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Published by the
Relationships Foundation

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Relational Justice

BULLETIN

Sponsored by LINKLATERS

Issue 5 January 2000

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RETURN OF THE POLICE BOX

Ewan Ramage charts a new relational role for the police box



"There's never a constable around when you want one." "They're always driving about in cars" and "You never see a bobby on the beat any more." Familiar cries on a familiar topic – and an important one. In the days when a police officer could be found around the next corner or in their familiar police box, the public felt reassured and that all was well. However, society and lifestyles have changed since the days of *Dixon of Dock Green* and so too has operational policing. In Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders Police have adapted three of their disused police boxes to allow the public an alternative method of accessing information and contacting the police. The boxes have positive relational implications. They promote greater partnership between police and public and they provide a fixed police presence in public places which people find reassuring. By using touch screen displays and state of the art computer technology, one of policing's traditional icons have been given a new lease of life. The very technological changes that once saw the demise

"People can see an officer at the touch of a button."

of the police box now herald its return.

Launched by the Chief Constable, Sir Roy Cameron, in November 1998, the

pilot box located in the centre of Edinburgh has dealt with over 140,000 enquiries to date. The project was praised in the 1999 Audit Commission report *Action Stations* as an excellent example of an alternative method for police contact by re-using existing resources. The information box performs two functions. Firstly, in emergency situations it allows the user to speak face-to-face with an officer in the control room by means of video conferencing technology and ISDN links. Secondly, it allows locals and tourists alike to access information about Lothian and Borders police departments such as CID, Traffic and Community Safety Branch. It also includes useful help and advice regarding personal safety, domestic violence, what to do in a road accident, parking regulations, road safety and recruitment. The list is by

no means definitive and need only be limited by the imagination of the system developer. At present, the system holds about 100 pages of police information. In addition, thanks to Edinburgh and Lothian Tourist Board, the boxes also contain local information about accommodation and sightseeing. From a map, users select popular tourist attractions where they can take an interactive virtual tour, for example of Edinburgh Castle or the former Royal Yacht, Britannia. The facility is accessible to young children and wheel chair users, whilst the screen itself is daylight reactive, improving readability in bright sunshine.

"Using touch screen displays and state of the art computer technology the police box has been given a new lease of life."

COMMUNICATION LINK

Edinburgh's police boxes are of a unique design and were first introduced to the City in the 1930's as the beat constable's 'home from home.' With a box located on every beat it was a natural focal point for the public to contact the police at a time when telephones were very much a luxury. At other times when the officer was not present, people could contact the police station by opening a small access door activating an intercom link. This incidentally was located in the same position as the new interactive screen.

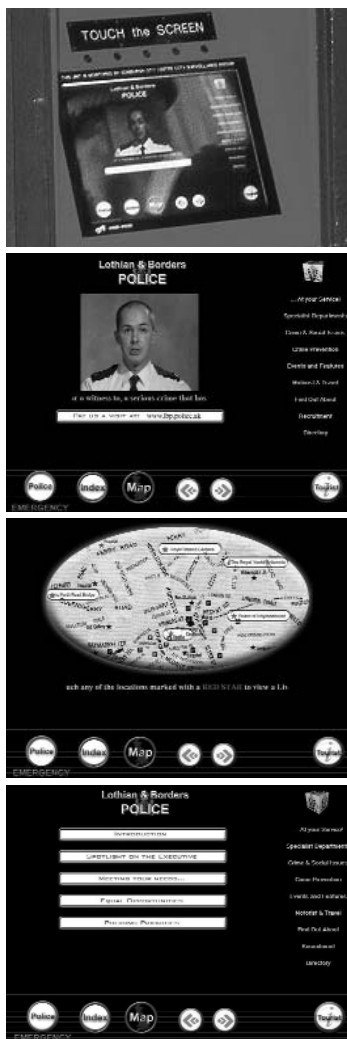


When centralised policing took over in the mid 1980's, and Lothian and Borders officers commenced duty at divisional stations rather than at the box, it appeared as if the police box had had its day. Their use declined and became a target for vandalism, graffiti and billposters. About 50 police boxes remain in the City, some of which are designated listed buildings, many occupying prime sites in both the city centre and residential areas. Because of this it was felt that a new role had to be found for these distinctive structures.

Continued on Page 2

A small working group lead by the Deputy Chief Constable, Tom Wood, was formed in early 1998 to review possible uses for the boxes. An objective of the policing plan at the time stated that the force should strive to improve communications with the public.

It was recognised that people come to the police with questions and problems as diverse as life itself and if we cannot answer or solve them we will attempt to point that person in the right direction. This often takes time and can divert officers and support staff from their core activities. The concept of an information point that would complement existing, often stretched resources by giving the public an alternative source of information, together with the ability to contact a police officer 24 hours a day via a communication link seemed a logical solution. A survey of all police boxes in the city was undertaken with five boxes in the centre designated as suitable for the installation of the kiosk.



BOXES ON-LINE

The idea was developed in partnership with a local company Cyber Frontiers International. However, the project could not be financed from existing budgets alone and so before the project could go ahead, the necessary funding had to be secured from external sources. In this respect we were extremely fortunate. A local enterprise initiative company Lothian and Edinburgh Enterprise Limited (LEEL), and British Telecom put up sufficient funds to allow the pilot project to proceed. Since then, we have received further substantial funding from LEEL and BT and have now entered the second phase of the programme.

