersal) powers and Section 60 (stop and search) powers<sup>1</sup>. Respondents' confusion between the types of powers being utilised is significant as it has repercussions for their rights and their awareness of the potential for enforcement relating to Section 30 powers. Moreover, a number of BME respondents also observed that their experiences of policing had proved remarkably consistent, between periods when their neighbourhood was and was not subject to dispersal powers. Raising concerns regarding their ability to differentiate between those periods when 'exceptional' powers are in place and the 'lived reality' of day to day policing in their neighbourhood. These findings are of particular concern in a context in which there is disproportionate representation of BME groups at all stages of the criminal justice process (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2007, Phillips and Bowling, 2007), and where the enforcement activities associated with anti-social behaviour orders have been found to have adversely impacted upon Pakistani and BME groups Fitzgerald and Hale (2006). Any prospect of disproportionality with regard to the use of dispersal powers necessitates further and thorough investigation.

### **Young women and dispersal powers**

The final issue we would like to highlight is the use of dispersal powers with regard to young women. Notwithstanding recent media concern regarding a reputed growing lawlessness among young women (BBC News 2008, Morris, 2008; McVeigh, 2009), it is clear that women commit less crime and that it is of a less serious nature than that committed by men (McIvor, 2007). Women also express greater fear of crime than men (Stanko, 1990) which is likely to be informed by their perceptions of risk and the social and economic context in which they live (Measor, 2006). These 'truths' regarding female criminality and fear of crime present some interesting challenges with regard to the use of dispersal powers. Indeed, many of the young women we interviewed expressed concerns regarding the potential for stigma associated with their identification as 'anti-social' youths and in relation to the impacts of dispersal upon their perception and experience of personal safety within public space. Indeed, a number of young women noted the obvious contradictions relating to the focus within dispersal powers on groups of 2 or more and the strong messages they receive to take greater responsibility for their own personal safety and to enact strategies to minimise risk, particularly to remain in groups.

### **Conclusion**

In highlighting the exclusionary potential associated with the use of dispersal powers, the emergent findings of our study raise broader questions, these include their usefulness with respect to public protection *per se*, and also in respect of the attendant risks of further alienating young people, who already constitute a marginalized and excluded group within British society.

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<sup>1</sup> The latter refers to additional search powers provided by the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act relating to pedestrian and vehicles in a specified locality, for a period not exceeding 48 hours. These can be utilized on the basis of a reasonable belief that incidents involving serious violence may take place or that people are carrying dangerous instruments or offensive weapons in the area without good reason (OPSI, 1994, Section 60).

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## Investigating public perceptions of anti-social behaviour



**Vicky Heap is a PhD research student at the Applied Criminology Centre at the University of Huddersfield. Her work focuses on anti-social behaviour. Here she documents how she has used her research to chart both the change and complexity of the Government's policies to meet its desire to quell anti-social behaviour and its impact on public perceptions of anti-social behaviour.**

Understanding the factors that affect public perceptions is almost certainly not the first thing that springs to mind when someone mentions anti-social behaviour (ASB). Headline-grabbing ASBOs (anti-social behaviour orders) and young 'hoodies' have captured the imagination of the media and public alike, with a large proportion of academic research also devoted to these topics. Nevertheless how the public perceives ASB, how it affects their lives and how public perceptions are formed is an important and as yet, highly under-researched subject.

### **But why do we need to know about perceptions of ASB?**

Perceptions of ASB are crucial to the overall crime reduction agenda. Perception scores are used by the Home Office to determine the extent of problems with ASB, because counting actual incidents of ASB is difficult due to classification issues. Research-wise, only the British Crime Survey (BCS) had provided a thorough investigation into levels of perceptions in England and Wales. This is purely quantitative data, concentrated around demographic factors being linked to those who perceive high levels of ASB. The local government Place Survey also provides a perceptions measure at a local authority level in England. No in-depth qualitative research has focused on the factors that shape public perceptions of ASB.

### **Setting the scene: the ASB Agenda in 2007**

In contrast to the years preceding it, 2007 was a fairly quiet year for ASB. Many of the well-publicised policies such as the Together Campaign and the Respect Agenda had faded into the background and changes were afoot within central government. Gordon Brown became Prime Minister and brought with him different priorities that saw the profile of ASB fall.

