

Penal Programme Report

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cpf CITY PAROCHIAL
FOUNDATION

The photographs were provided by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. They are used as general illustrations rather than showing any particular prison described in the report.

Introduction

In 1993 the Trustees of the City Parochial Foundation decided to establish a major new programme to provide funding for initiatives in the field of penal affairs. The aim was to provide grants for new work, emphasising the hardest end of the penal process and reaching people who were often marginalised.

The City Parochial Foundation had for some time supported programmes in the penal affairs field, including the Clean Break Theatre Company, the Creative and Supportive Trust, the Female Prisoners Welfare Project, London Prisons Community Links, Victims Support London and Women in Special Hospitals.

For the new Penal Affairs Grants Programme, the Trustees consulted specialists in this field from the statutory and voluntary sectors, including the courts, probation, social services and those involved in race relations, mental health, prisoner care and resettlement and prison reform. Through this consultative process certain areas of priority for funding were identified:

- the remand and bail process
- diversion from custody
- reparation
- resettlement

The Trustees decided to target groups of special interest: women, black, young, and persistent offenders. The Foundation's requirement to help the poor of London dictated the geographic focus. Seventy-four potential applicants attended a meeting in June 1993 at which the programme was explained and discussed. Subsequently the Foundation received 42 applications from 40 organisations. No suitable applications were received for work in the field of reparation. A short list of 17 were considered as best fitting the criteria agreed by the Foundation's Trustees and from these six projects were selected for funding early in 1994. The funding of £1.1m covered grants of up to £80,000 annually per project and extended over a three year period, to allow for development and consolidation of the work. In 1997 five of the six projects required further funding, totalling £435,000 to maintain the work for two more years. The Persistent Young Offenders Project set up collaborative working structures in participating boroughs to develop the working methodology, and will not be continuing in its present form.

The projects funded were:

- The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) explores non-violent ways of dealing with anger and aggression.
- The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) provides a full-time

service at HMP Wormwood Scrubs covering housing, legal matters and other issues.

- The Counselling Service for Prisoners on Remand (CSPR) provides its services in London prisons, helping people come to terms with the first impact of prison life and minimising the disruption it causes.
- Holloway Remand Scheme (HRS) helps women prisoners develop a plan for options other than custody.
- The Persistent Young Offenders Project (PYOP) focuses on provision for a particularly problematic group which peaks at 15-16.
- The Prisoners' Resource Service (PRS) provides a range of services to young men in HM Feltham Young Offenders Institution and Remand Centre.

The emphasis on the harder end of the criminal justice system is clear from the focus of five of the six projects on programmes in prisons. One deals exclusively with women prisoners. Two are concerned exclusively with remand prisoners in London, in which population there is a disproportionately high percentage of prisoners from ethnic minority backgrounds. Two projects, one of which was not prison based, are concerned exclusively with young offenders. One project deals with an aspect of serious crime which is of major public interest: violence.

The projects began in 1994. The groundwork was often complex and time-consuming, since each project involved a new approach which had to be explained, explored and accepted by key partners in the relevant agencies or prison establishments. Where projects were working with a number of sites or agencies, a different *modus operandi* had to be worked out to suit each location. A foundation of shared understanding, goodwill and commitment was a prerequisite for effective operations. Although the remit of each project is different, the accounts of their work in the penal system reveal recurring similarities in terms of changes affecting the system during the period of the programme and the critical state of provision for people on its margins.

However, what no one foresaw when the programme was planned so enthusiastically in 1992 was the dramatic change within prisons. The optimism of the Woolf report faded. Security became the central issue. The prison population rose by 40 per cent in the four years, 1993 to 1997, and reached 60,000 at the end of the Summer of 1997. The probation service was radically reappraised. Bootcamps were advocated. Condemnation rather than care was advocated.

This report reviews six projects which achieved considerable success in an uncompromising climate.