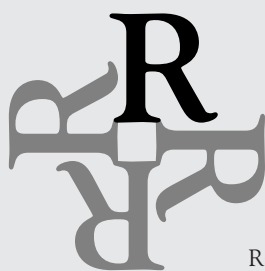
In this phase, two more boxes situated in Edinburgh's historic Royal Mile have come on-line with the same facilities. Software revisions include some text replaced by a police officer 'talking head' video. By doing this, the display takes on the 'persona' of a police officer and gives the user a more interactive experience. A kiosk is also due to be installed in one of the city's flagship out-of-town shopping centres. Although enjoying regular police patrols, the kiosk will help reassure shoppers that if required, they can see an officer at the touch of a button.

"Advances in technology can be used to promote, rather than undermine, relationships."

It is anticipated that we will extend the project into our rural communities where the closure of many village stations over the years has meant they more than anyone have felt isolated. Together with the 'mobile police stations' that already visit villages in the Scottish Borders, a permanent police information box will help to re-establish a sense of security. We will need to assess the needs of the community and possibly adapt the features and services provided by the box; the content of which is presently weighted towards the tourist.

So far the project – the first of its kind in the UK – has been judged a success. It has received wide and favourable publicity and has been scrutinised by several other forces considering the use of similar technology. As mentioned earlier the box aims to complement and not replace existing resources. We still need to interact at a personal level with the public who feel reassured by the presence of a beat constable. For many reasons replacing police stations on a large scale with communication kiosks would not be practical or desirable. But it is proof that advances in technology can be used to promote, rather than undermine, relationships and it is hoped that this new role for our old police boxes will be a sign of creative and relational policing in the new Millennium.

Ewan Ramage is a constable with Lothian and Borders Police. His background is in electronic engineering and, since March 1999, he was responsible for progressing the Police Information Box Project from the pilot stage to include two further boxes with redeveloped software. Prior to returning to beat duties in January 2000, Ewan will be negotiating a contract with the suppliers to provide four further kiosks for the force.



Views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Relationships Foundation.

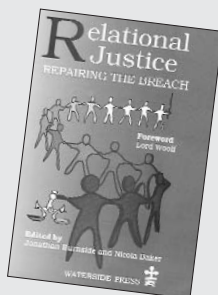
WHO WE ARE

The **Relational Justice Bulletin** is a quarterly publication by the **Relationships Foundation**, a Cambridge-based charity, as part of its **Relational Justice** initiative.

Relational Justice is a fresh approach to crime and punishment.

Rather than looking at crime solely as an offence against the state, it sees it as a breakdown of relationships between offenders, victims, families and the community.

The concept was developed by the **Relationships Foundation** in the early nineties. It first gained public exposure with the publication of the book **'Relational Justice: Repairing the Breach'** (Waterside Press, 1994), which was welcomed by Lord Woolf as 'a radical new approach which anyone with any concern about the criminal justice system needs to be aware'. Since then, it has been shown to have wide implications for policy and practice.



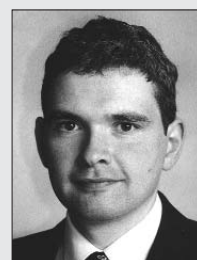
The **Relational Justice Bulletin** has been launched as a platform for discussion of the ideas at the heart of **Relational Justice** as well as exchange of good practice across the system.

You are warmly invited to join the growing number of professionals and practitioners who are already receiving it (see subscription form on the back page) and to contribute your own ideas and experience.

The **Relationships Foundation** is a registered charity dedicated to developing new 'relationships-based' approaches to social, economic and political issues.

Your help would be welcome in publicising the Relational Justice Bulletin. Free A5 leaflets are available for your use. You can request copies on the form on the back page.

Dr Jonathan Burnside is Editor of the Relational Justice Bulletin



PAYING FOR CRIME

Joshua Bamfield looks at restitution for store thieves



Crime costs British retailers £1,900 million every year – £1.4 billion in direct losses, plus annual spending of £550 million on security and crime prevention. These losses result from about 10 million individual crime incidents. Last year retailers apprehended 820,000 thieves stealing from their shops. Depressingly, the arrest data found that all human life was represented including: professionals; youngsters learning how to steal; regular shoppers who succumbed to temptation; family shoppers who steal together; staff thieves; hardened criminals and drug addicts trying to raise the cost of their next 'fix'.

Dealing with this mass of offenders who have widely different motivations is difficult for the police and the criminal justice process, particularly given the concern of public authorities to avoid 'labelling' and criminalising petty offenders. As a result from a total of 820,000 apprehended shop thieves, only 65,000 (8% of the total) faced a criminal trial. The vast majority of offences (92%) were dealt with by means of warnings or cautions. For this reason retailers, in addition to improving shop security, have started to use the civil law, based on the law of tort, to provide an additional sanction against shop theft.

