

editorial

resettlement

Penny Fraser and Una Padel put this issue in context.

In July 2002 the Social Exclusion Unit published its report *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners*. In his introduction Prime Minister Tony Blair said, "We need to make sure that a prison sentence punishes the offender, but also provides the maximum opportunity for reducing the likelihood of re-offending. That means we need to redouble efforts to rehabilitate prisoners back into society effectively". This CJM on the theme of resettlement marks the second anniversary of the publication of the SEU report, and examines progress made since then.

The concept of resettlement has a long pedigree, dating back to the voluntary assistance offered by the discharged prisoners' aid societies and police court missions of the 19th century (see Bain, this issue). The Prison Service has recently affirmed its commitment to the concept by creating a Directorate of Resettlement in place of the Directorate of Regimes. Peter Wrench, Director of Resettlement, writes in this issue about what that change means. The Home Office has now published its *Reducing Re-Offending National Action Plan* (July 2004) in response to the SEU report and it is summarised in Una Padel's article.

Voluntary support for the majority of prisoners who serve short sentences (less than 12 months) has declined in availability since the 1980s. This tension is addressed by several contributors. Rod Morgan points out that short-term prisoners present the highest risk of re-offending, have the highest resettlement

needs, yet receive the least help either in prison or following release. He describes the barrier to the effective resettlement for prisoners serving sentences of all lengths created by the workloads of probation officers in resettlement teams. Jo Dobry looks at the impact this has on parole arrangements. The article by Mike Maguire echoes many of these concerns. He describes the new 'Custody Plus' sentence, created by the *Criminal Justice Act 2003*, which will be introduced from 2007. On the basis of recent research he and colleagues have undertaken on resettlement 'pathfinders' (Lewis *et al* 2003) Maguire highlights some areas of effective practice which aid resettlement for short-sentence prisoners.

Gelsthorpe writes that the 71% of all women prisoners who serve short sentences are particularly poorly catered for under present provision for resettlement. She expresses concern about the impact on women of the new Intermittent Custody Sentence (introduced by the *Criminal Justice Act 2003*) as it "may work against attempts to root the offender in a network of community resources".

Taking a critical look at the discourse of risk and offender management that he feels has supplanted that of reformation or rehabilitation, Shadd Maruna wonders if we will be led in the direction of what he calls the Californian 'waste management' model of resettlement. He cites latest figures from the Parole Board in England and Wales showing that there has been a sharp rise in the number of recalls to prison with only 6 per cent of

these being the result of further offending, the majority being for breaching licence or Home Detention Curfew conditions.

How are the component parts of resettlement to be organised? In his article, which provides a case study of one region's (Yorkshire and Humberside) plans for a joined up approach to resettlement, Paul Senior argues that the role of 'case manager' is pivotal. The regional resettlement model seeks to make the notion of 'active communities' a reality.

Key facets of successful resettlement are discussed by Turnbull (drugs aftercare), Fraser and Grimshaw, and Galbraith (accommodation). Turnbull highlights the lack of aftercare for many prisoners who were drug-dependent prior to going into custody and whose risk of relapse on re-entry to the community is very high, and suggests a number of ways in which the effectiveness of prison-based drug treatment can be enhanced. Fraser and Grimshaw consider access to accommodation and support and urge a proper understanding of the relationship between recidivism targets, social integration and service input for individual offenders.

The distinct needs of particular groups within the overall prison population are examined. Neal Hazel comments on how the positive attitude of juveniles leaving the custodial part of their Detention and Training Orders to commence the period of community supervision can quickly change to disillusionment as they encounter broken promises of support. Hindpal Singh Bhui points to the particular difficulties facing foreign national prisoners held in British prisons in resettling either to communities in Britain or abroad. Elaine Crawley challenges the presumption that imprisonment is a 'young man's game' and discusses the health and social care issues facing the over 65

in prison and the community. The difficult resettlement issues facing offenders who are mentally ill are highlighted by Lynch and Skinner.

There is a real danger that resettlement becomes something which is done to, rather than with, prisoners. In his article on prisoner councils Enver Solomon describes the role prisoners can play in determining the way prisons are run, and how taking responsibility in prison can help prisoners develop the skills and attitudes necessary to help them on release.

As Solomon points out, all but a handful of prisoners in the UK will eventually be released. The SEU report pointed out the enormous difficulties facing many ex-prisoners, and the additional obstacles placed in their way by different agencies and government departments failing to work together to create a coherent resettlement process. Two years on from the publication of that report, with a new National Action Plan, and on the threshold of the National Offender Management Service created with the avowed intention of creating better, smoother case management, it will be interesting to see how the ideas expressed in this issue develop.

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References

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