

# Downsize, build, transform: An assessment of the Justice Matters workshops

J M Moore

December 2018

## About the author

J M Moore is a Lecturer in Criminology at Newman University, Birmingham

I would like to thank the workshop participants who made the time to meet with me and share their experiences.

Thanks also to Will McMahon and Rebecca Roberts, formally of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, who commissioned this research and kindly spent time talking about the project.

## Declaration of Interest

I am a member of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies.

I have been involved in the Justice Matters project since its inception as a member of its academic advisory panel. I attended one of the workshops being evaluated as a participant and, prior to this research, have spoken with several other workshop participants about their experiences.

I have co-authored a journal article<sup>1</sup> with the Centre's former Senior Policy Associate, Rebecca Roberts, in which we explored the potential of the workshops to develop social justice solutions to problems currently responded to through the paradigm of criminal justice.

Newman University funded the travel and accommodation costs incurred whilst I was carrying out the interviews.

## Centre for Crime and Justice Studies

2 Langley Lane,

Vauxhall,

London SW8 1GB

[info@crimeandjustice.org.uk](mailto:info@crimeandjustice.org.uk)

[www.crimeandjustice.org.uk](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk)

Registered charity No. 251588

A company limited by guarantee.

Registered in England No. 496821

© Centre for Crime and Justice Studies

December 2018

ISBN: 978-1-906003-69-2

<sup>1</sup> Moore, J.M. and Roberts, R. (2016), 'What lies beyond criminal justice? Developing Transformative Solutions' pp. 115-136 in *Justice, Power and Resistance*, Foundation Volume. Online at: [www.ejpress.org/papers/what-lies-beyond-criminal-justice-developing-transformative-solutions](http://www.ejpress.org/papers/what-lies-beyond-criminal-justice-developing-transformative-solutions)

## Contents

---

Foreword .....	1
Introduction .....	2
Justice Matters .....	2
The workshop and toolkit .....	4
The research participants .....	5
Findings .....	5
Participants expectations .....	5
Information provided before the workshop ....	5
Structure of the event .....	6
Working in a group .....	7
The Justice Matters Framework .....	8
Generating solutions .....	8
Future workshops .....	9
Thinking .....	9
Are they useful? .....	10
Can the toolkit be rolled out more widely? .....	10
Conclusions .....	11
Recommendations .....	12

---

## Forward

The Centre is appreciative that J M Moore has carried out this assessment of participants' responses to the workshops and toolkits we carried out as part of the Justice Matters project. The findings and responses will be valuable to us in informing future work and potential partnerships for using the toolkit.

To put the assessment in context, the project was originally prompted by our thinking that criminal justice is far too big; far too costly; and far too intrusive. Far from being a means of delivering social justice, it is the cause of much social injustice, with the combined criminal justice institutions being deeply socially harmful.

By focusing on some of the consequences, participants recognised that we can start earlier on in the criminal justice process and consider other forms of reacting to those caught up in the criminal justice system.

In assessing the workshops and toolkit the overall impression was one of positivity, and it is encouraging that he reported a 'high level of participants' association with the values, analysis and approach of Justice Matters'.

There are many formal decision makers who direct the paths of those criminalised. If we can reach educators, students, practitioners it may be possible to unpick the process and reflect on at what stage social interventions might play a diversionary role in the process.

Thank you to J M Moore for highlighting the positives of the project and most importantly the toolkit that we developed, and also areas we can learn from in this aspect of the Justice Matters project.

**Tammy McGloughlin is Projects and Publications Manager at the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies**

## Introduction

2 [www.newman.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2018/02/Code-of-Practice-for-Research.pdf](http://www.newman.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2018/02/Code-of-Practice-for-Research.pdf)

3 Beardsworth and Keil (1992), cited in Bryman, A. (2008), *Social Research Methods* Oxford: Oxford University Press p.439

4 This section is informed by an interview the researcher conducted with Will McMahon and Rebecca Roberts of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies on 5 March 2017

5 [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/project/justice-matters](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/project/justice-matters)

6 [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/news/reform-sector-strategies](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/news/reform-sector-strategies)

7 [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/publications/criminal-observations-why-harm-matters-more-crime-2nd-edition](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/publications/criminal-observations-why-harm-matters-more-crime-2nd-edition)

This research provides an initial evaluation of the workshop model that has been designed to play a central part of the toolkit developed by the Justice Matters project being run by the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (CCJS). The initial Justice Matters workshops had, CCJS reported, received considerable positive comment from participants, but this feedback was predominately anecdotal, and it was felt that a more systematic assessment was needed to more fully capture participants' experiences, and to identify the workshops' strengths and weaknesses in relation to the objectives of the Justice Matters project. This assessment, it is hoped, will inform the future development of both the workshops and the wider project, as well as supporting future funding bids.