Cranstoun Drug Services

Prisoners' Resource Service

Background

Cranstoun Drug Services has worked for 25 years with drug users. The PRS (Prisoners' Resource Service Agency) has a particular emphasis on criminal justice work.

A start up grant from the Home Office followed by the CPF grant, allowed Cranstoun to establish a Young Offenders Team (YOT) for work in HM Feltham Young Offenders Institution and Remand Centre, housing young men aged 15 to 21 years.

The Young Offenders Team, formed in the summer of 1994, consists of a team leader and two caseworkers. It is based at the PRS office but also has an office in Feltham. The PRS Young Offenders Team has a non-judgmental approach to working with young people in custody and its central focus is to provide effective services for those young people experiencing problems with drugs, alcohol and/or HIV.

Prisoners on remand form a large part of the client group and the Team provides assistance to individuals who are looking towards addressing their substance use in the community as an alternative to a sentence of imprisonment. They also work with sentenced

prisoners in relation to release plans, offering advice, support and education on drugs alcohol and HIV related issues.

Aims

The Young Offenders Team aims to:

- work with remand, sentenced and juvenile offenders in HM YOI/RC Feltham on an individual and group basis;
- write official reports on behalf of clients;
- train staff at HM YOI/RC Feltham;
- promote and develop the service provided by the Team.

Client group

In the three years the team worked with 501 individuals, and ran groups for nearly 700. Ten per cent of those seen were under 17 years; 25% were black; 47% were self-referrals; 43% had been in local authority care at some time. Most clients had multi-substance problems with cocaine being the most frequently used drug (48 %).

Way of working

The Team has an office on the hospital wing of Feltham. It is used as an administrative base and not for interviewing clients, which is done on the wings.

Services include drugs, alcohol, HIV education, planning treatment options as an alternative to custody, community support plans, short-term counselling, liaison with other agencies, through-care and release planning.

Publicity is through leaflets, radio broadcasts, memos to staff, posters displayed on the units and liaison with other agencies both inside, and external to Feltham.

Referrals come from sources other than the probation service including other

PROJECT DETAILS

Cranston Drug Services

Prisoners' Resource Service

CPF grant: £230,129 over three years and a further £105,568 over one year.

Further information from Paolo Pertica,

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112-134 The Broadway,

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voluntary organisations. Prisoners can refer themselves by using the application form on the leaflet, or by stopping a worker on the wing and requesting a visit.

Prison officers can refer by 'phone as can workers from other agencies. All referrals are logged on a waiting list and allocated to team members on a first come first served basis unless the case is particularly urgent or the inmate is considered to be particularly vulnerable; this applies to all under-16s.

During the initial interview with the client an assessment is made by the worker of the individual needs, based on the prisoner's own perception of their requirements combined with the workers knowledge of available services. Future contact with the client is determined both by their needs and the resources available.

Outcomes

The Young Offenders Team counts among its achievements the following areas:

- staff training in drug and alcohol

awareness

- drug education groupwork programmes for inmates
- broadcasts on Radio Feltham
- provision of an auricular acupuncture service for inmates experiencing problems associated with substance withdrawal
- family/Visitors' Centre workshop
- liaison with external agencies and providing an advocacy service for clients
- contributing to the therapeutic section of the Feltham Drug Strategy
- contributing to the HIV Committee drug and Alcohol Steering Committee
- raising awareness about issues relating to young people, HIV, drug and alcohol use.
- membership of the Drug and Alcohol strategy team and HIV Committee.

Women in Prison

Holloway Remand Scheme

Background

The Scheme was initiated by Women In Prison (WIP), a charity which has been working since 1983 with women prisoners both inside and outside prison. Its past work had given WIP an extensive knowledge of the resources available to women coming in and from prison and familiarity with the range of problems faced by women prisoners.

The diversion of women from custody is an ever more important task; the number of women in prison has increased in recent years, even more sharply than the number of men and this phenomenon includes increased use of remand.

