

A new phase

Enver Solomon and Rebecca Roberts introduce the new-look cjm.

Over the last 20 years, the criminal justice state has expanded and grown, exceeding all previous expectations and predictions. Yet, dissent and critique of these developments have been remarkably muted, and debate has focused narrowly on how best to reform, expand, or intensify criminal justice interventions. Great attention has been given to demands for more prison places, police officers on the beat, drug treatment through criminal justice, action on anti-social behaviour, and powers to fight terrorism. We have witnessed an increase in numbers of people employed by the criminal justice state and those processed by it. This has taken place with very few voices of opposition.

For those who want to engage in critical debate about the direction of travel, there are precious few places to turn. The national newspapers and current affairs media tend to reflect the stifling consensus currently the feature of much of the political debate. Criminological research and comment are thriving in the many academic journals that now exist in the field, but it is often remote and inaccessible for practitioners and others who are not directly involved in the academic world.

Criminal Justice Matters (cjm) has attempted to fill the gap by providing a space for critical analysis, debate, and the sharing of research, ideas, perspectives, and practice. Presented in a jargon-free and user-friendly format, the magazine has engaged with a range of research and policy developments relating to contemporary social, crime, and justice issues both in the UK and abroad. It has gained a loyal readership, particularly among students, academics, and practitioners.

Nearly two decades since its launch in spring 1989, cjm has now been given a much needed facelift. The refreshed design and revised content are intended to build on the magazine's strengths to encourage, facilitate, and promote critical perspectives. Each issue will continue to have a themed section, engaging in a particular area of interest or concern. From this issue onwards, the themed articles will also be supplemented by a number of pieces reflecting on the very latest developments that have been making the headlines on crime and justice matters. There are also two new sections: an 'in focus' article, which takes an in-depth look at a particular area of research or policy development from the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, along with an improved digest section, which draws together interesting publications, government developments, and useful research. Our newly

reconstituted editorial advisory board will be assisting in the future development of cjm. We will keep the structure and shape of the magazine under review and very much welcome suggestions and proposals for special issues, articles, and new columns or sections.

The themed section of this issue, edited by David Scott of the University of Central Lancashire, takes a detailed look at 'detention' in all its different guises. Covering a variety of settings, the authors explore prison, psychiatric hospitals, immigration detention centres, and police stations. The UK locks up more people in prison per head of the population than most European countries, and we also incarcerate the greatest number of asylum seekers for longer periods than any other country in Europe. At any one time in the UK, there are close to 110,000 people detained in prison, child secure units, and immigration removal centres or under the Mental Health Act (see Table, p. 12).

The numbers in detention have increased in recent years, and there is no indication that the trend towards mass incarceration will slow or reverse. This raises important moral, ethical, and political questions. It also challenges us to think more critically about the role of the state in late modern society and the extent to which detention is used as a form of social control. **David Scott** explores these questions in the introduction to the themed section, highlighting the main issues and challenges involved in the ever-expanding use of detention.

Guns, gangs, and violent crime have continued to dominate the headlines in recent months. From stop and search to 'zero tolerance' the wide-ranging political consensus is that it is possible to police and imprison a way out of these interminable crises. A reliance on tougher responses is politically popular, but the evidence tells a different story. **Ben Bowling** reacts to these strategies, accusing government of a 'zero policy' approach and 'empty rhetoric'. He calls for a radical overhaul of stop-and-search policies – and a scaling back of their use.

Focusing specifically on gun crime, **Peter Squires** looks behind the political rhetoric to consider recent trends and new approaches to tackling it. He reminds us that gun crime is far more complicated than is often portrayed and that only 3% of gun crime results in serious or fatal injury. Different strategies can be adopted, but Squires questions the 'purchase that a criminal justice system can have on essentially social relations of violence'.

Basia Spalek outlines her recent research exploring the impact of the collapse of the Farepak Christmas hamper scheme, highlighting the disproportionate impact on low-income women. The findings indicate that victims experienced great distress, anger, and injustice following the loss of their savings. **Will McMahon** and **Rebecca Roberts** of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies describe some of the thinking behind the Centre's 'Harm and Society' project. They outline this newly emerging area of study and identify the possible merits of looking at death, injury, and deprivation through a social harm 'lens'.

By providing a wider variety of articles that are focused on more than a single theme, cjm provides the reader with a richer mix than previously. The changes and revised format are a result of a new partnership for the magazine with the academic publisher, Routledge. We hope this will extend the reach of the magazine to new

audiences at home and overseas. Importantly, it has enabled us to put the full back catalogue online, providing an invaluable resource of knowledge and learning on criminal justice from the last two decades. We hope that subscribers find it useful and our members enjoy the new online access. After all, the changes and revised format are intended to benefit you, the readers of cjm.

The magazine is entering a new phase in its development, but it will continue to provide a unique blend of contributions from leading academics and practitioners and to be at the forefront of contemporary critical debates and discussions on the future of crime and justice in the UK and beyond. ■

Enver Solomon, Deputy Director of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies and **Rebecca Roberts**, Senior Policy Associate are joint editors of cjm.

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Tel: 020 7848 1688

Email: ccjs.enq@kcl.ac.uk

Visit: www.crimeandjustice.org.uk