

Breaking the chainlinks of poverty: strategies for social justice

Roger Grimshaw introduces this issue of *cjm*

Thanks to support from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies produced an evidence review on the links between poverty and institutional care, summarised in a collection of reviews published by the Foundation (Grimshaw et al., 2014; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2014).

The emerging findings showed how entrenched were the patterns by which people with backgrounds of poverty entered institutional care and left it with uncertain futures that held the risk of poverty. Evidence reinforced doubts about the effectiveness of services that stop at the institutional gate; instead of focusing simply on the institution, the review suggested that mainstream policies, services and support rooted in the community would be of greater value and effectiveness. A more positive outlook would follow reductions in imprisonment and detention, and reconfigurations of care in community settings, as in supported living for people with disabilities.

In November 2014, we held a roundtable entitled *Prisoners and looked after children: a common cause?* The existence of shared social backgrounds and needs linked by the experience of social injustice suggests a similarly robust policy of reparative measures should be adopted to challenge their risks of poverty. While social justice can underpin a common policy stance, the management of specific needs may call for differentiation in ways that the roundtable discussion began to address.

Our event was an opportunity to engage with a wide policy audience and we were fortunate that representatives from key user organisations were able to give responses to the main presentation on the day, and their articles build on their insights into the experiences and needs of people who contact their organisations. In particular they were able to reflect on the strategic questions about making common cause in the fight against poverty.

Christopher Stacey widens the debate about criminal justice and poverty by showing how important the stigma of conviction can be, and how measures of rehabilitation should mark a public form of return to social and economic participation. **David Graham** emphasises how tragically easy it is for young people to fall through the thin mesh of services that are supposed to support them. Despite the sums spent on their care, there is little effective appreciation of what is necessary to give them the equal start that they deserve. Our colleagues **Monica Dowling** and **Courtney Hougham** have developed the

analysis in their contribution to the evidence review about interventions to assist young people looked after by local authorities. Extending the timescale of support would pay real dividends for young people. **Becci Newton** and **Jonathan Buzzeo** bring their research expertise to bear on the problem of how to give effective help to young people not in education, employment or training. Planned and managed support has been shown to make a difference to young people's trajectories. In a distinguished closing piece, **Lucy Williams** provides an original viewpoint on the plight of former immigration detainees facing destitution.

We asked a number of roundtable participants to reflect on the themes and discussion in short comment pieces. **Judy Corlyon** and **Aggrey Burke** draw attention to issues affecting women and young black people, respectively. **Harriet Ward** warns against the revival of a discriminatory separation between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. **Victoria Lowry** reminds us of the importance of support and social capital in overcoming disadvantage.

In the topical issues and comment section, **Auke Willems** explores the discussion surrounding the recent request, which was granted, for euthanasia from a mentally-ill detainee in Belgium. **Dulcie Faure Walker** reports on examples from her project carried out at a medium security male prison which revealed the huge role the informal economy plays in prison life, and the reasons why. **Alan Clarke** and **Sarah Wydall** look at ways of creating opportunities for domestic violence victims to remain in the family home. **Helena Gosling** and **Gillian Buck** consider the positive potential for using mentoring within the criminal justice system. With an estimated 50,000 jobs being cut across prisons, probation, police and the courts, **Sharon Sukhram** raises concerns about the impact of the government's reduction in expenditure against a backdrop of marketisation. ■

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References

- Grimshaw, R., Roberts, R., Bebbington, P., Dowling, M. and Hougham, C. (2014), *Institutional care and poverty: evidence and policy review*, London: Centre for Crime and Justice Studies.
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2014), *Reducing poverty in the UK: a collection of evidence reviews*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.