

University Collaboration Dissertation highlights 2018

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How do we successfully support female prison leavers to reintegrate them with their children and families?

Aim: to reduce re-offending amongst female prison leavers to lessen the impact on the family.

The objectives/research questions are:

- ❖ What impact does offending/re-offending have on the children of female prison leavers and why?
 - ❖ To what extent are female prison leavers re-offending and where they are re-offending, what are the barriers to rehabilitation?
 - ❖ To what extent are the support services in place to aid the rehabilitation of female prison leavers?
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- UK prison population June 2018: 83,254 – male population of 79,361 and female population of 3,893 (HMPS, 2018)
 - Hampshire:
 - Highest number of women offenders working with the CRC in Southampton (718, 15.03%) (CRC, 2018)
 - Across all districts in Hampshire, the most common offence type is 'Violence Against the Person' (CRC, 2018)
 - Age group of 26-34 has the highest number of offenders with the CRC, specifically Southampton (326 offenders) (CRC, 2018)
 - Ethnic group of White Gypsy or Irish Traveller has the highest quantity of offenders in Hampshire, precisely in the city of Portsmouth at 81.34% (CRC, 2018)
 - UK Female offenders are over-represented in the crime type of theft. Females made up 26% of theft offence group arrests in 2016/17, compared to 21% of male arrests.
 - Re-offending rate for females is at 23.3% compared to 30.7% for males
 - Rehabilitation is a key factor in reducing re-offending- there is too much focus on punishment and deterrence. Since 2007, 94 deaths in UK women prisons due to the prisons 'ignoring' their drug addiction and mental health
 - Life after prison is challenging for both male and female prison leavers, but in different aspects.

- Female prison leavers most likely to find challenging:
 - Accommodation: 30% of women in prison lose their housing while they are in prison (Corston, 2007)
 - Substance Abuse: In 2014, 7% of UK female prisoners developed substance misuse problems
 - Domestic Abuse: In 2014, approximately 57% of women in prison have experienced domestic violence (Prison Reform Trust, 2017).
- Male prison leavers most likely to find challenging:
 - Low education levels education and employment: 47% of UK prisoners have been estimated to have no GCSE qualifications (House of Commons, 2016).
 - Re-offending: the power of peer pressure from bad influences e.g. gang culture

Results:

- Women- specific behavioural programmes such as CARE have been proven to improve FPLs lives with individual and group session on life goals and mindfulness
- Residential treatment can be a successful alternative to prison for offenders with mental health problems
- Approximately, two out of five UK prisoners (37%) reported that they will need support in finding new accommodation one they have been released
- Reasons why FPLs need suitable housing: homelessness, can earn back parental rights of their children, semi-permanent accommodation can be risky for vulnerable FPLs, Black and minority ethnic FPLs may be at risk of deportation if they are not a permanent UK citizen.
- It is very common for the children of the female prison lever to be accommodated with the family members. However, this is not always a positive outcome. Wider family may experience ‘invisible punishments’ such as financial, social and emotional.
- There are barriers between female prison leavers and their children that makes it more difficult for them to reconnect.
- Mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety can unfold if they are struggling to reunite with their children/family, finding employment and housing.
- Using the rehabilitation method of women centres could be an alternative to being in custody – services such as individual and group counselling/therapy, case management and family care.

Recommendations:

- ❖ The OPCC for Hampshire should support female prisoners with maintaining relationships with their children and families: fund organisations such as Action for Prisoners’ and Offenders’ Families and Prison Advice Care Trust in making sure there are regular visiting hours for families to visit the female prisoner.

- ❖ The OPCC for Hampshire should prioritise in making sure suitable accommodation is available by the time the female prison leaver is released: fund or partner with local housing organisations such as the Society of St James and Radian to ensure that every FPL that is relocated in Hampshire receives suitable accommodation.
- ❖ The OPCC for Hampshire should support rehabilitation services for female prison leavers such as women centres: could fund women centres in Hampshire such as the Salvation Army (Booth Centre) in Southampton and Trinity in Winchester.
- ❖ The OPCC for Hampshire should support female prison leavers in the process of reuniting with their children and family: By supporting female prison leavers through the pathway (maintaining relationships, accommodation and rehabilitation), the social services will have enough concrete evidence to see that the FPL's life is stable to have full custody of her children.
- ❖ The OPCC for Hampshire should support more crime prevention services for the youth: a child of a prisoner is more likely to be involved in criminality. Invest money into services such as youth centres as they keep youths out of trouble. The OPCC should encourage the Hampshire Constabulary to employ more PCSOs - PCSOs could de-escalate situations with youths before it escalates to them being arrested by police officers.