### **The research**

My PhD focuses specially on public perceptions of ASB. I began my research in 2007 at the Applied Criminology Centre (University of Huddersfield), when I was selected to undertake their ESRC CASE studentship in collaboration with the Home Office. Unlike a 'normal' PhD (if there is such a thing!), which is the product of the author's creative consideration, the basic remit of my research

was already established. I have therefore had a slightly different experience of the research process, having worked from and refined an existing proposal, employing the most appropriate methods to answer the questions posed.

Briefly, the main aim of my research was to understand what factors influence public perceptions of ASB. To achieve this I decided on a mixed methods approach, conducting all elements of the research in the same four case study areas. I used a self-completion postal questionnaire to obtain a quantitative snapshot of public perception levels in the case study areas and to explore whether certain attitudes were significantly related to perceiving high levels of ASB. For the qualitative aspect, I carried out ten focus groups to look in-depth at some of the topics highlighted by the questionnaire results. In addition I was keen to find out what ASB practitioners were doing to address public perceptions in the local case study areas, in order to acquire an overall picture of perceptions from both sides. Fifteen semi-structured interviews were completed with a range of ASB practitioners. These included local authority ASB officers/co-ordinators, police and housing enforcement officers.

The Home Office were keen for me to build on existing BCS findings, which have shown since 2004 that those most likely to perceive high levels of ASB live in 'hard-pressed' ACORN<sup>2</sup> areas, essentially deprived areas (Flatley et al., 2008). Therefore all case study areas reflected this requirement. A further dimension to my research was the inclusion of two designated Respect areas within the four case study areas studied. These areas obtained Respect status in 2007 as part of the Respect Agenda and received extra funding to carry out ASB interventions. The reason behind selecting these areas was to examine whether Respect status had any impact on public perception levels and ASB reduction practice. So overall quite a complex methodology was employed, but one which sought to appreciate the multi-faceted nature of ASB and its governance, as well as the real-life context experienced by the public.

### **Some emerging results . . .**

The self-completion postal questionnaire produced a number of significant findings, particularly in relation to different attitudes being related to perceptions levels. The percentage of people considered to perceive high levels of ASB varied between the case study areas, providing an insight into the perceived problems being faced by each area. Differences were also uncovered between the designated Respect and Non-Respect areas. See Heap (2009) for further details.

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<sup>2</sup> ACORN is 'A Classification Of Residential Neighbourhoods' and categorises households according to their demographic, housing and employment characteristics. 'Hard-pressed' is one of the five main ACORN groups and is characterised by low income families, residents in council areas and people living in high-rise and inner city areas. (ACORN User Guide, 2006)



*Photographs provided by Vicky Heap as illustrative of the anti-social behaviour that is the focus of her research.*

The real value however is emerging through the qualitative aspect of my research. For a topic as subjective and personal as ASB, listening to what the public had to say was invaluable. It was evident that some of the focus group participants did not experience ASB but were quick to state that it was a problem in their local area. Conversely other members of the groups who did experience ASB didn't seem to think it was a problem. This paradox is not new, but serves to reiterate why research into the drivers of perceptions is necessary.

A number of common themes emerged from the focus groups that were considered to influence public perceptions. Many participants believed that factors such as poor parenting, a lack of discipline in schools and newspaper stories influenced their perception of ASB where they lived. The majority of groups were also similar in the high expectations they placed on local practitioners to reduce ASB, which were not always met. It was apparent that a number of participants felt practitioners had their 'hands-tied' and could not apply any meaningful punishment to the perpetrators of ASB. Subsequently there was a feeling of apathy about their situation, with participants often expressing how they were resigned to ASB being a part of their life as no-one could do anything about it. The above factors demonstrate, despite their brief explanation, that the factors influencing public perceptions of ASB are not straightforward nor are they always directly related to directly experiencing ASB.

Findings from the practitioner interviews indicated that reducing perceptions of ASB was not addressed in a consistent manner across the case study areas, with differences in approach between agencies, areas and Respect status.

