

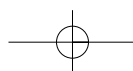
EDITORIAL RESETTLEMENT AND TACKLING SOCIAL EXCLUSION

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In a quiet and perhaps unnoticed change in penal policy the Prison and Probation Services, with the active support of voluntary community-based agencies, and the engagement of housing, employment, education, health and drugs and other statutory organisations, have begun to focus attention positively on the needs of offenders upon release from custody. The idea of Resettlement, which is focused on enabling those released from prison to move away from crime through a combination of protective, integrative and rehabilitative strategies (see Raikes (2002) in her contribution to the first issue of this journal) has a political momentum which has not been seen for nearly thirty years. Indeed, this is represented symbolically in the Prison Service by the change of name of a key member of staff in prisons from Head of Regimes to Head of Resettlement.

It was the late 1960s when the Probation Service, through parole and what was then known as voluntary aftercare, was first focused on the needs of offenders resettling into communities from a prison sentence. The agenda then was essentially rehabilitative in orientation. Today there is some overlap with Levitas's (1998) notion of the 'social integrationist discourse' (SID), which emphasises the centrality of work/training in the realisation of an inclusive society. This represents something of a subtle shift in emphasis within government, consequent on the arrival of David Blunkett as Home Secretary, as resettlement responses seem to acknowledge more fundamentally the social context within which offending takes place. Whilst it is clear that New Labour has continued to get 'tough on crime' there is clear hope in the resettlement agenda that they are beginning to get 'tough on the causes of crime'. The nature of the task ahead is neither easy nor simple; indeed the complexity around effective delivery of resettlement practices may prove to be its achilles heel. Resettlement policies do represent an active commitment to what the government has popularly termed 'joined-up thinking'. Crucial to the success of such 'joined-up thinking' is active communities being involved in and willing to accept those members of the community who have been excluded through their actions. Resettlement is thus an example (at least in principle) of social inclusion which should be at the heart of any community justice initiative.

Ever since the Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society was subsumed under the Probation Service in the early 1960s, the Probation Service has been charged as the statutory agency for ensuring effective through-care of individuals from sentence through custody and back into the community. In the late 1960s and 1970s this was largely achieved by a duty enshrined in Probation Rules to 'advise, assist and befriend' offenders upon release but without any statutory requirement for them to attend. The institution of Parole in 1967 and the growth of other licences throughout the 1970s and 1980s, firstly for young



offenders and increasingly for adult offenders culminating in the 1991 Criminal Justice Act, changed the nature of these discharge services delivered by the Probation Service. As early as 1984, through the Statement of National Objectives and Priorities ((SNOP)Home Office, 1984), services were deprioritising voluntary aftercare for statutory aftercare and new legislation continues the Probation Service’s reinvention of its prime duties as delivering protective services. The ‘Custody Plus’ recommendations in the White Paper Justice for All (Home Office, 2002) are an example of this.

These changes raise key questions about who is responsible for through care services. The administration of the task has become increasingly perceived as a shared one - at the centre between prison and probation (Home Office, 2001) and at the periphery through a role for all major welfare agencies (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). One regional initiative perceives this complexity diagrammatically as a series of concentric circles (see Figure 1). This is illustrative of the complex nature of resettlement as a policy driver.