Student: Fiona Pink, Criminology MSc, Winchester University

By investigating the change in volume of trial receipts at a single Crown Court is it possible to draw robust conclusions as to why a change has occurred since 2015?

Aim: To investigate why the amount of trial receipts have decreased at Winchester Crown Court between January 2015 and January 2017.

- ❖ To ascertain the trends in which crime types have/have no reduced.
- ❖ To identify what impact the Criminal Justice System and its agencies has on the reduction of trial receipts at Winchester Crown Court.
- Crime rate for England and Wales there were 6.8 million offences in the year ending March 2015 and 5.9 million offences recorded in the year ending March 2017. In the year ending March 2015 where 950,000 people were arrested by the police compared to 777,660 people in the year ending March 2017.
- In the year ending March 2017 40% of violent crimes were believed to be committed whilst under the influence of alcohol and 18% committed whilst under the influence of drugs.

- When focusing solely on Winchester Crown Court, with 404 trials in January 2015 as opposed to 194 trials in January 2017
- Factors considered for the reduction of crime and court cases:
 - Government policy and legislative change
 - Reducing reoffending by rehabilitation
 - Restorative justice
 - Out of court disposals
 - Technology e.g. BWV and smart phones
 - Reduction in resources, both CPS and Police

Conclusion:

- ❖ The view that the crime rate is falling which in return presents the view that trial receipts are reducing, upon researching the topic, it appears that trial receipts are going in a downward trend because there is now less crime being recorded. All participants seemed to agree with this.
- ❖ Compelling argument presenting the case of why there is less crime being recorded, key claim being a resource issue throughout the Criminal Justice System. It can be said that the Home Office and the Police and Crime Commissioners need to review how much money is being invested into each police force in England and Wales. To further improve the resourcing issue it is recommended that there needs to be an assessment of whether the distribution of resources is being invested into the right areas.
- ❖ It was found that there are structural changes within the Criminal Justice System with possibly the most important change being the change in nature of crime itself. This change is testing the police's capabilities due crime being more complex. Other changes which have had an impact including the police giving more conditional cautions and the seriousness of crime changing.
- ❖ The final factor which was drawn out of this research is that there are behavioural aspects which are contributing to trial receipts declining. A change of behaviour within the Criminal Justice System, with offenders and with society. A change in behaviour with regards to policing, which is considered the most important behavioural consideration, is that the police now act less proactively compared to a few years ago. The police now target what is right in front of them rather than spending the time 'dealing with the actual problem' (Participant D). It should be considered that to bring back their proactive approach it will require more personnel being invested into the police to allow for the extra time and intelligence which is needed to be more proactive. It was also found that there needs to be more work within the community due to less people reporting crimes as they believe the crimes will sort themselves out or because they are not seriously injured so it is not worth reporting.

Student: Rosie Haskins, Criminology MSc, Winchester University

The Voice of Children and Young victims: Methods of Gaining feedback of services

Aim:

- CSEW estimated 20% of women and 4% of men have experienced some form of sexual assault since the age of 16, which is equivalent to an estimated 3.4 million female victims and 631,000 male victims.
- In March 2015, it had been noted by police recorded crime data that children aged under sixteen years old accounted for a large proportion of rape offences recorded by the police. It was found that roughly 30% of female rape victims were aged under sixteen years old, roughly 60% of male rape victims being under sixteen years old.
- Professionals that work with young people and children can be hesitant about identifying possible participants to take part in research. There is a lack of evidence of children and young people being engaged and consulted in writing policies and inputting into possible services available for child abuse and exploitation
- By involving children and young people in research, and if done so in a supportive and understanding way it can actually help children explore their past traumas and regain confidence for their future.
- Children have many suggestions, however many are unable to actually provide any practical suggestions of how to improve the courts for children. A way that the research was able to overcome this however, was by giving suggestions and ideas to the participants and allowing them to add and discuss those suggestions, allowing conversation from the child participants regarding potential changes that could be put in place for courts.
- A number of methods have been adopted by a range of researchers to attempt to gain a more improved voice of victims. One method that has been adopted is the use of technology such as computers and tablets to take part in self-completion questionnaires.
- Peer support can be valuable in a range of different methods to gain insight into children and young people's thoughts, feelings and opinions as having the support of someone familiar or relatable to, makes children and young people feel more comfortable. To be a peer supporter, they have to feel confident within themselves to be able to deal with someone else's experiences without it triggering their own previous experiences as a victim. They would also need to undergo sufficient training.
- Lack of research that directly relates to gaining the voice of children and young victims.