Aims

The Holloway Remand Scheme seeks to divert women from prison and from offending by providing women remanded to Holloway Prison with community based support programmes, thereby offering the courts a viable alternative to imprisonment.

community resources, including drug and alcohol rehabilitation, education, work, training, housing, hostel placement and counselling.

Client group

The two caseworkers took on the first women remand prisoners in September 1994. By the end of April 1997, the HRS had accepted 84 women on to the programme.

When the scheme is not appropriate in individual cases, women are referred to the general caseworkers of Women in Prison or other projects.

The women on the HRS came from courts in 26 different boroughs, 16 in the London area. They were charged with a variety of offences, most frequently handling stolen goods, theft, shoplifting and supplying drugs. About half the women reported that it was their first time on remand in custody (53%).

The ages of the remand women on the scheme ranged from under 21 up to 60; almost a quarter (23%) were in the age group up to 21 years, 63% were aged less than 31; and the vast majority (94%) were under 41 years of age.

The ethnic analysis showed 48% were white, 39% were black and 13% mixed race. Monitoring of the background of women on the HRS reveals striking childhood histories:

- only 36 of the women (43%) had been cared for as children by both natural parents
- 21 women - one quarter of all those on the scheme - had been in care at some point
- only 6 women (7%) did not report experiencing abuse, rape or domestic or other violence

Only one woman was a homeowner; 30 women (36%) had permanent council accommodation; 48 (57%) were without a permanent home or tenancy.

PROJECT DETAILS

Women in Prison

Holloway Remand Scheme

CPF grant: £178,375 over three years and a further £100,000 over three years.

Further information from

Chris Tzchaikovsky,

22 Highbury Grove,

London N5 2EA.

Tel: 0171 226 5879

The project deals with women who are intending to plead or have pleaded guilty. The HRS tries to match the self-perceived needs of women remand prisoners with available



Crown Courts. 30 were accepted outright. One report was prepared for the Appeal Court and was accepted.

The HRS presented reports on 11 women to magistrates' courts. All were accepted, 8 for community support programmes and 3 reports for bail applications.

The Crown Courts did not accept 34 reports prepared by the HRS.

The HRS was committed from the outset to providing services for more serious offenders, i.e. those facing a lengthy prison sentence.

Way of working

The caseworkers conducted interviews with 464 women referred to the HRS and explain the scheme in detail, women who want to take part are asked to identify the reasons for their current circumstances. At subsequent meetings an alternative non-custodial plan is developed for to the court; the objective is to match the needs identified by the women with available resources in the community. As the plan emerges there is liaison between the caseworker and probation officers, both those seconded to the prison and field officers, and with the prisoners' legal advisers. The caseworkers compile reports for the courts and attend court hearings to explain the HRS and details of the plans.

If a non-custodial sentence is imposed, HRS continues liaison with those responsible for putting the plan into effect in the community and keep in contact with the woman at least once a month for the next year, to provide follow-up advice and support and to provide feedback for the monitoring process. If a sentence of imprisonment is imposed, the woman is referred to the WIP welfare worker. HRS monitors what happens to all the women on the scheme and will continue to do so for the period of the project.

Out of 84 women monitored for substance misuse, 74 (88%) were involved in some form of substance misuse, ranging from alcohol to amphetamines. Crack cocaine was the drug most frequently reported, with 30 women (36%) reporting using it.

Four women were in full-time employment (5%) and one in full-time education. 68 (81%) were on income support and 8 had no income. The women on the scheme had a total of 108 children between them. While the women were in custody their children were cared for by a variety of arrangements, most were with relatives or partners/friends, but 6 were adopted, 20 were in local authority care and three babies stayed with their mothers in Holloway. Forty-six of the children were separated from siblings.

Outcomes

Overall there was an acceptance rate of the HRS recommendations to the Courts in 41 out of 75 cases.

