

# **GUEST EDITORIAL**

## **THE RE-EMERGENCE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE 'RELATIONSHIP' WITHIN COMMUNITY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE PRACTICE**

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In the last edition of the BJCJ Paul Senior paid a powerful tribute to our colleague and former co-editor of the journal, Brian Williams who died earlier this year. Brian, as a colleague of mine over many years was, as Paul described, much more than just 'an academic concerned about his own outputs'. His last tribute to me was to confer on me the responsibility of being a guest editor for this edition of the BJCJ – a novel experience but one which, on reflection, I welcome as challenge to develop some new skills!

I would first like to welcome Jean Hine, Reader in Criminology at De Montfort University, as the new co-editor of the journal with Paul Senior. Jean brings energy and experience to this role and we all look forward to working with her on future editions of the journal.

Sheffield Hallam University celebrated the centenary of the probation service through 'Moments in Probation History', a series written for the Community Justice Portal and with a conference in September. The last edition of the BJCJ was also dedicated to celebrating the centenary. This edition has a more eclectic mix of articles although I am intrigued by the links between these current writings and many of the lessons from history that the centenary illuminated. The theme I have chosen to draw out in this editorial is the significance of the 'relationship' in addressing offending behaviour and whether the skill of 'relationship building' can be properly valued, taught and supported.

Historically work with offenders was largely determined by the quality of the relationship between worker and offender. As Paul reminds us in the previous editorial, the role of the early probation officer was to 'advise, assist and befriend' – the latter term becoming the core medium through which the advice and assistance was offered. Many of the early texts on both social work and probation practice (Monger 1972, Biestek 1961) identified the significance of the quality of this 'casework' relationship. More recent developments under the mantle of the 'What Works' movement and the rise of accredited programmes, has tended to highlight the importance of group activity, programme integrity and, increasingly the meeting of targets, over and above the nature of the relationship between worker and service user. Interestingly, we are now seeing a resurgence of interest in the

significance of the 'therapeutic alliance' (Dowden and Andrews 2004, Burnett and McNeill 2005), as it is now called. The article by Mills, Davies and Brooks in this edition, which is based on research examining the experiences of participants of Drug Treatment and Testing Orders, develops this theme of the importance of the relationship in bringing drug users into treatment, holding them within the programme and enabling them to benefit from the treatment regime. They identify the sometimes profound significance to the service users of the development of a warm and supportive relationship, but interestingly also the recognition by the users of the use of legitimate authority and the setting of clear boundaries by the workers. They refer to Trotter's (1999) argument that an empathic relationship, while necessary for change, is not always sufficient (pro-social modelling and other more directive elements are also required), and to findings that indicate that while group work is valued highly by participants, so is one to one work. The service users they interviewed described the relationship with individual workers as the bedrock of their contact with the organisation. The authors refer to the Offender Management Model (2005) as stressing the importance of a consistent working relationship within a process of 'end to end' supervision. They also refer to the lessons learnt from rates of attrition from accredited groups (Roberts 2004, Kemshall and Canton 2002) and the importance of consistency, reliability and fairness within the operation of the relationship. Even the Audit Commission reports of 2002 and 2004 suggested that, whilst it was hard to measure, the fostering of relationships was a core skill of the probation service and an important component of effectiveness.

Roy, Anitha and Fountain in their article examine the delivery of drug services in prisons and consider whether prison officers or civilian drug users should deliver these services. They reflect on issues of role boundaries, tensions between officer and civilian roles, and the importance of trust and motivation amongst the prisoners if interventions are to be effective. The National Offender Management Service was set up with the intention of bringing the two organisations of the prison and probation service closer together in the management of offenders. Interestingly the Roy et al article highlights some of the inherent difficulties arising when 'outside' workers, in this case described as 'civilian' drug workers, attempt to offer a service within a closed institution (prison). They also describe concerns by the prisoners about issues of confidentiality and mistrust of the motives of prison staff when these staff deliver the service, and of suspicion on the part of prison staff towards 'civilian' workers when they deliver the service. The new Offender Management model (2006) requires prison staff and probation staff to work together on assessment and interventions and we might speculate what training and support is needed to ensure that relationships between such staff develop positively. The inherent clash between 'security and care' that the authors highlight has a resonance with the themes of 'care and control' which have always been a core dynamic for probation staff, and interestingly is now being played out in the larger arena that NOMS attempts to encompass. The authors suggest a different uniform for prison staff undertaking drug intervention work – I am not sure that different uniforms are in themselves sufficient – although I recognise the importance of demarcating roles clearly. Certainly I agree that training both in the subject area (in this instance drug awareness) and in the significance of relationships in a multi-disciplinary setting is critical.

Atterbury, from a different angle, considers the importance of victim empathy work with offenders – which again can be conceptualised as helping and enabling offenders to consider the nature of their relationship with their victim(s). She highlights how important it is that probation staff have themselves had victim training and awareness, in order to avoid collusion when working with offenders. Good relationships, as Mills et al clearly identify, require not just a warm and empathic approach, but also an ability to manage boundaries and exercise legitimate authority. Offenders need to be 'challenged' about the impact of their behaviour on others, but if this 'challenge' stands outside a significant relationship it is unlikely to be effective. Whether staff receive sufficient training or support in the complex process of building and maintaining effective relationships with sometimes very difficult and damaged people, is a moot point.

Souza and Dhimi's article examines what constitutes 'effective' facilitation in the context of restorative justice, in order to inform strategies for the recruitment and training of volunteers in community-based RJ initiatives. The article outlines the four stages required of successful facilitation and the tasks and responsibilities involved. The research study explores the features of a 'good' facilitator – identified as being primarily about skill level and organisation, and of a 'bad' facilitator, which are highlighted as 'being judgemental and biased'. The authors suggest that the former is more amenable to training than the latter, which is likely to be related to ingrained attributes, and that the careful initial screening of volunteers is required. Building relationships, in my view, requires careful attention to the issue of values and power. Any worker, whether they are in a prison, probation, voluntary or private setting, needs to be helped to recognise the power of their role and the influence of their personal and cultural values and attitudes on their ability to build effective relationships with service users.

In the last article, Mandisa examines the endemic nature of crime in South Africa and the way that young people in particular are demonised, and economic conditions largely blamed. Whilst the context and history of South Africa is very different from the UK and the continuing impact of the legacy of apartheid and extreme poverty continues to be a very strong contributory factor in the commission of crime by young people – Mandisa takes her focus closer to 'home'. She explores the impact of inter-parental violence, weak parental control and discipline and 'non-existent' parental supervision from very 'stressed' parents on some young people growing up in South Africa. She challenges the dependency of parents on social workers and their tendency to see them as instruments in the disciplining of their children. I could speculate that Mandisa's theme of parental relationships with their children and with their social workers is significant in some of the ways in which the causes of crime and management of crime in South Africa is understood. She argues for the need to strengthen family welfare and parenting services, and suggests that few are willing to look at the role of parenting strategies as crime reduction.

Maybe we will see a continued resurgence in interest in the development of professional relationships both between professionals (particularly in the growing multi-disciplinary and multi-agency settings) and with offenders as service users. Certainly some of the evolving literature around 'desistance' (Maruna and Farrall 2004, McNeill et al 2005) highlights the importance of the relationship and is increasingly being seen as a significant theoretical development in training programmes. Issues of training, management and measurement of effectiveness in the area of 'relationships' will need to be addressed if this is to be an effective resurgence of interest.

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