### **ASB in 2010 and beyond**

Whilst these findings contribute to the growing body of research into perceptions of ASB, a note of caution must be exercised as additional influences may be involved. Since starting my research in 2007 a number of major changes have taken place. In terms of policy, Neighbourhood Policing has been rolled-out, the police performance measure relating to confidence levels has been prioritised and the Policing Pledge launched. These measures have placed a greater emphasis on communities and they are now responsible for selecting local policing priorities. Furthermore, Alan Johnson is

now in post as Home Secretary and ASB has been placed firmly back on the agenda. The commitment to ASB reduction has been highlighted by New Labour in the build up to the past three election campaigns, so further policy developments are anticipated in the coming months preceding the general election.

ASB also hit the headlines a number of times during 2009, most notably through the inquest into the death of Fiona Pilkington, where she took her own life and that of her daughter's as a result of the ASB she had suffered over a number of years. Even this week (week commencing 4 January 2010) there is a feature every night on the ITN early evening news on ITV1 entitled: 'The Truth About ASBOs'. ASB is certainly entering back into the public consciousness after a couple of relatively 'quiet' years.

Overall, both government policy and the public profile of ASB have evolved since I began researching public perceptions. With ASB being such an emotive subject I'm sure it will remain in the spotlight. However the emphasis of government policy and consequently public perceptions are open to change, providing numerous opportunities for further enquiry that will hopefully build on the foundations laid by my PhD research.

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## Research focus: Men serving long-term prison sentences

**Deborah Drake is a lecturer at the Open University. Here she explains why her research focuses on men serving long prison sentences.**

Understanding the experiences of men who serve long-term prison sentences in conditions of maximum-security is an area of research I have been working on for some time. My interest in this area emerged as I was pursuing my Master of Arts degree in Canada. This research (funded by the CURA: Bridges and Foundations Aboriginal Housing Project) was an exploratory, qualitative study of the experiences of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ex-prisoners. It specifically considered the barriers and support structures men encountered as they tried to return to the community after long-term imprisonment. Whilst this research highlighted some of the key structural difficulties experienced by former long-term-prisoners on the outside, it also pointed to some of the implicit difficulties ex-prisoners face as a result of their prison experiences.

As a result of this research I became interested in gaining a clearer understanding of what men's experiences of long-term, maximum-security imprisonment were like. More specifically, I wanted to explore questions such as: What shapes prison life? And in what ways do prison experiences differ? I also wanted to consider contemporary developments related to risk and punishment in the English prison system – e.g. lengthening prison sentences, mandatory sentencing and increasing prisoner numbers – and what their effects were on the inner life of long-term prisons. To pursue these interests I undertook my PhD at the Institute of Criminology's Prison Research Centre at the University of Cambridge (part funded by the Wakefield Scholarship and the Cambridge Overseas Trust).

My PhD research considered two long-term, maximum-security prisons in England. It specifically focused on the issues of quality of life, order and legitimacy. The research was ethnographic in nature and consisted of three months field work in each of the two prisons and yielded 150 interviews with prisoners, staff, and governors and over 400 hours of observation. The research also considered the histories of the two prisons studied and included 38 interviews with long-serving staff, prisoners, and key figures from each prison's history.

Amongst the main findings were:

- history played an important role in shaping the contemporary practices of the two prisons studied;
- the design of a prison can have a strong impact on culture and the quality of prison life for both staff and prisoners;
- recognition that there are pains associated with long-term imprisonment was largely absent in staff, governor, and official discourses;

- high-security prisons were heavily-controlled, repressive environments and in this way delivered further punishment in addition to the loss of liberty;
- staff-prisoner relationships were suffering from legitimacy deficits; and
- high levels of security and/or very long prison sentences affected prisoners' perceptions of quality of life and made their prison time 'worse'.