The HRS prepared a total of 64 reports for

Kensington and Chelsea CAB Service

Citizens' Advice at Wormwood Scrubs

Background

The Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) at Wormwood Scrubs is a special outreach facility attached to the Kensington and Chelsea CAB. The project aims to provide an independent, impartial and confidential service to all prisoners who request information, advice or help on any issues including preservation of accommodation, debt, benefits and grants, employment, tax, immigration, access to children, prison issues and legal advice. The Service is also available to staff on an ad hoc basis.

The project's provision of a full-time CAB service is the first of its kind in a prison

and an important experiment in making a necessary community service available to prisoners on the same terms and standards as to all other citizens. The

extensive service enables the CAB worker to involve the prisoner fully, reducing dependence and increasing the prisoner's responsibility.

Client group

Wormwood Scrubs is notable for the diversity of its prisoner population. It holds remand, short and long-term sentenced prisoners, as well as lifers and immigration detainees. Such a diverse

prison population presents a very wide range of problems for CAB work.

The project started operating at HMP Wormwood Scrubs in December 1994. As of the end of March 1997 the project has had 5,572 contacts with prisoners; the prison as of September 1997 has a population of just over 1,300. Some 260 men a month are seen by the CAB staff.

The preponderance of the matters dealt with centred on benefit issues, legal matters and housing problems.

A detailed study of a sample of 94 CAB clients showed that half had never been in prison before and 69% had never previously used an advice agency; 40% of those men were on remand and 23% serving four years or more.

Ethnic monitoring of the client group shows that black and ethnic minority users varied between 21% and 40%.

Way of working

The project has interview facilities on all wings. In addition the prison has provided a furnished office for the project in the spinal link building. This has secure storage for files, three telephones, an answering machine and word-processing equipment. This office is used for record keeping, storing reference materials and forms and for follow-up work. While the City Parochial Foundation funds the main costs of the project, including staff costs, the prison has provided offices, and covers telephone and postage costs.

The caseworkers perform a variety of functions. They provide information and advice based on their training and experience. Both advisers take advantage of the National CAB training courses to keep their skills up to date.

The National CAB information system and standard reference books, updated on a monthly basis, are held by the project. In addition the project has acquired other specialist reference books and holds a

PROJECT DETAILS

Kensington and Chelsea Citizen's Advice Bureau Service

CAB in Wormwood Scrubs

CPF grant: £181,588 over three years and a further £73,334 over two years.

Further information from Majorie Popper and Barry O'Connor HM Prison Wormwood Scrubs Du Cane Road, London W12 OAE. Tel: 0181 743 0311 Ext. 560/1/2

stock of housing benefit forms for all the London boroughs.

The project has access to an experienced solicitor working for the Kensington CAB and to other NACAB specialist consultantancies. It is therefore unusual for advisers to need to refer clients on to other agencies or organisations.

The advisers carry out complex casework for prisoners, wherever possible involving them in the process of problem solving, and thereby helping them to gain a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

Stress is an inevitable part of the custodial experience. It is most corrosive when

exacerbated by the sense of frustration, isolation and helplessness felt by prisoners when problems arise or continue on the outside. The CAB project provides opportunities for dealing with such problems. Besides contributing to a resolution of the matters themselves, it helps to lessen some of the tensions of prison life, by providing an avenue for prisoners to express anxieties and to set about tackling some of their problems with expert assistance.

Half the costs of the service will be met by the prison from April 1998 with the other half being provided by the Foundation until April 2000.



Bourne Trust

Counselling for Prisoners on Remand

Background

This project provides formal, professional counselling to prisoners held on remand in London prisons in order to alleviate the stress they experience and enable them to cope with imprisonment and to come to terms with the behaviour and events which have brought them into custody.

The CSPR was established by the Bourne Trust, a charity which has been working with prisoners and their families for many years. Having identified a gap in the provision for remand prisoners, the Bourne Trust planned the project as an extension

into a new area of its existing welfare and counselling work.