PAYING BACK DIRECTLY

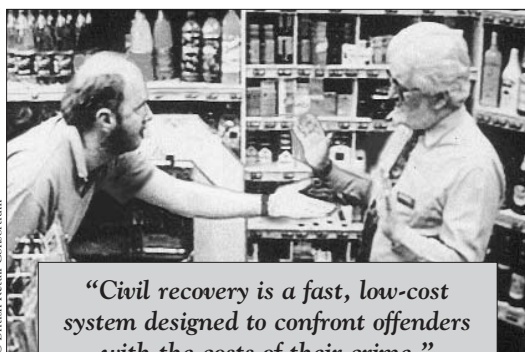
'Retail civil recovery' as the programme is called, aims to recover the cost of crime directly from the criminal. The thief is asked to repay losses directly caused by the act of theft including: the costs of the goods or cash stolen; the costs of staff time in investigating and dealing with the offender; and a contribution to security equipment such as CCTV. Research has shown that these costs typically vary from £60 to £150 for a theft by a customer and are usually £390 for theft by a member of staff.¹ There are now 28 retailers who are members of the civil recovery programme, including Tesco, Sainsbury, Safeway, W H Smith, Boots the Chemists, HMV and Bhs. The civil recovery programme is a splendid example of Relational Justice, insofar as these stores have succeeded in devising a fast, low-cost system designed to confront the offender with the costs of their crime. The criminal is put in the victim's shoes and instead of benefiting from the crime has to restore the shopkeeper to the position he/she was in before that act of theft.

Wrongdoers are sent a letter by the central civil recovery unit, which is based in Nottingham, giving them the following options. They can either: pay a lesser amount now, be sued in the civil courts for the full amount, or explain why the penalty should not be applied to them. The letter is sent within seven days of the theft. Compared with the criminal justice process, it is swift in bringing wrongdoers face-to-

face with the penalty for their crime. It is low-cost because the civil recovery programme works mainly by letter rather than by expensive and time-consuming court cases. Civil recovery is also creative. Small-scale offenders and the elderly often receive simply a warning letter. Indeed, the use of warning letters against elderly repeat offenders has been a major success of the programme. Experience has shown retailers that the courts and the media can be contemptuous of stores that bring elderly recidivist shop thieves to court. As a result a number of old people felt they were beyond the law. Retailers are using civil recovery to change these misconceptions.

WARNING LETTERS

The process of civil recovery, which involves reading a Notice of Intended Civil Recovery to the offender in-store and sending a warning letter to the person's home, tends to have a salutary effect. The reoffending rate is less than 10%.



"Civil recovery is a fast, low-cost system designed to confront offenders with the costs of their crime."

The civil recovery unit also has the right to suspend or cancel a civil demand. As with drug-related offences, it will attempt to agree with the offender that he/she should take part in a rehabilitation course. The penalty will 'lie on the file' until the wrongdoer reoffends. Another relational aspect of the scheme is the fact that, as a result of civil recovery letters, the civil recovery unit can find itself engaged in correspondence with the offender's family. Previously, the offender's family may have been unaware that the thief has been stealing from shops or has been cautioned several times by the police. And because the aim of the civil recovery programme is to prevent shop theft, the unit tries to support families that are working to change the thief's wrongful behaviour. The unit can suspend civil recovery, make referrals to appropriate agencies, and, occasionally, arrange meetings with store security staff.

Civil recovery does not decriminalise shop theft. Rather, it reinforces the criminal justice system. Retailers involved in the programme have been careful to ensure that thieves are reported to the police, as before. The initiative has police support and a Code of Good Practice has been

agreed between retailers and the Association of Chief Police Officers. To prevent people being wrongly accused of shop theft, the civil recovery unit requires full information on the offence, including witness statements, to be sent by the store. In addition, the unit carries out a third-party check on the evidence provided before sending out any letters. Juveniles and the mentally disturbed are excluded from the civil recovery programme and the elderly receive a written warning for their first offence.

ENERGY AND SKILL

The programme was piloted by 60 stores in the West Midlands for six months between October 1998 and March 1999. For 75% of those stores, the number of offenders fell by 20% compared to control stores in other Midland towns and losses from crime fell by 10%. However one-quarter of the stores in the trial made no gains from civil recovery, although their results did not worsen.

Research suggests that stores which already had good loss prevention systems and procedures and who could manage effectively the new initiative received greater benefits than those who were uncommitted to the scheme. This shows that the results of civil recovery, like many other initiatives, depend on the energy and skill with which it is used. One important by-product of the use of civil recovery is the creation of a database of offenders that can be used to track the work of habitual offenders and target them for criminal prosecution. The development of the database is in its early stages.

Retailers are sanguine about the potential of civil recovery in combating shop theft although they see it as a valuable additional tool to be used in a targeted way, rather than a panacea for all their problems. Whilst most retailers probably would prefer the criminal justice system to take a more punitive approach towards shop thieves, they have instead worked in partnership to design a new way of sanctioning shop thieves based on the idea of Relational Justice. So far, the cost of the civil recovery programme has been £100,000. It is intended that the scheme will become self-financing next year with the expenses of the programme being funded 100% by criminals. A criminal justice system paid for by the proceeds of crime? If restitution takes off as a means of punishment, this may be the new meaning of the phrase "crime pays."

Prof. Joshua Bamfield is Director of the Centre for Retail Research in Nottingham. His Report on the West Midlands Civil Recovery Pilot will be published later this year.

¹ Costs for staff theft are higher for two reasons: first, they steal more (an average of £200 each) and second, they are rarely caught by accident. Usually, an investigator will spend between eight and twenty hours observing them before catching them 'in the act', thus increasing the retailers' expense.