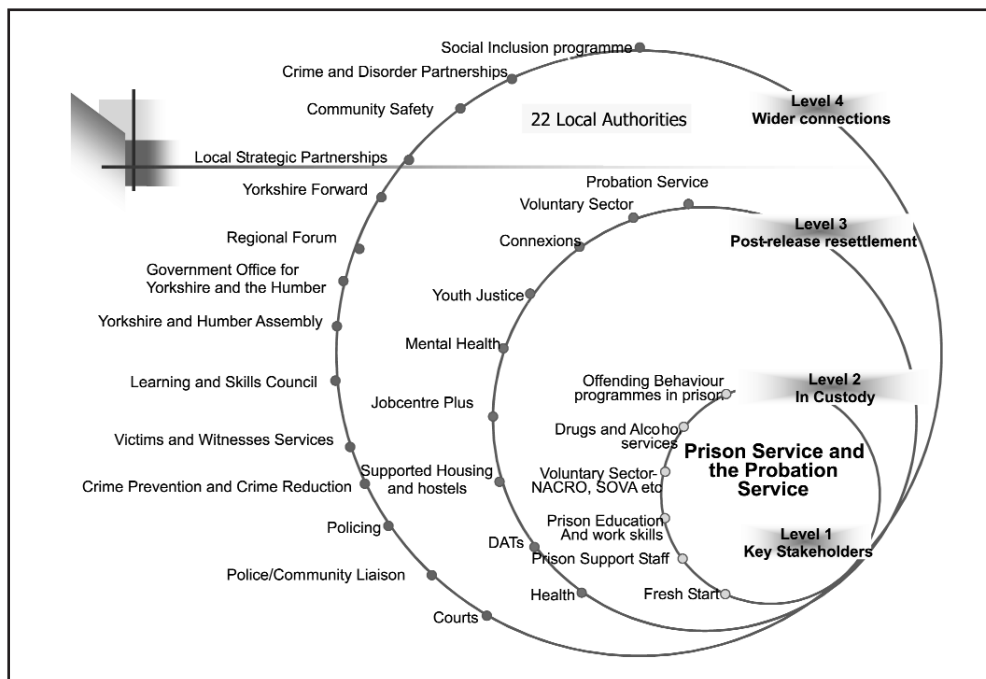


Figure 1: Taken from the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Resettlement Framework’ Consultative Document (Regional Resettlement Steering Group, 2002).

In the last ten years certain groups of offenders most at risk of re-offending, such as remand and short-sentence prisoners, have decreasingly had community support services to ease that transition from custody back into the community. At the same time, the structures created around sentence planning in prisons for medium and long-term sentence prisoners seem to offer a good strategic basis for effective through-care provision. That sentence planning has often looked good on paper and has been more problematic in

its delivery has to be noted. There is a clear danger that prison-based strategies for change flatter to deceive as the last major attempt to develop effective through care in the early 1990s did and indeed can be seen in the strained relationship between policy statement and changes in practice in such diverse areas as race relations and suicide prevention.

However, the evidence suggests that rather than sit back and feel that the job has been well done and just concentrate on improving its delivery, both the Prison and the Probation Services have sought to address in a much more fundamental way their commitment to resettlement services. *Through the Prison Gate* (Home Office, 2001), a joint thematic review of through-care, offers a clear and challenging definition of resettlement. Resettlement is defined as:

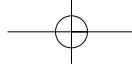
a systematic and evidence based process by which actions are taken to work with the offender in custody and on release so that communities are better protected from harm and reoffending is significantly reduced. It encompasses the totality of work with prisoners, their families and significant others in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations.

This definition certainly focuses the attention of statutory agencies towards their duties of public protection and reducing harm. But it goes on to identify that 'too little attention is being paid to the basics of resettlement - assistance with money; the provision of suitable housing; the preservation or repair of crucial relationships; employment; education; and drug and alcohol problems' (Home Office, 2001). This directs attention towards both rehabilitation and integrative drivers for change.

It is in the attention being paid to what is called the *basics of resettlement* that recognition is being given to the need to 'join-up' services for offenders to ensure that not only is the public protected but that effective support for the myriad of social needs which offenders have upon release can be provided and sustained. Indeed, the publication of the Social Exclusion Unit (2002) report *Reducing Re-offending by ex-prisoners* (SEU, 2002) focused no less than nine chapters on the social needs of offenders. The extent of the statistics presented can give no one any doubt that the weight of social problems and their cumulative nature that individuals face upon release from custody means that attention to those areas is vital if resettlement is to be achieved successfully. Indeed whilst employment may be a key inclusion goal, unless other actions are taken to address wider barriers to employment around housing, basic skills, drug treatment or health problems employment targeting is unlikely to be successful.

If we were to take a snapshot of resettlement services from the two main stakeholders, prison and probation, at the moment we would see the following:

- a Prison Service committed to linking with voluntary and community based agencies and developing targeted resettlement services for their inmates - at its best this includes work with local and regional employers to develop appropriate job skills to



meet the gaps in the market, thus a partnership between employers and prison staff is producing productive outcomes. Implementation of offending behaviour programmes, basic skills work, Custody to Work initiatives and mentor supports is growing.