Findings:

- Methods used can usually depend on the ages of the victims using the services they offer.

- Age group of 14 to 17 years old, are much more aware of what has happened to them, and are more conscious of talking about it or their experiences with the services. It was therefore noted that one to one feedback and having a conversation about their opinions and experiences were not ideal, and they often prefer anonymous methods.
- Use of online surveys and social media for older children.
- Younger ages may benefit more from the one to one communication, however a rapport would need to be built beforehand. It was therefore noted that methods that can both be used with the younger ages could include drawing and play to gain an insight into their emotions and allow the service users to become more comfortable.
- Some children and young people would be nervous to share their experiences and opinions in front of a group of people, and would prefer a one to one method. However, it was also argued that some service users would feel encouraged by being in a group with people who share similar experiences to them, and instead they would gain comfort in knowing they were not alone in the experiences they have had.
- Participants highlighted one to one conversations and written methods as being most commonly used. These methods appear to be the easiest of possibilities, also less costly, written feedback can allow for a range of responses to be gathered quickly, and one to one can allow for more in-depth feedback. When asked whether these methods were successful for the participants, most stated that the methods had been. However, it should be noted that participants may be more likely to claim success to make their efforts appear more positive, as they may be ashamed to admit if they are failing in a part of their work.
- When the parents are not the offenders, it should be remembered that parents may have a big impact on feedback. It could be that the parents speak for the children, and reflect more of their own views and opinions rather than those of the children and young people.
- Suggested participant age groups: age groups of 0 to 5, 6 to 11, 12 to 15 and 16 to 18 years old.
- Methods such as drawing were one that they would strongly recommend for the younger ages particularly, while participants noted that written feedback would be a favoured methods among older children and young people as they wish to remain anonymous.

Conclusion:

- The use of drawings as a method among younger aged children was the most recommended and recalled method.
- All participants used either one to one or written feedback methods, noting that both methods were useful, the first for allowing in depth conversation, and the second for the opportunity to give feedback anonymously.
- All participants discussed the way in which different ages that used the services would need different methods, and that one method could not be generalised to all.

- Nearly all participants believed that more needed to be done to give children and young victims the opportunities to voice their opinions within providing feedback of the services that they have used. Many were also open to the ideas that were put forward to them of methods such as the use of play, computers and tablets and the use of workshops.
- Each service user is an individual, and should be treated that way. One method cannot be generalised, therefore the recommendation from this research would be to provide a service that allows a range of methods that can be used to give feedback to support services, which in turn can then help improve those services for future children and young victims that would use those services.
- While methods such as one to one communication, written feedback and the use of drawings for the younger ages are popular and may have their advantages, more methods need to be developed to expand upon the feedback and opportunities given to children and young victims to voice their opinions. There is not enough being achieved to encourage and allow children and young victims to give an input into the matters that concern them, so by improving on methods of achieving feedback and allowing their opinions to be shared, the bigger issue can be attempted to be improved upon

Student: Roksana Galuba, Criminology MSc, Winchester University

An exploration of restorative justice practices for domestic abuse victims in the United States of America and Canada with a series of recommendations on how these practices can aid the United Kingdom in implementing restorative justice for domestic abuse victims.

Aim: to address the issue of domestic violence in the United Kingdom, by implementing the practices of restorative justice; by drawing recommendations from existing programmes in the United States of America (USA) and Canada.

- Evidence suggests that victims see emotional reconciliation to be far more important than material or financial reparation (Umbreit et al, 1994), today' system focuses on economic reparations, rather than emotional recovery. Many offenders are unable to make the payments to the victims.
- The experience of forgiveness, is believed to be the factor which mostly assists victims in recovery from their victimization (Zehr, 1985).
- 46% of all prisoners will re-offend within a year, and 60% of short sentenced prisoners, will reoffend within the same period (Cameron, 2016).
- Offenders with multiple crimes or prior convictions have met with victims and apologised for their actions, with benefits for themselves

(redemption), as well as the victims who have experienced reduction in PTSD (Sherman and Strang, 2007).