Although a number of interesting differences between the two prisons were revealed, these differences were inconsequential when considering the essential experience of long-term imprisonment. The research illustrated that, above all, long-term, maximum-security prisons were places of punishment. Having gained my interest in prisons from first researching the experiences of ex-prisoners, I was struck by just how punishing and debilitating the lived experience of long-term imprisonment can be – and in the face of this, the strength of human resilience. The loss of one's liberty is an inherently punishing experience that is difficult to imagine until you observe it first hand – and even then I am not sure the full reality of serving a long-term prison sentence can be completely understood vicariously. The tangible, observed realities of prison life, however, attest to the fact that prison is not 'easy'.

Facilities and living areas are sparse and sometimes dilapidated (and seem to be decorated from a palette of shades of grey). Access to fresh air and outdoor areas are limited (and outdoor areas are generally entirely made of concrete, with no green spaces). Regimes are austere and heavily controlled. Although there are some 'rehabilitative' activities (e.g. offending behaviour courses, limited vocational training and educational opportunities), they offer little respite, especially as some of these activities are punitive requirements. There are very few opportunities for positive or pleasurable experiences, with the exception (perhaps) of association times or visits from family and/or friends (though these activities can be sources of extreme anxiety and stress for many prisoners). Although one might be able to imagine successfully enduring such an environment for a few days or perhaps even months, the prospect of living in conditions such as these for years or decades is chilling. Imagining such an



environment (and seeing it first hand) gives one pause to consider how such an experience would adequately prepare anyone for a safe and successful return to the community. This research reminds us that all but a very small

number of maximum-security prisoners will, one day, be released. These prisons, therefore, must be seen to have an obligation, both to the public whom they are meant to protect and to the prisoners who they house, to provide prison experiences that at the very least 'do no harm' and ideally foster human potential and repair.

## Opinion

### Time out of cell for children

The Conservative shadow justice minister, David Burrowes, recently tabled a parliamentary question about the number of hours that children spent out of their cells each day (Commons Hansard, Written Answer, 18 January 2010, Column 27W). The information supplied indicated that Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) were failing to meet the requirement – or target if you are NOMS or the YJB – for young people to be out of their cell for 10 hours a day. Some young people were locked in their cells for 16 hours a day.

- 12 out of 16 YOIs failed to ensure that children had 10 hours out of their cell each day
- Those YOIs not meeting the obligation were Brinsford, Castington, Cookham Wood, Downview, Feltham, Hindley, Huntercombe, Parc, Stoke Heath, Warren Hill, Werrington and Wetherby. For example, at Stoke Heath YOI, in September 2009, young people were only out of their cells 7 hours and 42 minutes per day.
- The average time out of cell across all YOIs was 9 hours 24 mins.
- All Secure Training Centres and Secure Children's Homes met the target, with an average of 13 hours and 18 minutes and 13 hours and 54 minutes, respectively, out of their rooms each day.

Chris Callender, the head of our legal team, commented on this story saying

"With reoffending rates so high, it is crucial that children are allowed out of their cells to access the services and help they desperately need to turn their lives around."



**What do you think about this story?  
What concerns do you have about  
children having such limited time out of  
their cells? Is 10 hours a day enough?**

Please let us know your thoughts either by emailing [anita.dockley@howardleague.org](mailto:anita.dockley@howardleague.org) or joining our facebook group (see below). A selection of comments will be published in the next Early Career Academic's Bulletin – so please indicate if you don't want your views published.

## Suggestion box

The Early Career Academic Network (ECAN) bulletin is all about enabling up and coming thinkers. We want you to

- let people know what interests you,
- identify people who are working on similar issues,
- be kept up to date with events and issues for penal reformers,
- get involved in discussing policy and campaigning issues that we are grappling with at the Howard League, and
- what else?

Let me know what else you would like to see in the bulletin. Please forward ideas to [anita.dockley@howardleague.org](mailto:anita.dockley@howardleague.org)

We are also keen to receive short feature articles for publication in the next ECAN bulletin. These articles should be about 1,000 words long. Guidelines are at the end of this bulletin. If you have an idea for an article or want to submit something, contact me on the email address above.

## ECAN Facebook Group



The Howard League for Penal Reform is active on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Delicious](#). There is a special page dedicated to the Early Careers Academic Network that you can reach either by searching for us on facebook or by clicking on the button above.