This report focuses on the experiences of six participants who attended at least one of the initial workshops that were held in 2016. A selection of people who attended the workshops were initially approached by CCJS staff who invited them to take part in this research. Where participants consented, they were put in touch with the researcher. All then met individually with the researcher and the interviews took approximately 30 minutes. Some, but not all, interviews were, with the consent of the interviewees, recorded. The research was subject to the Newman University research ethics framework<sup>2</sup> and all participants gave informed consent to participate. Specifically, this project received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Newman University.

The principal research method used in this evaluation was a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews with workshop participants. The Justice Matters workshops have clear stated objectives and this method was chosen as offering the best possibility of establishing each participant's perception of the extent to which they had been achieved. Furthermore, the open-ended, discursive nature of semi-structured interviews allows a process of refinement and new themes, not anticipated by the researcher, to emerge.<sup>3</sup> This proved valuable, particularly in one case where the interviewee was critical of the underlying philosophy of the workshop and wider Justice Matters project.

The interviews were structured to explore:

- Participants' expectations prior to the workshop
- Participants' feedback on the organisation and structure of the workshops
- Participants' evaluation of the workshops' methods
- Participants' understanding of the 'solutions' developed and their usefulness
- The impact the workshop had subsequently to the thinking or activities of participants.

## Justice Matters <sup>4</sup>

Justice Matters is a project of CCJS.<sup>5</sup> It emerged during a CCJS strategic review during which it became clear that although CCJS had been successful in developing a critique of the criminal justice system and identifying its extensive failures, limited progress had been made in developing viable alternatives. Furthermore, research carried out on the criminal justice reform sector by CCJS clearly identified that the reform agenda had failed.<sup>6</sup> It was clear that limited progress could be achieved through working with mainstream penal reform groups and there was a need to develop a coalition of individuals and groups not caught up in the reform paradigm. Influenced by CCJS's commitment to focus on harm rather than crime,<sup>7</sup> the project developed to achieve this was Justice Matters.

Justice Matters adopts a radically different approach to penal reform. Its starting point is that society has become too reliant on criminal justice as the default response to a wide range of social problems. Justice Matters advocates the downsizing of criminal justice whilst simultaneously developing alternative approaches – based on the principles of social justice – which are inclusive and not punitive.

- 
- 8 [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/  
project/justice-matters](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/project/justice-matters)
- 9 [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/  
why-justice-matters](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/why-justice-matters)
- 10 [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/  
why-justice-matters](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/why-justice-matters)
- 11 [www.womeninprison.org.uk](http://www.womeninprison.org.uk)
- 12 [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/  
justice-matters-women](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/justice-matters-women)
- 13 [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/  
publications/empower-resist-  
transform-collection-essays](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/publications/empower-resist-transform-collection-essays)
- 14 [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/  
project/justice-matters-  
community-plan-holloway  
plan4holloway.org](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/project/justice-matters-community-plan-holloway-plan4holloway.org)
- 15 [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/  
justice-matters-tackling-ethnic-  
penalty](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/justice-matters-tackling-ethnic-penalty)

As CCJS state on their website:

*The Justice Matters initiative is motivated by the belief that the United Kingdom's over reliance on policing, prosecution and punishment is socially harmful, economically wasteful, and prevents us from tackling the complex problems our society faces in a sustainable, socially just manner.*<sup>8</sup>

Mainstream reform groups largely remain committed to the idea that criminal justice – and penal sanctions (in particular) – offer the required solutions and that the evident failures of criminal justice are the result of a system malfunction, resolvable by the right reforms. Justice Matters is based on a conviction that it was essential to get people to think differently and to look outside the criminal justice paradigm for solutions to social problems. The project seeks to create a dialogue that is radically different, drawing in a wide range of individuals and organisations from outside the criminal justice system. In short, it aspires to develop ideas and solutions that escaped the limitations of criminal justice expertise, whilst simultaneously liberating other expertise outside the system. From its start Justice Matters had a ‘threefold focus: downsize, build, transform’.<sup>9</sup> This focus clearly identified that Justice Matters was about both a reduction in criminal justice and the development of solutions outside it. To progress Justice Matters, CCJS had engaged a wide range of other organisations in conversations and set up a working group to advise on the project. The working group brought in people from outside of the organisation who could provide a range of perspectives.

