

# From Redemption to Rehabilitation to Resettlement

Andy Bain reviews historical shifts of attitude toward changing offending behaviour.

There was a time when the purpose of rehabilitation was to provide offenders with the opportunity to examine their own behaviour in solitude and before the eyes of God, with the aim of engendering penance. Indeed, it could be argued that this belief in ensuring that the individual was given every opportunity to make amends for their behaviour drove the work of those responsible for rehabilitation for over a century, from the police court missionaries through to the probation officers of the present day. Today, this noble quest seems to have lost sight of its original aims, for whilst the government acknowledges the importance of addressing education, health and welfare, it seems that the individual is far removed from the debate.

and how to change or model more appropriate behaviour. O'Brien (1998) notes that in the first instance, the Victorian prison was seen as a place of rehabilitation, providing the ideal of "rehabilitation through punishment...for a variety of social ills", such as poverty, a lack of training or even unemployment. These conditions raised the fears of middle-class Victorians of social and political unrest much as they have emerged as a growing concern for contemporary society.

There seems general agreement that for rehabilitation to be successful, a change in behaviour or attitude must have taken place. For instance, Crow (2001) suggests that for rehabilitation to have taken place "a programme of treatment will have been

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Although there were many initiatives which looked to support offenders, and whenever possible steer them away from the harsh realities of justice, it is the work of the police court missionaries of the 1880s which motivated much of the historic change that was to follow. Whitfield (2001) suggests that for the most part police court missionaries were charged with providing offenders with moral and religious guidance away from a life of offending towards a new life as decent and proper members of society. The ideal was that through the establishment of full-time and fixed employment, decent accommodation and health-care, the individual could be provided a fresh start.

It is an ideal echoed by the recent statement made by the Home Secretary David Blunkett, in the forward to the government paper *Making the Right Choices* (2003), in which he says, "A life of crime is not inevitable, whatever our background. But it is easier to make the right choices about crime if the basics are in place: a good education, a place to live, decent healthcare and paid work", a statement that begs the question of just how far society has moved on.

These points have been the recurrent theme of rehabilitation throughout the modern criminal justice period and have left many unresolved issues and debates, not least how best to support the offender

successful in enacting a change in behaviour". However, in what form and to what extent? Prior to 1974 little in the way of legislation was available to support and guide the offender or practitioner. Indeed, rehabilitation would seem to have been an expectation rather than a definable goal or target.

It was to this point, says Mair (2004), that Martinson directed his influential article 'What works - Questions and Answers about Prison Reform' (1974), when questioning the rehabilitative ideal and effectiveness of the interventions undertaken with offenders, suggesting that from the work that he had seen undertaken within the criminal justice system of North America "very little (if anything) seemed to be working in terms of addressing offending behaviour". Indeed, to many other authors there remained no clear evidence of how constructive 'intervention work' had been, or indeed if that work would lead to the offender abstaining from criminal behaviour in the future. McGuire (2002) goes further, suggesting that the 1970s were marked by a failure of interventions to impact upon criminal recidivism, which continued throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s.

It does indeed seem that something central to the support and effectiveness of working with offenders was missing. It is of no surprise that the conclusion that some approaches work better than others,

produced by the growing number of meta-analytic studies conducted during the 1980s and 1990s, fed directly into the government's interest in more structured and constructive ways of working with offenders. In this way a move towards targeted intervention and accredited programmes for offenders provided the cost-effective and efficient systems government was looking for.

Conversely, Mair (2004) argues that if the meta-analytic research was so successful why then did positive results number only into the hundreds and remain based on interventions undertaken in prisons, neglecting offenders in the community? Moreover, Falshaw *et al* (2003) found that there was no significant difference in the reconviction rates of those offenders undertaking a custodial sentence that had completed an accredited programme (in this case ETS) and those that had not. This position is in conflict with statements made by the National Probation Directorate who note that up to "69% of offenders have been identified as having problems that can be challenged and changed by successfully completing an accredited programme" (NPD, 2004). However, no such supportive figures from research have been made available at this time, even though accredited programmes have been in place on a national level for some years.

Moreover, it would seem that with little evidence coming to light to support and justify the use of accredited programmes, many questions remain as to their effectiveness. Crow acknowledges the point that we seem to be some way from an answer, stating that rehabilitation "has to be seen in a context where factors associated with offending are embedded in a person's background, upbringing and social experience" (2001). The argument would seem to suggest that no one approach is more effective than any other. Indeed, it would seem that in determining criminal behaviour, many other factors are of equal importance to those to whom accredited programmes are directed. For instance, the Social Exclusion Unit makes the point that one-third of offenders lose their housing due to imprisonment and that "stable accommodation can make a difference of over 20% in terms of reconviction" (SEU, 2002). To this they add that employment "reduces the risk of re-offending by between a third and a half. But two-thirds of prisoners arrive in prison from unemployment, and three-quarters leave prison with no job to go to" (SEU, 2002).

It would seem then that the need to address thinking skills and behaviour are only some of the issues that must be considered. Employment is a key factor raised by a number of writers, not least the Social Exclusion Unit, and one which is impacted upon by the individual's level of education and training. Indeed, the level of education will to a great extent inform the opportunities for training and therefore employment that the individual may have access to during the course of their lifetime.

In the rush to provide an answer for criminal behaviour, we have misplaced the individual, whilst to some extent, turning full circle. A century ago, poverty and unemployment were seen as factors which led to crime, a behaviour which could be challenged through strict regime and punishment, not far removed from the essence of accredited programmes in use today. Conversely, in supporting the social needs of offenders, we acknowledge the argument that behaviour needs to be addressed in context, in much the same way that the police court missionaries were employed for the purpose of saving the offender from the harsh realities of the criminal justice

system. It is the individual that is expected to benefit from the intervention and it is the individual's behaviour that is targeted for change, and for this reason it is the individual who must remain the central focus of discourse.

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