The position of unconvicted remand prisoners is paradoxical. As a defendant in the criminal justice process, the unconvicted remand prisoner has a right to be presumed innocent. Such prisoners should logically enjoy at least as good facilities, conditions and services as prisoners who have been convicted of a criminal offence and who are serving a sentence of imprisonment. Yet the reality of remand in custody is quite the reverse. Because the prison system holds a mixture of remand and sentenced prisoners, and because the sentenced population is less of an unknown quantity, the system is geared towards the sentenced prisoner.

Remand prisoners often suffer the worst conditions within a prison, including the worst overcrowding, and have access to the least range of facilities and services. In 1994 the counselling occurred mostly at Brixton and Wormwood Scrubs, while the service was still developing at Holloway and Wandsworth. It has gradually spread to include Wandsworth and Highdown, with some work also undertaken at Belmarsh, Pentonville and Feltham.

Client group

Since the CSPR began counselling work in 1994 and up to March 1997, 674 individual remand prisoners have had formal counselling with the counsellors. In the first year 186 remand prisoners were counselled, in the second year 252; and 236 cases in the third year. Many more remand prisoners were seen for informal conversations and discussions not leading to formal counselling.

The main route to counselling has been through self referral; in the first year 57% of remand prisoners seen by the project referred themselves for counselling; in the second year this dropped somewhat to 43% and in the third year to 38%. This shift reveals that although many remand prisoners are still referring themselves for



counselling, the project has become increasingly well known in the prison; referrals are increasingly made by prison officers and by probation officers seconded to the prisons, chaplains and health care staff (especially psychologists, where the establishment has a Psychology Department).

Over the course of the project it has become evident that the counsellors are dealing disproportionately with prisoners accused of the most serious offences. Of those seen by the project up to the end of March 1997, 44% were accused of offences of violence against the person (the single largest offence group being murder or attempted murder). In many cases the victim of the alleged offence is someone known to the prisoner, often a member of the family; dealing with the emotions surrounding the offence is complex work requiring the highest professional standards of counselling.

Just over a third (35%) of those seen for counselling were black. One in three remand prisoners (33%) counselled by the CSPR reported no previous experience of custody, either on remand or on sentence. They were experiencing the shock of being in prison for the first time. For them, as for other prisoners on remand, the project is providing what may be the only opportunity to talk about what has happened, how they might come to terms with past and cope with their future.

Way of working

As a voluntary agency, the Bourne Trust is not bound by the statutory limitations on probation officers and has the freedom to make contact with prisoners immediately.

The project provides the individual remand prisoner with the opportunity for confidential professional counselling in order to offer support in coping with imprisonment and to explore the reasons for his/her involvement with the criminal justice process. Whether the remand prisoner intends to plead guilty or not

guilty, counselling can offer an opportunity to address the circumstances of their lives, including possibly those which have led to imprisonment. This entails examining the individual's acceptance of responsibility for the consequences of his/her actions, his/her understanding of the need for change and motivation towards change, and exploring realistic options for and obstacles to making changes.

Custodial remand can be a time of fear, bitterness, frustration, shock, confusion, anxiety and despair. People who are having difficulties dealing with the remand situation refer themselves to the project, by contacting the Bourne Trust on the telephone number or at the address listed in the posters and leaflets which are displayed in each establishment. The CSPR produces a bright poster in shades of pink for display around prisons and a leaflet in similar design explaining how to contact the counsellors.

The counselling may be short-term crisis intervention or on-going work with the remand prisoner over an extended period in custody. Although the project focuses on remand prisoners, counsellors offer a period of through care to clients with whom they have been working. This is for a short time after conviction or sentence until hopefully other support is in place.

Most clients enter into the counselling contract with seriousness and honesty. Many begin the process of developing greater self awareness and a better understanding of their offending behaviour and their past histories. The presence of the counsellors has come to be accepted by staff and prisoners and makes a positive contribution to the culture within the London prisons.