THE RIGHT TO KNOW

Simon Bradshaw explains why the release of information is vital for good communities



Imagine the newspaper story. 'A male motorist was involved in a road accident in Acacia Avenue last night in which several members of a family were injured. Police are asking anyone who witnessed the incident to come forward.' It would probably make a paragraph tucked away at the bottom of an inside page, if at all. Now imagine what could have happened in that accident which you did not read. Suppose the motorist was a local MP who was over the drink drive limit and suspected of causing the crash. Front page news? Without a doubt. And yet, in local newspapers up and down England and Wales, such important public interest stories will not be appearing and will instead be replaced by apparently insignificant paragraphs (if this is not happening already).

The reason for this is the introduction of new guidelines drawn up by the Association of Chief Police Officers concerning the release of information to the media about victims and witnesses of crime, road and other incidents. The guidelines – which came into force in my newspaper's area (Sussex) on November 1st 1999 – state the police cannot pass on to the media the names of those involved without their permission. In the case of a drunken MP, the chances of such permission being granted are unlikely, to say the least. The media – and therefore the public – will not know who was involved in the accident. They will thereby be deprived of important information to which they are entitled, especially if they are one of the MP's constituents.

FLAWED GUIDELINES

The guidelines have been forced upon the police by the Data Protection Registrar, Elizabeth France, in some cases against the will of Chief Constables. Ms. France insists that, in order to comply with the Data Protection Act, names of victims should only be released with their permission. She has warned forces if they do not comply, they could be liable for a legal claim by a victim whose name was given out. The Registrar has failed to recognise that her guidelines are unworkable – despite intensive pressure by newspaper editors such as myself, Chief Constables and even the Home Secretary Jack Straw.

First, although the guidelines reflect the privacy aspects of the Act, they do not take sufficient account of the countervailing principle (the free flow of information) that the Act also enshrines. Some might say that this is because there is a Freedom of Information Act on the way. But if so, why jump the gun with guidelines that have, in effect, become compulsory? Second,

the spirit of the Act was to protect the integrity of private information such as bank accounts. It was not intended to protect the police from misplaced prosecutions. Third, withholding names risks non-publication and, in turn, distorts the public perception of crime and other events such as road accidents. For this reason Jack Straw has let it be known via editors that he believes the release of information is important for the function of communities. He claims that this public interest should override individual rights to privacy. I agree. Fourth, the guidelines risk giving the public the impression that the well-connected can keep their names out of papers. In the hypothetical case I mentioned, the drunken MP would be able to protect his privacy.

NEEDLESS CONFLICT

Fifth, the guidelines threaten a long-established principle that what happens in a public place is in the public domain, especially when it involves services such as the police, fire and ambulance that are paid for by us, the public. Sixth, local newspapers play a vital role in the community. They are read because they are relevant and relevant because they carry names. With no names, there is no interest and so vital issues such as crime prevention, bad driving, accident blackspots, drink and drugs are not being highlighted.

As an editor, I may go further.

Why should newspapers feel any obligation to publish appeals for witnesses to incidents about which they can carry so little information? I have told my Chief Constable, Paul Whitehouse, that I shall refuse to do so in cases where identities are not released. He has accepted this with characteristic grace, believing that it may help to encourage his officers to explain this to victims. And yet the notion of an accident victim being asked for permission to publish his or her name at a time of either deep emotional stress or serious physical injury is plainly ridiculous. The Chief Constable and I agree wholeheartedly on this point and I believe he secretly agrees with my other objections as well. And yet the Chief Constable has now had to order his officers to ask that permission of accident victims. Elisabeth France was warned that this aspect in particular would create conflict between police and media which did not previously exist. And so it has.

Within a week of the guidelines' introduction in Sussex, two teenage girls were killed in a crash

at an accident blackspot. The guidelines clearly state they do not apply to deceased victims and that families cannot request that no information is released. Yet the police told reporters on my paper that no names would be released "because of the guidelines". The police were wrong. Another officer stated that the families did not want the names released and so they wouldn't be. Wrong again. A third officer went so far as to tell a local news agency that "if it was up to me, the names would never be released."

These may be the words of a policeman who is sick of the admittedly wayward antics of some national newspapers. But they are also the words of a policeman who is failing to carry out his duty properly, responsibly and, most importantly, lawfully. Is this what we want: policemen breaking the law, theoretically at least, with a view to protecting certain individuals such as MPs who drink and drive?

"Good local intelligence is the lifeblood of local communities and it is a vital part of local crime prevention."

LOCAL INTELLIGENCE

It is a basic tenet of Relational Justice that crime prospers in anonymous societies where relationships are attenuated and no-one knows, or cares, about what is going on. Good local intelligence is the lifeblood of local communities and it is a vital part of local crime (and accident) prevention. Indeed, these are the very things that the police are supposed to uphold. We need to know what is going on in our area. The quest for right relationships at the heart of Relational Justice demands the free flow of information –

especially at a local level. We do not want crime to flourish under the cover of blanket guidelines that restrict press freedom. Ultimately, Jack Straw has the power to override the guidelines in a Freedom of Information Act. Alternatively, he can call a halt if, as he told an editor colleague of mine, "the balloon goes up". I can already hear it rapidly filling with air...