At the outset, Justice Matters had two distinctive characteristics. Firstly, it had a clear critique, arguing that whilst it was important to recognise that there was a considerable amount of harm in society that required responding to, the current criminal justice system responses failed to do this effectively. Whilst criminal justice ‘is good at punishing certain individuals and groups’ it not only ‘fails to prevent social problems from arising, or to resolve those that occur’ but ‘also crowds out other, more innovative, just and effective policy and practice solutions to the problems our society faces’.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, it wanted to focus on these ‘more innovative, just and effective policy and practice solutions’. To develop them, a conversational process was adopted with an extensive range of groups and organisations who were already engaged with these problems or had expertise which could contribute to the development of transformative solutions. CCJS was *not* claiming that they had ‘better ways’ of dealing with these social problems but wanted to engage in a conversation to seek out solutions. They were seeking partners to work with to develop better ways of responding to social problems that drew on the widest possible expertise.

Justice Matters has several threads. The first, in alliance with Women in Prison<sup>11</sup> and a wider network, was Justice Matters for Women.<sup>12</sup> Highlighting the extensive and systemic harms faced by women, this thread also identified that criminal justice largely ignored these harms and, where it did intervene, its responses tend to increase harm by replicating and reinforcing inequality. It sought to build an alliance to challenge the underlying structural inequalities that caused harm, including punishment and other forms of coercive control.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, this thread provided the basis for a specific intervention following the closure of Holloway Prison, Justice Matters: A community plan for Holloway.<sup>14</sup> Drawing on the principles of Justice Matters this has involved working with local residents to develop a positive vision for the future of the former prison site, including specific provision of non-punitive resources for women.<sup>15</sup> Thirdly, a thread of Justice Matters, Tackling the Ethnic Penalty, focused on the over-representation in penal processes of some minority ethnic groups.<sup>16</sup> This not only focused on the institutional racism that underpins the criminal justice system’s targeting of minority ethnic groups, but also the potential benefits for these communities of downsizing criminal justice and reallocating resources to social justice solutions. Fourthly, CCJS staff developed the workshop and toolkit which is the focus of this research.

## The workshop and toolkit<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/justice-matters-workshop-and-toolkit](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/justice-matters-workshop-and-toolkit)

<sup>18</sup> This became clear at an event hosted by CCJS and University of Liverpool – ‘What are the alternatives to prison?’ attended by more than 80 activists, practitioners and researchers. The contributions established that whilst there was a consensus on what not to do, much more thought was required on alternatives. [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/resources/how-can-we-make-prisons-obsolete](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/resources/how-can-we-make-prisons-obsolete)

<sup>19</sup> [www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/justice-matters-workshop-and-toolkit](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/justice-matters-workshop-and-toolkit)

At the heart of Justice Matters was a desire to find better solutions and resolutions to conflicts and harms. Whilst it was clear that there was a genuine and widespread appetite for finding radical social justice solutions that truly sat outside of criminal justice, the mechanics of doing this were proving to be highly problematic.<sup>18</sup> To respond to this, Justice Matters set out to create a portfolio of resources and tools to provide a coherent framework within which constructive thinking and discussions could take place. To achieve this, in late 2015, in collaboration with a small group of activists and researchers, CCJS staff started working on developing a toolkit and visual aids. The aim of the toolkit was to provide an opportunity to develop ways of thinking and ways of acting that allowed responses to social harm and conflicts without recourse to the criminal justice system and punishment. The tool kit was designed to be used in a workshop setting. The design allowed for the workshop to work with a variety of participants. Although it would work with a homogenous group – members of the same organisation, for example – it was equally appropriate for a diverse group of people who may not even know each other.