PROJECT DETAILS

**Bourne Trust
Counselling Service for
Prisoners on Remand**
CPF grant: £205,549 over three
years and a further £107,764
over two years.
*Further information from
Marjorie Corbett,
Lincoln House, 1 Brixton,
London SW9 6DE
Tel: 0171 582 1313*

Leavers Leap Confronting Conflict

Alternatives to Violence Project

Background

Leap Confronting Conflict is a program of the Leavers, a Quaker youth and community project. Leap was founded in 1987 to examine the causes of conflict and to explore alternatives to violence through action-research and groupwork.

The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) is a multi-cultural organisation of volunteers offering experiential workshops that empower individuals to lead non-violent lives through affirmation, respect for all, community building, co-operation and trust. AVP builds on a spiritual base of respect and caring for others. It is a fundamental belief of AVP that there is a power for peace and good in everyone that is able to transform violence.

Workshops are facilitated by teams which aim to achieve a balance of women and men, experienced and apprentice trainers, and members of different racial and social groups within society.

There are three levels of workshop; the basic, which introduces the broad field of non-violent conflict resolution; the second level which explores specific dimensions of violence in depth; and training, which prepares participants to join teams running workshops. The workshops are intensive 3 day experiences of groupwork in which participants take part in practical exercises and reflect on their learning.

Each team member running a workshop

will have had the experience of being a participant. Equally, those who participate have the opportunity to go forward and become trainers. It is a strength of the programme that prisoners are included in teams running workshops in prisons wherever possible because they demonstrate the empowerment achieved through the programme.

In 1994, the CPF grant enabled Leap to appoint the first prisons development worker to accelerate the prison-based work of the London Alternatives to Violence Project. The worker had the objectives of contacting and developing programmes in London prisons and developing and supporting the pool of community trainers to run the prisons programme.

Client group

Alternatives to Violence workshops have been planned for prisoners in both male and female prisons: HMP Swaleside, HMP Wormwood Scrubs, HMP Coldingley and HMP Cookham Wood. Staff briefings have been held to inform prison staff about the programme as prison officers are not present during the workshops. Over three years 133 prisoners have participated in 24 workshops in 3 prisons. There have been several workshops cancelled during the programme due to difficulties in recruitment and problems in getting adequate information to staff and prisoners.

12 community workshops have been run, introducing 10 new trainers to the volunteer team each year; there have been 109 community participants. AVP has offered the workshops to a diverse range of prisoners - 48% have been from ethnic minorities. 56% have been female. No record is kept of type of offence but it has worked with short and long stay convicted prisoners, male and female prisoners.

Way of working

AVP workshops are open to anyone but are often most useful for individuals who

have problems with violence, either because they are perpetrators of violent acts or because they suffer the effects of other people's violence. All participants must be self-referred, and therefore are taking part in a totally voluntary capacity. AVP aims to complement other prison programmes rather than seeking to replace them.

Each workshop is facilitated by a team of 3 to 5 trainers. These are volunteers, trained in the Alternatives to Violence programme and experienced in groupwork, no AVP trainer is paid. AVP observes confidentiality in its workshops. This helps to build trust and avoids pressure on the programme from staff or prisoners within the prisons.

As confidentiality about individuals is respected, it is crucial that staff in other departments of the prison, e.g. medical teams, education, psychiatric support as well as officers, are given good information about the programme so that

they can offer prisoners relevant support.

AVP workshops use a variety of techniques including role play, personal affirmation, individual and group exercises to encourage people to learn more about themselves, their strengths and weaknesses and how better to cope with conflict, aggression, anger and obstructions in their lives. People are encouraged to be active in the group, but nobody is ever pressured into speaking or participating against their wishes.

AVP workshops are run with between 6 and 14 participants, with the preferred number being 12. The workshops are over an intensive period of 3 days, aiming to cover 18 hours of course material. Each session commences with an agenda review covering topics and issues that will be addressed, and concludes with an evaluation, a chance to ask questions, seek clarification and reflect before moving on.