"The quest for right relationships at the heart of Relational Justice demands the free flow of information – especially at a local level."

Simon Bradshaw is Editor-in-Chief of the Brighton Evening Argus



HOME SWEET HOME?

Katharine Mumford explores the role of urban management in building community and responding to crime



In some inner city areas there is virtually no demand for housing. Boarded up houses, muddy demolition sites and empty shop units are the most immediately visible signs of the extreme population loss in the least popular areas. As social resources become severely depleted, so crime, anti-social behaviour, and feelings of insecurity escalate. These neighbourhoods are also characterised by a dominance of social renting with very low levels of owner occupation, high population turnover, low skill base, and pressurised public services. Problems are extreme but there are also signs of hope. Committed residents and local agencies are undertaking a wide variety of initiatives to halt the decline. Rebuilding trusting relationships is central to their work.

The problem of low demand is nation-wide and has long roots. Anne Power and myself studied two cities (Newcastle and Manchester) and four neighbourhoods within them that have been badly hit. Most of the lessons could be usefully applied to council estates around the country. The migration from cities to greenfield sites, ongoing throughout this century, has hit the least popular city neighbourhoods hardest. At the bottom of their city hierarchies, they have experienced severe depopulation and growing polarisation. Rates of population turnover have exceeded 50% in certain areas and it is not unusual to see streets lying a third or a half empty. Streets can shift very rapidly from being relatively full to nearly-deserted. As so many people have moved out, and as a significant proportion of the population has been continually changing, the traditional community has broken up. Crucially, because these areas are seen as places of last resort, they attract only the most needy, so social resources become severely depleted. Remaining residents are often scared about who might move in next door. The result is a chaotic urban landscape in constant flux.

REBUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Escalating fear and distrust gives rise to a vacuum in both formal and informal social control. Anti-social behaviour and crime, even by children, can get out of hand. Fear of being the next target adds to the exodus – for those who can afford to leave. These processes occur in areas characterised by traditional houses with front and back gardens as well as in stereotypical 'problem areas' consisting of vast system-built blocks. Residents, local business people and staff across a range of services identify security as their

immediate priority for action. Unless people feel safe, they will not stay.

How can trusting relationships between public services and the 'community', and between individual residents, be re-built, and a sense of security generated? Here, design considerations are important – tackling exposed back-alleys, dark corners and insecure communal entrances – but so is getting the management of the neighbourhoods right. The good news is that many initiatives are successfully re-establishing informal social controls, and also making effective use of available formal controls. Constructive measures include: direct police action combined with witness support schemes to crackdown on crime; schools and housing departments at the front-line tackling bullying and anti-social behaviour; and service providers sending out strong, consistent signals about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. There are also some exciting new initiatives on guarding and supervision, as well as examples of people living locally coming together to 'stop

the rot' and of dynamic individuals going out on a limb to try to regain control of their neighbourhoods.

FIGHTING BACK

There are a number of inspiring examples of how low housing demand areas are fighting back against crime. The first of these is proactive policing. Close

work between Newcastle police, housing staff, residents and witness support has contributed to a reduction in reported crime of 50% over the past six years in one neighbourhood. But although an actual fall in crime is a crucial ingredient in creating safer neighbourhoods, on its own it is not enough. According to Newcastle City Council nearly one in two people felt unsafe in this neighbourhood in 1994.

One housing association has sponsored two community police officers to work intensively in an area of around 300 properties. The officers work closely with housing management staff. They have combined successful raids on major criminal families living in the area with establishing a constructive relationship with local people. The association also provided security packages for residents' homes and a community worker. Reported crime fell significantly: from March 1998 to March 1999 there were just 34 reported crimes, compared to 847 'police incidents' between January 1996 and December 1996. Likewise unreported crime, monitored by the developing neighbourhood forum, was virtually zero. The existing stable core of people living on the estate has been built up.

However, the vacancy level has not been reduced and remains at over 40%. Of course, increasing local security, on its own, cannot override the entrenched image of an area, nor stem the outward flow of people from across the city. Yet it can improve residents' life-quality and provide the basis for further improvement.

DYNAMIC INDIVIDUALS

In one Newcastle neighbourhood a community-run security project was set up by local residents, the vicar, housing officers and the police, among others. The control room is housed in a tower block, acting as a concierge for the tower and organising patrols of the surrounding area. The project has helped to reduce reported crime (the project manager reports a drop of more than 50%) and similarly to reduce empty flats in the block by more than half. It has also reduced vandalism and become a source of employment for local people.

There are many instances of committed residents deciding that enough is enough, and coming together to tackle area problems. Usually, one or two particularly motivated individuals have taken the lead and in doing so they have often taken personal risks. Two long-standing residents, prompted by concern at the decline of their estate, set up a 'Homewatch' scheme. They worked for years to get the community and local agencies involved. Trusting relationships are central to their work with the police and with other residents. Alongside tackling crime, other aspects of the area's management play a crucial part in its fortunes. Some blocks deteriorated because of lettings to young people who frightened elderly tenants. Members are now involved in council allocations, having the chance to nominate people to empty properties. They take responsibility for their nominee's behaviour. With the appropriate checks and balances, existing tenants have more confidence. The project has helped to keep vacancies at a much lower level than on nearby estates.