In using the toolkit within workshops<sup>19</sup> participants firstly identify a social harm or social problem. The problem identified is completely open with the intention that workshop participants will select something real and important in their own lives. Topics chosen have included sexual violence, ‘anti-social behaviour’, racism and homelessness. The workshop starts by focusing on exploring the selected topic and participants are required to identify who is harmed. Recognising the pull of criminal justice thinking, and the need to avoid it infecting the later stages of the process, the next stage is a critical discussion of how, at present, criminal justice responds (or doesn’t) to this problem. This allows participants to establish the difficulties with, and limitations of, the criminal justice approach.

The toolkit then encourages participants to move beyond criminal justice and focus on ‘doing things differently’ with prompts such as, ‘what would a social justice approach look like?’ Throughout their discussions the workshop groups are encouraged to consider if their proposed responses or identified approaches are focused at an individual, institutional or systemic level. Groups are also encouraged to identify if their solutions challenge or alleviate patterns of inequality and who would benefit from their implementation. The groups then consider ‘risks’, the degree to which their solutions replicate the problems inherent within criminal justice approaches and the extent to which their proposals are vulnerable to being subverted or captured by the criminal justice system. The workshop concludes with participants focusing on how change could potentially happen. This is anticipated to enable participants to identify that although the solutions they have identified may include ambitious proposals that require long term structural changes, they will also include proposals that could be implemented much more swiftly. The aspiration is that participants, by discussing ‘solutions’ to the problem or harm they have selected to focus on rather than seeking ‘alternatives’ to current criminal justice reactions, will become aware that opportunities exist for radically different responses to social problems.

## The research participants

This research is based on interviews carried out with six participants, all of whom had attended a Justice Matters pilot workshop. Apart from one, all the participants had established relationships with CCJS and heard about the workshops directly through them. The one exception was a participant who had heard about the workshop through their wider network. It was clear that CCJS's reputation and the participants' perceptions of the organisation were strong factors in motivating attendance. Within the interviewees were those who attended in an individual capacity and those who represented organisations. However, this distinction was not important. For those within organisations there was clear, personal commitment to social justice and those who attended as individuals aspired to working in the sector. Five out of the six signed up to the workshop with a positive anticipation of the process. One participant felt the approach advertised was, in respect of themselves, 'pushing at an open door'. Another was keen to address issues, 'outside of the student bubble', whilst another was keen to explore how the approach could inform their organisation's work with prisoners and ex-prisoners. One participant, however, was not aware of the workshop's specific focus and attended as part of a wider engagement with think tanks and open events.

## Findings

This section seeks to report back on the main findings of the interviews carried out with participants. These findings are organised under sub-headings which broadly reflect the 'semi-structured' organisation of the interviews. They have been recreated from both my contemporaneous notes and from reference to the recorded interviews. Whilst some of those I interviewed were happy to be identified, others – due to their employment – were not. I have therefore anonymised contributions throughout and hopefully not exposed any participants to identification. All participants have been sent a draft copy of this report and had the opportunity to request removal of any content they feel would identify them. Whilst it is not possible to fully detail/describe the full content of our conversations, it is hoped this account highlights the main themes and fairly represents participants considered and often highly nuanced, responses.

## Participants' expectations

Overall the participants reported that they had arrived at the workshops without specific expectations. One stated that they signed up without any clear idea of what they were attending, whilst another had been expecting the event to be structured as a seminar. One participant had come hoping to find out about alternatives to criminal justice, particularly in respect to domestic violence. Overall those interviewed attended the workshop with positive expectations. The workshop was seen by participants as, a 'workshop not a talkshop'; somewhere, 'to discuss difficult issues'; an opportunity, 'to engage with similar minded people'; and meet a wide mix of people/different agencies.

## Information provided before the workshop

In general, given the interviews were conducted over a year after the workshops, respondents could not recall in any detail what information was provided prior to the workshop. All did however feel what was provided was minimal. One respondent would have liked a lot more information, they felt that the workshops were engaging with 'very complex issues' and that they would have appreciated time to think about the issues and key questions in advance. Another felt it would have been helpful if participants had been encouraged to think in advance about what justice means to them as an individual. However, other participants felt that it was better to arrive cold. One participant argued that people not being prepared had contributed to making the day successful, whilst another appreciated that people 'came fresh' as it helped 'everyone to engage on the day'.