As AVP is both a prison and a community-based programme prison participants are able to become volunteers after release and to take part in courses and seminars on the outside. As the programme develops this has the potential to provide continuity and ensure that the benefits are spread more widely than the individual; AVP also has positive implications for crime-prevention and crime reduction.

AVP has demonstrated that committed volunteers are able to sustain a workshop programme within a range of London prisons; that prisoners are able to graduate through the programme to become apprentice trainers on teams running workshops with other prisoners; that prison governors see the programme as a valuable use of staff and prisoners' time and, most importantly, that prisoners respond positively to the opportunity to explore conflict in their lives constructively.

PROJECT DETAILS

Leavers: Leap Confronting Conflict

Alternatives to Violence

CPF grant: £107,662 over three years and a further £48,765 over 18 months.

Further information from Helen Carmichael, Leap, 8 Lennox Road, London N4 3NW

Tel: 0171 272 5630



Rainer Foundation

Persistent Young Offenders Project

Background

The stated aim of the Persistent Young Offenders Project is “to use a multi-agency approach in order to identify and explore ways of managing ‘persistent young offenders’ within the community”. The intention was to focus on difficult young people whose repeated offending may be symptomatic of other problems and who require specific help to maintain them within the community.

In practice this means that the project does not work directly with young people; its clients are the various agencies working in an identified local authority; the aim is to facilitate, encourage and co-ordinate the separate agencies to work together effectively.

As an outside agency the Rainer project did not want to be identified with any particular agency as this could easily affect its independent, objective status. The reasoning behind the multi-agency approach was that no single agency has sole responsibility for young people nor can any one agency offer solutions to the varying demands and needs of young people. For these reasons a joint, co-ordinated approach to young offenders must be the most effective way of responding to, and providing for their needs.

In six London local authorities a multi-agency group was set up to examine the borough response to young people identified as persistent offenders and the

way in which agencies worked together to make provision for these young people.

Study of 102 young people

In addition to the development work in the 6 areas, the Rainer team produced a report, “Is a Persistent Young Offender a ‘Child in Need’”? The findings were based on a survey of 11 London Youth Justice Teams and profiled 102 young people.

The main conclusions are that:

- the young people in the survey started to offend at an early age
- the educational system is failing to provide them with an adequate service
- the young people had a range of difficulties which support an holistic approach to working with them
- a multi-agency approach to sharing responsibility and providing the necessary resources is required
- persistent young offenders are ‘children in need’.

Before punitive measures are imposed the Rainer team believe that other options and opportunities should be given the highest priority and the survey concludes that, “...persistent young offenders are disaffected young people with a range of unmet needs. In the current economic and political climate they are given low priority. We believe that so called persistent young offenders are children in



need whose requirements are not being adequately met”.

Work in the boroughs

The two Rainer co-ordinators worked with three boroughs each during 1996, one of the co-ordinators moved to another job and so work in Barnet, Hammersmith & Fulham and Islington came to a halt. A report summarising the achievements so far and outlining a number of recommendations was made to each of the three local authorities, and in at least one borough, the work around issues of persistent young offenders is continuing. In the remaining three boroughs (Lewisham, Bromley and Barking and Dagenham) where work was completed, final reports and recommendations were fortified by the community safety fora and are in the process of being implemented.

Over the three year period membership of the six local groups was 69 individuals from a variety of public and voluntary agencies excluding the Rainer representatives. Three of the six local authorities have plans to employ a worker to develop and co-ordinate work with young people who repeatedly offend; this

PROJECT DETAILS

Rainer Foundation Persistent Young Offenders Project

CPF grant: £212,055 over three years.

*Further information from
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London SE 10 8TJ
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will be under the umbrella of the local Community Safety Unit or Chief Executive's Department.

Bringing together local representatives in six areas to address the way in which persistent young offenders are dealt with is an achievement in itself.