We hope to use the facebook site to generate discussions about current issues in the criminal justice system. We are currently seeking your views on the amount of time children have out of cell (above) – so perhaps you could share your views on facebook?

Also, if there are any topics that you would like to discuss, please start a discussion.

## Member profile

This time it's the turn of ...

**Sarah Lambie, Lecturer, School of Law, Birkbeck College, University of London**



“My work is driven by a commitment to struggles against gendered, racialised and economic violence - including intimate violence, state violence and the violence of imprisonment. I’m especially interested in community-based responses to harm that move away from models of punishment, retaliation and exclusion, and instead prioritise prevention, healing and transformation. I joined Birkbeck Law School in September 2009 and am also affiliated with the Centre for Law, Gender and Sexuality, at Kent Law School where I am currently completing my PhD.

My PhD research examines how grassroots activists generate new forms of knowledge as a response to the limits of legal reform. Focussing specifically on how gender/sexuality politics intersect, inform and influence struggles against imprisonment and detention in Canada, I consider how activists use “queer” and “transformative” knowledge as a strategy to resist neoliberal forms of punishment and social control.

Prior to coming to England, I completed a Bachelor of Arts in Cultural Studies at the University of Trent, Canada and a Masters of Criminology at the University of Toronto. I have also been actively involved in prisoner’s justice struggles, violence prevention and antipoverty initiatives, working with groups like the Prisoners’ Justice Action Committee in Toronto and the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty.

Since I’ve come to the UK, I’ve worked on two new community initiatives: Communities of Resistance ([www.co-re.org](http://www.co-re.org)) which aims to stop prison expansion in Britain and the Bent Bars Project, which is a pen-pal project for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer prisoners ([www.co-re.org/bentbars](http://www.co-re.org/bentbars)).

Being relatively new to the UK, I was happy to join the Howard League’s new Early Academic Career Network as it provides an important forum for making links and sharing information. Given current prison expansion trends in England and Wales, it also seems more important than ever to share resources and engage in discussion around strategies for reducing imprisonment, violence and harm. So I’m very much looking forward to connecting with other scholars who share a passion for critical research, community organizing and social justice work more broadly.”

## Get Involved

### Transforming the penal system for women

**Stephen Gummer, the Howard League for Penal Reform's Public Affairs Officer, reports on the first meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Women in the Penal System. Are any ECAN members engaged in research that might interest the APPG?**

On 9 December 2009 the first meeting of the all party parliamentary group (APPG) on women in the penal system took place. The meeting attracted a wide range of MPs and peers and was chaired by Baroness Corston. The keynote speaker was the Minister of State for Prisons, Maria Eagle MP.

The meeting opened with an address from Baroness Corston who spoke of her determination to make the group an active protagonist in attaining change for vulnerable women.

Baroness Corston also outlined to the meeting the essential findings of her report and what she still felt there was left to do in this area. She emphasised that the female prison population had almost doubled between 1997 and 2007 and that 68% of women are in prison for non-violent offences, compared with 47% of men. She spoke on about the vulnerability of women who end up in the penal system, and stated that the majority of women in prison had been victims of abuse themselves. She stressed that it was this which caused her to get involved in the female penal system.



Baroness Corston stated that she had particularly welcomed the announcement from the government that the automatic strip searching of women prisoners on reception to prison had ended and that women would only be strip searched if there was intelligence that she might be attempting to smuggle items into the prison.

The APPG then had a wide ranging discussion in which many MPs participated about their individual hopes and aspirations for the group. Lord Ramsbotham raised the role of magistrates in sentencing for women. Baroness Linklater raised the point that magistrates needed to be more aware of community options upon sentencing. Baroness Corston and Dr Roberta Blackman Woods MP both agreed there should be a greater onus upon

sentencers to provide a community alternative for women. Julie Morgan MP stated that women seemed to be receiving tougher sentences than men for smaller crimes.

Notably, Fiona Mactaggart MP stated there was a wide acceptance that female penal reform was now necessary across society and that the majority of people had come to the conclusion that something must be done on the matter of women in the penal system. However Ms Mactaggart felt that there was very little unity between campaigners on this matter and that this group represented an opportunity to unite all groups' action and approach.

