



VICTIMS

The Criminal Justice System has not done well by victims perhaps because it focuses upon punishing the offender rather than seeing what can be done to make amends and how to prevent similar events happening again. The latter notion does come into why we punish the offender but the argument that punishment does prevent recurrence no longer persuades anyone other than those whose book it suits to believe it. The System needs to change to recognise victims in a way that acknowledges their experience but without placing the victim in so central a position that all is decided by reference to the victim. To do so would ignore the fact that crime makes us all victims not just the victim of a particular crime and to place responsibility for punishment upon the victim would be to add not diminish the trauma already experienced.

In this issue of the Journal Sarah Perman gives an overview of the place of victims in the Criminal Justice System and does show that more is being done to recognise their needs, however, more resources are needed if the service is to be adequate. Sylvia Chenery and Ken Pease in their article demonstrate that some victims suffer repeatedly and that to a degree being a victim can be predicted. Of special interest to the Prison Service is the point made about crime in prison and what can be learned about the patterns which emerge.

The article by Joanna Adler describes research into just that area of crime in prison, in particular, bullying. She argues that managers can be out of touch with what is happening on the landings and staff and prisoners feel they have not been heard. If so that can be a way of turning a blind eye to abuse and intimidation.

Lancaster Farms has addressed that particular issue of bullying and a report of their approach is given by Marcus Sunderland who underlines the point made by Ken Pease about the parallel between crime in prison and in the community: bullying is a feature of both Young Offender Institutions in the penal system and in schools in the community. Perhaps in dealing with the problem there is learning for all.

Terry Green and Alan Gray at Stocken Prison have introduced a scheme whereby victims and offenders meet. Similar schemes have been developed elsewhere and demonstrate a very positive way in which prisons can offer victims a place in the Criminal Justice System which helps them come to terms with what has happened and can have a major impact on offenders.

What is clear is that the victim will have a place in the Criminal Justice System and if that is to be positive in its impact then much thought needs to be given to ways of doing it. These articles should stimulate that thinking ■