Ultimately, what these cities need in order to thrive is to repopulate and attract and retain higher earners. Until then these initiatives, and many more, are helping to increase actual and perceived safety. They help to make these chaotic urban environments less anonymous and more people-friendly. On their own, these intensive, often bottom-up activities are not enough to turn-around the neighbourhoods. But they do provide the basis for bringing them back from the brink of disaster, creating a much more humane environment for their inhabitants and signalling hope for the future.

Katharine Mumford works in the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion at the London School of Economics. All evidence is based on research by Power and Mumford (1999) The Slow Death of Great Cities?, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.



ANOTHER BREACH IN THE WALL

Joan Holmes considers the pioneering Canadian Community Prison Chaplaincy Scheme and its transposition to the UK



Some twenty years ago, a dedicated Prison Chaplain's heart ached as day by day he released to the outside world those whom he had cared for. "Who will be out there to receive the ex-offender and to continue the work of the chaplains inside the institutions?" was his unspoken question. Initially, he answered his own question by opening the door of his own home, which effectively then became the local drop-in centre. It was an inspired move. What better than that the same person who had sat with a prisoner in his cell should now walk beside him in an unfamiliar and hostile society? From that humble beginning, the Revd. Dr. Pierre Allard went on to set up the Community Prison Chaplaincy Scheme (CPCS) to serve the Correctional Services of Canada.

At the heart of the Community Prison Chaplaincy Scheme is the Community Prison Chaplain. The Community Chaplain is someone who can move freely between the inside and the outside of the prison, building relationships of trust inside the prison that are faithfully sustained on the outside when the man is released. His job specification is basically to be and to do whatever it takes to ensure the prisoner's transition back into society. It sounds so simple and obvious, but in fact it contradicts the conventional wisdom. Not so long ago the advice given to prison staff in this country was: "Finish your business and leave if an ex-prisoner comes into the same pub or shop as yourself."

The Community Chaplain does not work by himself, but is supported by a team of trained volunteers. Their job is to apply the same healing work done by the prison chaplains among the prisoners 'inside' to the families and community 'outside.' If this fails to happen, the process of reclamation begun inside the prison can be severely undermined, if not negated, when the prisoner is released back into his old environment. The Canadian Community Prison Chaplaincy Scheme is thus a new development in that it links ex-offenders and their families with the resources and agencies of the community from which they come. From its start in the 1980s, the initiative has grown

steadily. Today, the CPCS extends to 25 Canadian cities from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts and its transposition to the UK is currently under active development.

BUILDING UP RELATIONSHIPS

There are two aspects to the work of the Community Chaplaincy. First, there is the ministry to the individual, building up relationships between chaplain and ex-prisoner. This takes a huge amount of commitment and perseverance. Perhaps the closest analogy to the work of the Community Chaplain is parenting a hurt, troubled family member. As a weary social worker, tired of her innumerable prison visits once said to me: 'It would be simpler to marry the bloke and adopt the kids!' Similarly, a friend of mine was heard to mutter, regarding someone he is helping: 'I'd like to handcuff him to me for a week.'

Not the recommended relationship model, but the idea is the same. Personal discipleship in the context of a close relationship is vital to effecting long-term change. Picture a long line of pots with labels ranging from home and money management; education and training; physical and spiritual health, not forgetting birthdays and Christmas. The job of the Community Chaplain is to dip into the appropriate pots as each individual's circumstances and needs require, applying wisdom with compassion and care. Each individual Community Chaplain, in conjunction with the board and volunteers in their own area, have to decide how to formulate their own mission and how to invest their individual energies, resources and skills. Second, and parallel to the ministry

to the individual is the ministry to the community. The community, including the family of the offender, must learn how to integrate its delinquent members and work to eliminate the explorative living situations that make criminal responses appealing.

One might have expected the public to be hostile to the work of the CPCS. Yet in fact the Community Chaplaincy is a very acceptable initiative in the eyes of most Canadians. Media attention too has been surprisingly positive. In 1992 Community Chaplains were identified as an important front

"The Community Prison Chaplain applies the same healing work done by the prison chaplains among the prisoners 'inside' to the families and community 'outside'".

line point of intervention to combat family violence. Correctional officials are conscious of the risk of releasing certain prisoners without any

prospect of community support and they welcome the ability of Community Chaplains to lend a hand. Recognising this potential to make a substantial contribution to the objectives of the Canadian Correctional Service and to Canadian society as a whole, the Canadian Correctional Service gave the CPCS half a million dollars in 1994-1995 towards funding further Community Chaplaincies. This was recently extended to supporting CPCS management of sex offenders upon release.

TOUGH LOVE IN ACTION

Relationships are the focus of community chaplaincies and they are its primary concern. To quote from one Canadian report on Community Chaplaincies: "The CPCS is relational because it is a community based ministry that seeks to build links with all people touched or affected by crime." By explicitly seeking to build links between those who work with offenders spiritually before release and those who offer similar resources afterwards, the CPCS has the potential to mobilise a wide network of caring relationships. Crucially, the needs of all those affected by crime are met in a context of community (here, a faith community) rather than in the context of some external service provider.

