

EDITORIAL

Paul Senior, Sheffield Hallam University; and Jean Hine, De Montfort University

Our programme of fundamental reform will result in a revolution in rehabilitation that will reduce reoffending. We will ensure that those who break the law are punished. But by helping offenders get off drugs, move into work, and manage mental illness we will see fewer of them slipping back into lives of crime. Prisons will be places where meaningful work and opportunities to reform are the expectation for prisoners, not a matter of choice. (Clarke, 2011, MoJ Business Plan 2011-2015)

The publication of the Green Paper *Breaking the Cycle* in 2010 gave substance to the new coalition government's aspirations to take a radical approach to dealing with crime and became the catalyst of this special issue of the Journal. De Montfort and Sheffield Hallam Universities have established reputations in the field of community justice, a wide range of staff based in their respective centres of community and criminal justice and academic and practice expertise in many aspects of the criminal justice system. Staff were invited to reflect on the green paper and its proposed 'Rehabilitation Revolution' in the light of their own research and prepare papers from these reflections that would encourage informed debate about the subject. All papers have been doubly peer reviewed and, together, present thoughtful insights into some of the questions and issues that the government's proposals raise. The response we received was excellent and we have made this a double issue in our ninth year of publication. Since these papers were commissioned, there has been something of a political backlash to some of the key ideas presented by the Minister of Justice, Kenneth Clarke. In particular, the proposals to reduce the prison population fell on stony ground and were modified under pressure from the prime minister and the cabinet. This has had an impact on the funding of criminal justice, which was already facing a 24% cut by 2015. To achieve this saving, a redistribution of the burden has occurred, putting further pressure on the community agencies to deliver more for less. Payment by Results, heralded in the Green Paper, has become a central plank of this agenda and is touched on by some of the articles, though its ramifications remain, at the time of writing, an idea whose approach is still to be evaluated and tested, though this has not stopped the government in proclaiming its nationwide implementation across the system by 2015 – another example of policy-based evidence rather than evidence-based policy.

As this issue was going to press, England experienced riots at levels which had not been seen since 1985. Explanations are still being constructed but these events are bound to impact on the 'rehabilitation revolution'. Deterrent prison sentences have already been seen, resulting in a rise in the prison population to a new peak, putting further pressure on resources. The rhetoric of ministers has already ushered in a toughening of attitudes. This is the ever-changing backcloth around which this double issue appears and which may, in itself, threaten some of the more positive ideas emerging from the original Green Paper.

Running through all the nine papers is this theme of cutbacks and economic constraint, the context within which the policy has been framed and the key reason behind many of the proposed changes. A central tenet is devolving justice to the local level with greater involvement of local communities in the administration and support of criminal justice processes, which government has dubbed the 'Big Society'. This is a key theme addressed by many of the papers in this issue. They address, too, the notion of community justice, what this means and what is required for it to emerge and develop. This is a debate which has been central to the journal's history since its inception. Community justice is essentially about local communities taking responsibility and authority for decisions about, and delivery of, criminal justice in their locality; a set of ideas of much greater longevity than the latest 'Big Society' sound bite. The ramifications of greater involvement by voluntary and community sector organisations is an important sub-theme which has emerged alongside contested debates about the engagement of civil society in dealing with crime and disorder.

Atherton & Crisp begin the discussion with a piece about leadership in community justice. They present the notion of 'community' and its elusive nature, arguing that much policy is framed around an idealised notion of community, rather than an understanding of real-world communities with all their complexities, before exploring the role of leadership within community justice initiatives and the various agencies that would be involved in its delivery. They show how different agencies employ different understandings and models of 'leadership', and that effective leadership for community justice will require a leader who is a 'transformer' rather than a 'Great Man'. Drawing on the literature and learning from neighbourhood policing, they identify features of successful community involvement and argue that, without good leadership, community justice will not achieve its potential for community empowerment and may even lead to negative consequences for victims, offenders, and the public. Knowledge and understanding of the 'community' is key, given their wide diversity and the variation in crime types and causes, as well as the resources available within the community to address them. This paper may speak to the debates around the appointment of Police Crime Commissioners also promoted by government in its reforms.

Notions of Big Society are predicated on a return to local communities and individuals for the administration of justice and the second paper, by Clamp & Paterson, explores this dimension in their review of Neighbourhood Justice Panels, an idea promoted in the last few years for dispute resolution via restorative justice processes and introduced in various localities by Liberal Democrat councils. Whilst the idea fits squarely within the 'Big

Society' agenda, the article poses difficult questions about how far such a philosophy of practice can fit with the traditional punitive policy-making of successive governments since the late 1970s. Can those tensions on the ground between policing crime and repairing harm caused by crime be operationalised through such Panels? The August 2011 Riots have brought this debate into sharp relief, with some commentators advocating a restorative justice approach to the young people involved, whilst many politicians and the media call for punitive sanctions, such as benefit withdrawal and the heavy use of exclusion and imprisonment as a deterrent measure.

Since the 1990s, the voluntary and community sector has become increasingly pivotal to policy developments in supporting reducing re-offending. The innovative and independent potential of this diverse sector, with its local base and client-focused practices, has been brought centre-stage. The clarion call for this sector to take up the challenges of delivering local practices has been explored in the context of the 'Big Society' in the next paper, by Senior. The paper charts the growth of the sector and its changing relationship to the statutory and private sectors and asks questions about both the feasibility and the desirability of this sector becoming a lead provider of services under the rehabilitation revolution. Is there a risk to mission in becoming a key provider rather than a supplemental set of services? Questions are raised as to the capacity of the sector to deliver mainstream services and the paper queries whether there comes a pinch point where the fundamental nature of this sector is compromised by further engagement within the system, making its campaigning role incompatible with being commissioned by the local and national state.

The fourth paper, by Flint, raises key concerns about the nature of ensuring compliance in court orders, focusing particularly on sanctions applied in Intensive Intervention Project programmes and Housing Benefit Sanction pilots in England. Enforcement action became a key tenet of New Labour's approach to key problems in parenting and family intervention, and this paper explores the difficulties which can impact on the administration of orders as a result of these enforcement practices, citing research which casts doubt on its efficacy. These findings raise key questions for the new government in considering the utility of sanctions and suggest an approach based on clear expectations and consistency in support given. There is a clear danger that, in seeking to be tough within community orders, this can undo the best practice identified in a range of research cited in this piece.

Smith, in his paper about proposals for youth justice, argues that there is little that is new in the government's proposals here. The balance between 'welfare' and 'justice' (aka punishment) has, for very many years, been at the heart of youth justice policy and current proposals offer a slight shift in this balance and a repackaging of existing policies. In effect, they are 'bestowing legitimacy on practice changes that have already taken place', this being a strategy of many new governments. Smith sees some hopeful signs in the new policy proposals but is concerned that they will lead to increasing bifurcation between those whose offences deserve imprisonment and those who can be given the opportunities of the 'rehabilitation revolution'. He argues that real change in youth justice