- Studies confirmed that those offenders who took part in restorative justice reported a positive influence on their views on offending (Justiceinspectrates.gov.uk, 2018).
- Without restorative justice, many family and friends tend to avoid conversations surrounding the topic of the offence with the culprit, due to fear of aggravation or even violence; resulting in many accepting that the offence is irrelevant due to time being completed through incarceration.
- Restorative justice solutions as a means of restoration for domestic abuse or family violence victims, has been a present tool in many countries around the world for years; such as USA and Canada etc.
- Gale Burford and Joan Pennell; found a significant reduction in both child abuse/neglect and abuse of mothers/partners after the intervention occurred; these interventions were modelled on the principles of restorative justice. Incidents of violence halved for the 32 families involved in the interventions, and for the remaining 31 control families, the incidents increased significantly. Another positive outcome was a reduction in drinking problems after the interventions in the 32 families (Burford and Pennell, 1998).
- There is a lot of support for family violence being subjected to restorative justice, where the community adopted the principles of restorative justice in tackling issues such as sexual abuse, domestic violence etc. Although these emphasise the necessity for victims' circles and offender circles to be separated, until cycles of denial and intimidation are broken; only then restoration and healing can begin.
- There is a significant emphasise on making communities aware of what is happening in their area, and working together towards changing the practices and attitudes towards domestic abuse.
- Another criticism of restorative justice for domestic abuse victims is the need for a face-to-face interaction between the victim and the offender, along with a reconciliation between parties which is not appropriate for the power imbalance present in family violence cases.
- Many of the offences which fall under domestic abuse are not prosecuted, due to difficulties in distinguishing them (CPS, 2014); particularly cases of controlling/coercive behaviour and psychological abuse.
- The main concern regarding restorative justice is for the safety of the victim, which is threatened when placed in a situation with an obvious power imbalance (Penal Reform International, 2018)
- Re-victimisation can occur not only during restorative justice, but also during the court proceedings; meaning, that restorative justice should not be excluded, for an outcome that can occur in a system that is currently in place.
- Another argument against the initiation of restorative justice for domestic abuse victims, is that it will be a 'soft option', decriminalizing the offence; this issue being resolved by implementing a hybrid system.

- The underfunding of police force in the UK, contributed to the lack of delivery of restorative justice to domestic abuse victims, with a MP declaring that the availability of such scheme would be more expensive, and the savings were 'more emotional than material for criminal justice system' (Dowling, 2017).
- It is evidential that restorative justice has made significant impact on the lives of victims, offenders and the community, and appropriate bodies should push for implementation for all victims regardless of crime.

Recommendations:

- Victim Offender Dialogue/Mediation (VOD/VOM) which was analysed on its applicability in the United States of America, focused on facilitating the meeting between the offender and the victims (Daly, 2012), monitored by a trained individual (Webber, 2012). A recommendation suggesting application of VOM/VOD in the UK would suggest a positive benefit for the victims and offenders involved in the process. The programme would offer offenders a chance to apologise, make amends, and understand the pain and consequences of their crime; rather than assuming that once their prison time is over, the crime and its affects disappear.
- Implementation of Family Group Conferencing along VOM, allowing the participants, most importantly the victim to choose whether they want one of the other, or both. Firstly, participating in VOM, to have their voice heard, and secondly having FGC to integrate reintegrative shaming and the aspect of community/family shame which has been proven to be a 'more potent agents to achieve the objectives of denunciation' (Morris, 2002), being more affective than the criminal justice system.

Conclusion:

- There are significant benefits to all participants, victims, offenders and the community, when RJ takes place.
- The issues of re-victimisation, were addressed by highlighting that victims incur a chance of being re-victimised while in the traditional criminal process.
- VOM/VOD combined with FGC allows for flexibility between the wishes of the victim; whether they want to meet with the offender alone, or along with community/family. Both schemes have produced positive evidence when studied, with VOM/VOD declaring that 81% of offenders complied with the resolution plan created, compared to only 57% of those who went through only the court system (Umbreit et al., 2006).
- A hybrid of VOM/VOD and FGC reinforces the principles of RJ, as well as addressing the needs of all stakeholders affected. Providing a unique system available to the UK, with evidence of success in various other countries.

