

EDITORIAL COMMENT: PAUL SENIOR – LAST WORDS

Kevin Wong, Co-editor

Back in March 2016, our journal published a tribute to Paul Senior titled [An editor retires](#). It was penned by Dave Ward, Paul’s long-time friend and colleague, who has been a solid member of our journal’s editorial board since its commencement in 2002 to the present day. In the editorial Dave recounted the considerable achievements that marked Paul’s long and illustrious career as a probation practitioner, policy advocate and committed probation academic. As the title suggests, the piece marked Paul’s retirement as co-editor of the journal, which he had founded along with Dave and Brian Williams, their co-editor until Brian’s untimely death.

It was with much sadness, but also a sense of inevitability, that the editorial board learnt back in the summer that Paul had lost his battle with cancer. He passed away peacefully with his family at his side. At Paul’s funeral, the constituent parts of his full and energetic life gathered to give him an emotional, funny and lively send-off: his family and friends; the Tickhill Cricket Club, to which he was devoted; and representatives from academia and from the world of probation – which mattered so much to him, and which he cherished and argued so passionately for throughout his career.

Paul’s writing speaks for itself and for him, and can be found amongst the many back issues of our journal from 2002 up to March 2016. They act perhaps as the finest memorial to him and his passions. One of his best is his well-argued [critique](#) in 2013 of the then proposed Transforming Rehabilitation reforms. As a colleague observed on hearing of Paul’s passing, Paul lived long enough to be vindicated in his critique and to bear witness to the republication of probation case management in England and Wales.

In these ‘last words’, all that it remains for me to do – as one of the current co-editors of our journal – is to provide a personal view of Paul. I worked with him initially in 2009 as a freelance research associate of the Hallam Centre for Community Justice (HCCJ). He was generous enough to invite me to work with the centre on two major evaluations: of Integrated Offender Management and Intensive Alternatives to Custody. The learning from the evaluations of those two programmes is still relevant today. Later, I joined the centre as the Deputy to Paul’s Director. Early on I recall going to a pitch for a research contract with what was then the National Offender Management Service (NOMS). It was a rigorous interview and we arrived at a point where one of the NOMS panel threw out a particularly awkward question – one that we hadn’t thought of in our pre-pitch prep. My HCCJ colleagues and I, on our side of the table, tipped our heads downwards – none of us were

volunteering to answer this one. Left with having to carry the can, Paul took it in his stride and improvised on the spot. His answer was precise, well-articulated and highly plausible. He convinced us and, although we knew he hadn't thought any of this through beforehand, he clearly convinced the NOMS panel because we got the gig.

Paul was funny, witty and compassionate. He was understanding and supported HCCJ colleagues during difficult times in their lives; for instance, when they needed to take time away from work. He was unwavering, loyal and steadfast. He could also be awkward and stubborn and, as those who worked with him knew, he did not shy away from argument but – and it feels like a cliché to say this, because its common usage in less appropriate circumstances has undervalued the term – he was always true to himself.

As co-editor of the journal I take from Paul's legacy a commitment to foster the debate and ideas that he so encouraged and to steer an editorial course that advocates for and supports the kind of progressive criminal and social justice policies that he argued for so passionately in the UK and other jurisdictions. He spent a lot of time in his later years working in Hong Kong, a place and people that garnered much affection from him. Likewise, the students he taught and the colleagues he got to know at City University felt equally positively about him.

I will return time and again to Paul's writings for inspiration and direction. I warmly recommend them to other readers.