Community Chaplaincies are not only in the community and of the community; they are a community because the chaplain works in conjunction with a team of volunteers. At its best the relationship between the chaplain and the prisoner is the genuine friendship of the best possible 'pal'. It is never patronising, conditional or manipulative. There is no hidden agenda and no material gain for the giver. It is tough love

in action; eyes-wide-open and deserving trust; yet never compromising especially where matters of truth and justice are concerned. The image of community chaplaincies as 'bridge-builders' means that they are able to build relationships in areas where other agencies might have difficulty. Chaplaincies also build relationships in the

industrial world, often through board members increasing the possibilities of providing employment opportunities and integrating the ex-offender into the working world.

The CPCS is also cognate with Relational Justice in the sense that it recognises that crime

"Already local police, courts and probation value the work and positive results are evident in terms of resettlement and gainful employment."



Inside Eye

is a societal problem that must be addressed with broad-based long-term strategies. It assumes that all levels of government, private organisations and individual citizens need to accept their responsibilities and work in partnership to make a co-ordinated crime prevention strategy work. The Community Chaplaincy is a fine example of partnership in itself because it represents the efforts of faith communities to develop a partnership with the Canadian Correctional services to ensure the safe reintegration of offenders. Finally the CPCS scheme is relational insofar as it stresses the need for prisoners to be held near to their homes, where possible. The idea of a Community Chaplain only works where there is a local prison.

"All levels of government, private organisations and individual citizens need to accept their responsibilities and work in partnership to make a co-ordinated crime prevention strategy work."

CRASHING THE BARRIER

Can the Canadian scheme be transplanted to local prisons here in the UK? I believe it can. This stems from my conviction, borne out of years of experience, that the success or failure of any worthwhile work in prison is determined by the quality of relationships. My prison experience began four decades ago during missionary years in Nigeria. Two decades ago, I was appointed to HMP Nottingham (then a Category B training prison) to teach literacy, numeracy and social education. Within days, I discovered that my success as a teacher depended on good relationships with adult prisoners who could not be compelled to come to my classes.

"The CPCS is relational because it is a community based ministry that seeks to build links with all people touched or affected by crime."

It also depended on their relationships with other inmates (who ridiculed their fellows for attending my 'Noddy' classes); and staff, who could make or break any endeavour as they pleased.

The next stage on my journey towards

the Canadian model was the realisation that a relationship formed on the 'inside' is not worth its salt if it cannot be sustained on the 'outside.' If there was little credit in the prison for doing the former, there was even less for doing the latter. Unwittingly, the Governor crashed that barrier by asking my husband and myself to stand *in loco parentis* for a young lifer. Our job was to care for him during his first weekend 'break' after more than ten years inside. His only worry was whether I could cope with him seeing me at the weekend with my hair down and in a dressing-gown, and then face him with keys round my waist on Monday. (No problem!). More difficult was meeting a prison officer as we walked hand in hand through the busy town. My charge was hanging onto me for dear life; scared of losing me, scared of the crowds and terrified of a 'gang' of denim-clad teenagers. (The encounter with the prison officer was a gift for those who like to log the time it takes for gossip to complete its tour of a prison!).

journey to visit their son and who used our house as a visits centre. By this time, our home was hardly ever without someone struggling with 're-entry into society' problems. For those we could not personally help, we tried the growing Prison Fellowship network (an international prison ministry) and faith community links in other areas. However, this did not seem to work at the time. From this need, the vision for bringing the Canadian Community Prison Chaplaincy Scheme to Nottingham was born.

WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

In 1994, Nottingham became a local prison and it seemed that we had our window of opportunity. Our first step was to send a letter to every church geographically close to the prison, inviting a representative to a working lunch in the prison chapel.

Over 40 came. Some enjoyed the conversation-stopper of having had lunch in the prison whilst others, thank God, saw the point. Thereafter, a Steering Committee was formed who drafted the vision statement, constitution, job description for the

Community Chaplain and so on. Two public meetings later and the constitution was ratified and the Management Committee formally elected. All concerned within the Prison Service were kept fully informed throughout. The last piece in the jigsaw was a volunteer called Johnny who, having come to the end of a long prison sentence, was well prepared to offer his services as pioneer. As for a project base, we soon learned that the Community Chaplain's home was not appropriate – however much he would have liked it to be. By this time a particularly needy area of the city, where very many ex-prisoners are housed in assorted blocks of flats – was identified as a potential location. In 1999, a church from this area put their Drop-In Centre at the Community Chaplain's full disposal.

Johnny began his work in 1995. Now, three years later, both he and his role are accepted within the prison, valued by staff, inmates and the Chaplaincy team. It has not been without pain and trauma for Johnny. In recent months, Johnny has been mugged twice. But he estimates that he has made about 200 contacts with men and women, most of whom have served some

sort of custodial sentence. We on the Management Committee feel that, with the acceptance of Johnny and the scheme in the prison, our initial task is done. The main priority for us now is to select and train volunteers to support the Community Chaplain. Already local police, courts and probation value the work and positive results are evident in terms of resettlement and gainful employment. As time goes by, the Committee is fast becoming equipped to tackle the hardest problems: as I write they currently include a sex offender and a released lifer-recall. All in all it's yet another breach in the wall. The churches and the local community, unfortunately, are tougher nuts to crack. The reasons are usually fear and a desire for revenge respectively. Funding too remains a problem. At the moment, everyone involved is a volunteer and none of us would have it otherwise. There are, however, expenses to be met and the Community Chaplain needs a



Joan Holmes (middle row, far right) with inmates and members of the Prison Chaplaincy Team of HMP Nottingham

discretionary fund. So far, the local Nottingham Police Force has been our only contributor.