Following this the Minister of State for Prisons, Maria Eagle MP, addressed the meeting. She stated her determination to get this issue moving and felt that Baroness Corston's report had placed the issue of women in the penal system firmly on the political agenda.

The minister stated it was important that sentencers use community programmes more frequently for women. She felt that the creation of more community programmes by central government would not be helpful at the present time if it did not come with a commitment from sentencers to use them. She felt options currently available were underused.

Maria Eagle MP also talked about the funding made available, where it was going and what she hoped it would achieve. She stated she was in a fortunate position to be able to increase funding to help keep women out of prison as she was able to divert funds from the Government Equalities Office. The minister felt that further funding was essential to helping women avoid custody.

The minister concluded that progress has been made in the field of women in the penal system but it was a very fragile progress and she stated that extra funding was soon to be available for this agenda in order to consolidate progress made thus far.

Following her appearance before the APPG on women in the penal system the Ministry of Justice published the 'Report on the government's strategy for diverting women away from crime'. This outlined extra funding and policy focus for the issue of women in the penal system.

The APPG will meet again later in 2010.

**If you are engaged in research that you think would be of interest to the APPG or we can highlight in future ECAN bulletins please let me know. Email [anita.dockley@howardleague.org](mailto:anita.dockley@howardleague.org)**

## Community Programmes Awards – Nominate now

**Catryn Yousefi, our programme manager, explains our Community Programmes Award and asks you to nominate good community programmes that you have worked with or know about in your area.**

This is the Howard League for Penal Reform award for the country's most successful community programmes. The competition was launched in November 2005 as part of our work aimed at increasing public and government support for community sentences, as well as fostering good practice. They are a wonderful opportunity to highlight all the outstanding work going on around the country to make our neighbourhoods safer. Community sentences are proven to reduce reoffending and allow people to make amends for what they have done and live law abiding lives.



Community sentences however do not get the best publicity. The media is largely uninterested in stories of success and much more interested in finding failure. The dedicated professionals who deliver community sentences have not always got the time to explain and promote the excellent work they do. Even colleagues in one probation area may be unaware of the excellent results in another area. Meanwhile, thousands of people in the

criminal justice system are being offered the opportunity of challenge and change for the better, with success stories galore, but the general public is only dimly aware of all the tremendous work being done.

### The 2010 awards

The 2010 awards are supported by the Magistrates' Association and were launched at their Annual General Meeting in Birmingham in November 2009.

An effort has been made to make the awards truly reflective of the great work being carried out across the criminal justice system. For the first time we have introduced award categories to reflect this work which include:

- Children and young people
- Adults (sponsored and supported by Probation Association)
- Women
- Education, training and employment
- Unpaid work

The competition is open to statutory agencies and voluntary organisations, which are developing innovative community schemes. The programmes nominated are required to show for example:

- they are rehabilitative and help to prevent future offending;
- offer a programme tailored to individual needs;
- be based on restorative principles
- encourage offenders to think about the consequences of their crime;
- are cost effective;
- work collaboratively with the local community.

The award winners will be invited to a celebratory event in the summer of 2010. Their work will be publicised locally and nationally.

### **Follow up work**

The awards are an ongoing process. Each winning project will be visited to learn more about its effective practice. An awards report will be published setting out the principles upon which community sentences should be founded and with practical examples of successful schemes, highlight positive practice and replicate good practice. This process will also include a series of local events round the country to educate local people about the successes of the schemes. The Howard League for Penal Reform is determined to enhance understanding and usage of community initiatives but it is clear that community programmes must find ways of ensuring that people know what they are doing is so good. These events will be one way of highlighting the excellent work being carried out locally.

### **How to nominate**

Nominations have to be made by post by 5 pm Tuesday, 4 May 2010. Further details of the 2010 Awards, full criteria list, an entry guide and nomination form can be found at: [www.howardleague.org/community-programmes-awards/](http://www.howardleague.org/community-programmes-awards/)

Further information is also available from Catryn Yousefi:  
[catryn.yousefi@howardleague.org](mailto:catryn.yousefi@howardleague.org)

## **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 (eg 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](mailto: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.