- the Probation Service has initiated a number of resettlement pathways: the development of OASYS; the roll out of accredited programmes; and work on integrating case management models - all these areas highlight the importance of a seamless and thus integrative approach between prison and probation programmes.
- a raft of initiatives from the major welfare agencies including Job Centre Plus (Fresh Start and Progress to Work), National Treatment Agency (Models of Care), Prison Health agenda, Learning and Skills Councils.

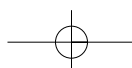
The work of the Prison and the Probation Service highlighted in *Through the Prison Gate* (Home Office, 2001) showed pockets of excellent practice whilst also identifying a lack of coordination and consistency across and within regions. Attending to the basics of resettlement demands a much more 'joined-up' approach to resettlement thinking and the work of the SEU has highlighted how important the major agencies such as housing, education, employment, training, work with families, drugs and health are to an effective reintegrative response. Resettlement has now reached the point where it could be offered as a template to 'joined-up thinking' in criminal justice practice with a central concern to create a more inclusive society (Crowther, 2002). As part of the consultative process surrounding the development of an effective regional framework this editorial suggests four key themes which are the key drivers in the agenda for improving resettlement activities:

- continuity of care
- communication
- customisation
- cash

These four headline features can in combination enable an effective community-based approach to resettlement to develop.

Continuity of Care

Many of the experimental practices that have been developing in the last few years break down if continuity in the provision of services is not maintained. The importance of coordinating services so that the right things happen at the right time cannot be over emphasised. There are many examples where this coordination just simply does not occur. Examples include discontinuities between prison initiatives and follow-up upon release, repeating assessments as each offender visits a new agency, ineffective links between drug rehabilitation and GPs to maintain drug-free lifestyles, and training started in prison not recognised upon release. The remedy is clearly articulated as relating to coordination and continuity through some form of integrated case management. Specifically, as an example in the area of drug treatment and prevention, an integrated care package system called Models of Care is being developed (Department of Health 2002).



It is not clear who or which agency should take control of case management processes. Historically, the National Probation Service would have been the agency to undertake this role. However, the statutory tasks outlined above raise a question mark about the capacity of the Probation Service to deliver an effective, integrated case management structure. If the government's *Justice for All White Paper* (Home Office, 2002) does in fact lead to statutory licences on all offenders, including short-sentence offenders, then it becomes more likely that Probation might act in this coordinating role. However, the 'Going Straight' contract highlighted in the SEU report and to be piloted with young adults aged 18-21 does not specify any particular agency to deliver on these contracts and indeed, some of the most effective coordinating work that has gone on in recent years has been handled by voluntary and community based agencies.

However, there is a cautionary note here. Often the work that voluntary agencies undertake is project based, with limited funding and limited resources. This means that although they are able to deliver effectively in terms of continuity of care for the prisoners that are allocated to the project, they are not always able to do so for every prisoner. This leads to discontinuities and leads to many prisoners remaining unhappy about the level of service that they receive. There is an important distinction between case management and key working. An integrated case management system ensures that someone takes charge of and embeds continuity in whatever provisions the individual accesses. Within that provision key workers may emerge according to the particular needs of the individual, be that for drug treatment and guidance, for accommodation services, for offending behaviour programmes, for basic skills work, for employment training, for job skills training and so on. If that distinction is not upheld then the danger is that the continuity of care which is so important breaks down. Timely access to provision can only be achieved if there is a single reference point to ensure coordination and continuity. A community justice orientation demands enhanced interaction between agencies to create an 'inside-out' and 'outside-in' commitment to bridge gaps in continuity and enhance the potential for a seamless provision. Consider the problems of CARATs - Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare services (see Prison Service Order 3630, Feb 2002) - in this respect who have failed to deliver on the 8 week community follow-up targets set deliberately as a way of providing seamless continuity between prison and the community.