Over the years I have come increasingly to recognise that the potential for wrongdoing runs deep within us all and that usually it is only circumstances that prevent any of us from being on the wrong side of the prison wall. Yet history teaches us that sometimes those who go into exile are the favoured ones. Certainly, I have seen this happen many times in the lives of prisoners for whom exile was their redemption. My hope is that as the communities formed by the Community Chaplaincy initiative reflect on the relationships at the heart of their work, they never forget the greatest role model of all time – Jesus Christ – the One who makes reclamation a realistic option in the first place.

Joan Holmes is a former missionary who taught at HMP Nottingham from 1974 until her retirement in 1988. Between 1988 and 1999 she was part of the Chaplaincy team in the prison. She was awarded the Butler Trust Award in 1987 in recognition of her outstanding work in the Prison Service and received the MBE in 1998 for her services to Nottingham Prison.

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MAKING TOWNS SAFE

Gai Palmer describes how Lichfield's Townsafe strategy uses community relationships to tackle community problems



Townsafe is a series of separate but interlinked strategies for making Lichfield a safer place to live, work and visit. Its goals are to prevent, reduce and detect crime; reassure the public; and develop approaches to public safety based on partnership. It does this by drawing together different community groups including retailers, pubs, families and schoolchildren to tackle problems of common concern.

Townsafe is the brainchild of Lichfield Police Station's Inspector Chris Blagborough. Existing elements include the national ChildSafe scheme which provides guidelines for children, parents

"No one agency can provide the solution. People need to see themselves as a part of the solution for community problems."

and retailers so that everyone knows exactly what to do if a child gets lost or separated from their parents. It also incorporates a training scheme for door supervisors (e.g. club bouncers and security men) which teaches them how to defuse potentially troublesome situations and generally reduce violence. Over the next year, they will hopefully be supplemented by a Schools Attendance Initiative (to combat truancy) and a Language Support Scheme (designed to help foreign tourists in trouble by labelling certain shops as language help centres). But this article will focus on three further aspects of the Townsafe scheme, namely the use of curfews, the retail theft exclusion order scheme and the 'Pubwatch' initiative.

CURFEWS AND EXCLUSION ORDERS

Offenders who commit crimes of violence, drunkenness, shoplifting or public disorder will be barred from entering Lichfield town centre during specified hours. The curfew will be directly linked to the times at which the offences occurred. So for example, someone charged with an alcohol related offence during the evening will be barred from the town centre say from 7p.m. until 7a.m. and a shoplifter charged with a daytime theft offence will be barred during shop opening hours. The bans are imposed by the police when the offender is charged but before he or she is due to appear in court.

A natural extension of this idea is the Retail Theft Exclusion Order scheme. Persistent store thieves are identified and their pictures are shown to store management who in turn share the pictures with relevant staff (e.g. store detectives and security guards) under controlled conditions. Limits are set on who sees them and where in order to preserve confidentiality. Offenders convicted of a shoplifting offence are served with an exclusion notice, banning them from all stores who are scheme members. In the past, persistent

offenders could go around the city centre being banned from store after store in a piecemeal fashion with no store being aware of the action taken by any other store. In practical terms this meant that persistent offenders were never really accountable for their actions and could cause years of town centre misery by merely moving their activities from one location to the next. Now they can be effectively banned from most town centre stores in one fell swoop. If they re-offend in any of the member stores they can be treated as trespassers, leaving themselves open to the more serious charge of burglary.

IN THE HANDS OF THE PEOPLE

Another aspect of the Townsafe strategy is the 'Pubwatch' scheme, presently being piloted among city centre licensees. The idea is to provide an early warning system for pub landlords so that they can share actual or potential problems with each other and the police by means of a radio link system. So if a publican realises in the course of a day that he has been given forged notes, he can pass the message round so that other publicans are aware of the problem and are watching out for counterfeit currency. Significantly, it is a licensee-led scheme. It means that publicans are helping themselves and each other to solve local problems, sometimes before they arise. Although 'Pubwatch' is still in the pilot stage, the increased communication between the relevant parties will hopefully prove the benefit of this problem-solving, community-based approach to policing. It holds out the prospect that, by working together, the relevant parties can produce results without leaving it all up to the police.

In this, and other ways, the Townsafe scheme is a splendid practical example of Relational Justice. It is a basic tenet of Relational Justice that "justice is a community responsibility, with community obligations". The image of the sword and the scales in the hands of the people on the cover of the *Relational Justice* book is not a licence to vigilantism but a vision of an empowered local community taking greater responsibility for crime. This involves drawing together, as Townsafe has done, different community

groups to work in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies to reduce crime. This means getting participants to see the benefits of getting involved, which is not always easy. But the fact remains that no one agency can provide the solution. Community based problems must have community based solutions if they are going to have any impact in the long-term. People need to see themselves as a part of the solution for community problems. Ultimately they are the only ones who can make their town safe.

"By working together, the relevant parties can produce results without leaving it all up to the police."

PC Gai Palmer is based at Lichfield Police Station and is Townsafe co-ordinator for the city.