That the groups were often able to agree on the characteristics of the young offenders in their area, if not actually to formulate a precise definition, is a positive outcome of the project.

The Rainer project has been instrumental in drafting a policy in a number of local areas which is intended to:

- i. reduce offending among young people
- ii. identify joint responsibility for responding to youth crime
- iii. develop more effective, humane and relevant ways of working with persistent young offenders.

The project brought together those who develop policy with the practitioners who implement it; they have identified and discussed productively, problems and issues arising from their different perspectives. Policy makers have been sensitised to the need to allocate resources to work with persistent young offenders and it is up to the local groups to maintain the momentum created in the initial stages of the project.

It is difficult to measure the long-term impact of work of this nature which involves changing perceptions and well as influencing policy and practice; neither is it an easy task to identify the numbers of people who will be influenced by, and benefit from the project. The young offenders who are the primary focus of the projects may be affected in a number of ways depending on the way in which local agencies respond to the findings of the report produced in their area.



Conclusions

The penal affairs programme focused on three areas - remand, diversion and resettlement - and on particular target groups - women, black, young, and persistent offenders. Five of the six projects worked directly in prisons, the setting for the penal system's ultimate sanction.

The services provided were in great demand. Self-referrals were high. Those on remand and in prison for the first time were in great need of services. All projects were successful in reaching men and women from the black and ethnic minority communities.

A great strength of the projects was that in all of them key staff were the same for the whole three years and still remain unchanged as a new funding period begins.

From the experience of the projects it is apparent that a valuable input can be made by the voluntary sector in partnership with statutory agencies in the penal system. Their input has been relevant and cost effective in both financial and other terms and has had a positive impact on the system at several levels. It can be shown that the impact is felt by individual offenders, particularly with the Holloway Remand Scheme and the Counselling Service for Prisoners on Remand.

Prison staff have benefited as well as prison regimes and the families of offenders. Community based voluntary organisations such as the Alternatives to Violence Project have demonstrated that successful partnerships can exist between the voluntary and statutory sectors.

If multiplied, schemes of this nature can have an ameliorating effect on re-offending rates, and therefore on levels of crime. The positive impact of such projects does not appear to translate itself into systematic action within the prison service to develop this approach.

Despite the structural, political, managerial, organisational and human problems attending the penal system, the projects funded under the CPF Programme accept the necessity of containment for

violent and dangerous offenders. The projects demonstrate that there exist low cost, efficient, publicly acceptable alternatives to imprisonment as well as humane and effective ways of dealing with those who must be imprisoned.

The penal system is under-resourced, both in terms of the will to reform and the finances to do so. In an environment that has been characterised as one of fear and retrenchment it is difficult to argue for diverting time and money (however minimal) to providing a system that responds to the needs of offenders, both inside and outside prison.

Such a penal system would have a long-term positive effect on the prison population, on offending patterns and on crime. Such a penal system, if accurately represented to the public, would be acceptable to all but the most aggressive advocates of punitive incarceration.

The detailed monitoring of the service provided by the CAB in Wormwood Scrubs has amply demonstrated the case for the public funding of such a service in all establishments. Projects such as The Alternatives to Violence Project, The Counselling Service for Prisoners on Remand and The Prisoners' Resource Service provide a service without which the prospects of resettlement are diminished. Projects such as The Holloway Remand Scheme and The Rainer Foundation project bring together the various agencies and organisations in the community to help divert people from prison or reduce the use of custody.

When the costs of the alternative scenario – more imprisonment, state care for children, recurring crime - are so high, why does it remain for charitable foundations to fund these important services?

The need for change is urgent. The way forward has been illustrated by the Penal Affairs Programme of the City Parochial Foundation, as by many others before. The following suggestions arise from this review of the projects:

The projects need

- to make clear and refine their working guidelines, confidentiality rules and the boundaries of their work
- to communicate with the agencies with which they work - in the case of prisons, with prison staff