Communication

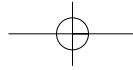
Given that the delivery of adequate services to offenders in prison and on release from prison demands the engagement of a large number of agencies, clarity on communication protocols is absolutely essential. Ensuring that resettlement is a performance target for all the major agencies engaged in relevant work is a difficult but necessary task to achieve. All the major agencies are governed by the Blairite modernisation agenda and work to performance targets. These are often directed from the centre and restrict the ability of an agency at a local or regional level to make an independent choice in their business planning. Thus resettlement has to be a key performance target for each of those agencies if it is to be given any priority.

Creating an holistic approach and ensuring that agencies give sufficient priority at a local level demands good communication and open systems of communication. Currently, the concerns of confidentiality and the consent needed through the Data Protection Act, often produce miscommunication or no communication at all. It is wasteful of professionals' time and certainly of an individual offender's reintegration, if they have to continually go over work that they have done with one agency when they meet a new agency. 'Death by assessment' is experienced by many offenders seeking help from a variety of agencies.

Communication exists on a variety of levels - from custody to community is a key one - but within the community between the different agencies is also important. This thus demands both vertical and horizontal communication. This should be developed on at least two levels: vertical communication between the national, regional and local areas and horizontal communication between the agencies at national, regional and local levels. But also, within the local area, vertical communication from the top of the organisation to the grass roots workers as well as horizontal communication across all local agencies. This demands that the partnership organisations prioritise resettlement and ensure that it is on their agendas. This raises the question about who should own this priority and certainly the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and Drug Action Teams need to be engaged actively in integrating resettlement services. But at a local level, the Local Strategic Partnerships whose business is both wider than, but includes support for resettlement, should be engaged in discussion and communication as part of the wider social inclusion agenda.

Customisation

One of the factors emerging from the SEU (2002) report is that whilst consistency in services is important, there needs to be a fundamental recognition of the needs of different groups of offenders within the system. To make services client-centred would be both empowering for the individual and ensure that sensitivity to the different needs of different groups is adequately developed. Managing the diversity of needs of young offenders; male and female offenders; black and minority ethnic groups; and the particular needs of individuals with disabilities means that it is important to develop systems which are focused on those needs and not assume that a system in place for one group will work for another. Also, whilst attention is being paid to the longer term needs of individuals through sentence planning and the development of structured programmes of intervention, it is still the case that a crisis intervention capacity is needed. If prisoners are to be engaged with resolving the problems they face in living upon release, there need to be services that recognise the immediacy of their problems and timely access to facilities to prevent a cycle which will encourage them to drift back into offending behaviour. This is particularly the case in relation to support for drug treatment and prevention, attaining accommodation upon release and in responding to short-term prisoners for whom an immediate response demands a flexible and adaptable approach.



Cash

There is no doubt that resources are limited to develop an effective resettlement strategy across the country. This means that resources need to be targeted and that the criteria for selection of individuals for assistance needs to reflect an equitable approach to services. However, there are a number of ways in which funding regimes can be improved in order that voluntary and community based agencies can play their part more effectively in delivering community based services. The contract culture which has developed over the past decade often is a disincentive to small organisations to get involved in the process of bidding for and delivering services. The uncertainty of funding even if they go through this process often is also a disincentive to engage. Ways need to be found to ensure that funding streams have some sustainability so that the projects which are set up and working can continue to do so over a longer period of time, and this may mean some more creative use of funds than currently exists. In order for funding to be effectively targeted there needs to be concurrence between the aims of individual agencies and the broad aims of resettlement and that means some national commitment to resettlement as a key area of continuing practice.

There are many challenges ahead in the resettlement agenda. It does feel that there is political and agency momentum for effective change and the time is right to consider how those strategies can be effectively mounted. There is much in the developments which supports a community justice orientation to resettlement. It is an area which demands a positive combination of protective, rehabilitative and integrative drivers. At a policy level the links with strategies for social inclusion particularly around the employment agenda are being made. Communities have to be actively engaged if ex-prisoners are to be restored into those communities and protected from potential for communities to exclude problematic groups. We await with interest how regional strategies to implement action for change in the resettlement area, alongside any changes in government legislation, will help in producing an effective resettlement framework for the next decade.

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