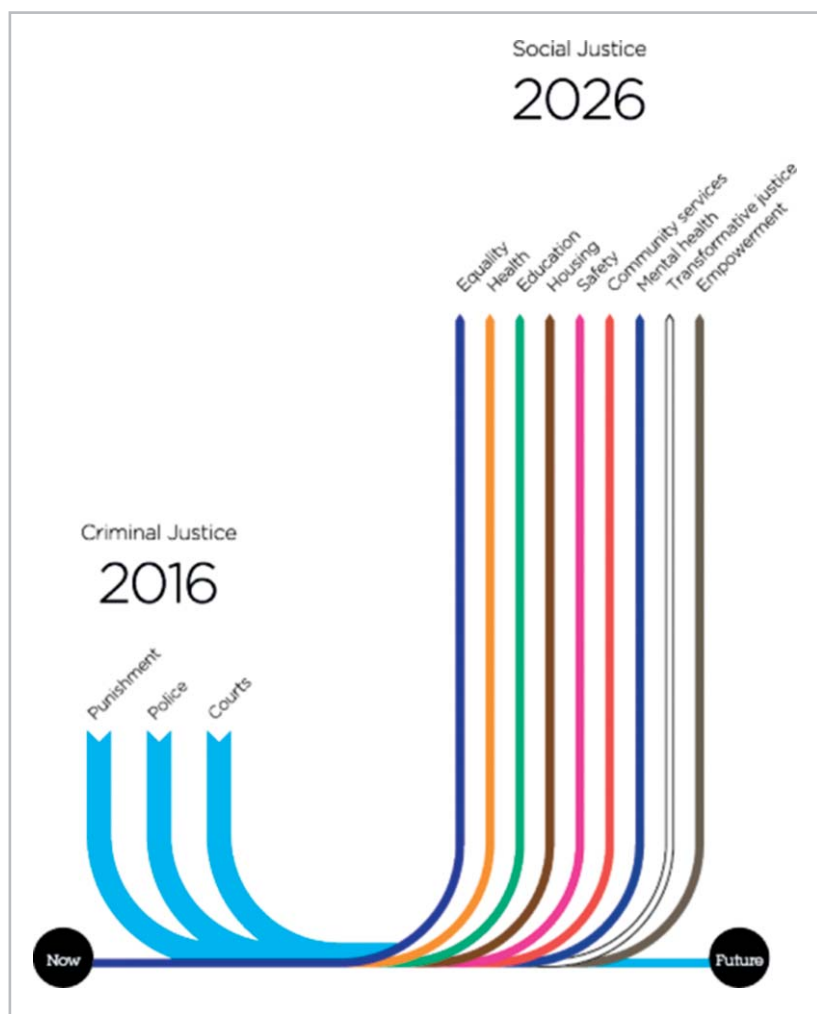
## Structure of the event

Respondents had an interesting mix of observations on the structure of the workshop. Some considered the length of the session – half a day – to be about right, whilst others felt a longer session was required. Time pressure was not regarded as entirely problematic with one participant observing that their workshop had been ‘a bit rushed, but this helped us focus’. The time spent at the outset for introductions was appreciated by some participants, who felt that it was important to ‘get to know each other’. There was a consensus that there was a good balance between information giving and participation, with participants split between those who would have appreciated more background and those who felt there was a ‘lot of preamble’ and would have preferred to have spent more time focusing on the activity. This difference is likely to reflect different people’s personality, knowledge and aspirations and is likely to be replicated with future groups of participants. Whilst it is impossible to establish an ideal balance it is probably worth noting that with separate groups a different balance needs to be struck. Groups doing the workshop who arrive with expertise and cohesion will require less background information, whilst less homogenous groups will need more. In the latter case it might be worth recognising the different knowledge/experience of participants and highlighting the need to ensure everyone is brought up to speed.

Several participants identified that both the Reclaim Justice posters (see below), used in the early part of the workshop had really helped set the scene and provided a clear focus for the subsequent group work.



One participant, however, felt that although the poster above provided a ‘really good initial visual stimulus’ they didn’t feel the poster below ‘really added much’.



Participants reported that the workshops were well organised, the number of people attending was felt to be about right, thus ensuring the contribution of a range of different perspectives. In the workshops that the interviewees had attended, participants had been encouraged to specify a problem or area they wished to focus on and these were used to identify groups for people to work together in. Inevitably, some participants whose interest was not shared had, consequently, to join a group discussing a topic unrelated to their individual preference. This led to two participants arguing that the topics should have been predetermined. Will and Rebecca in their conversation with me had observed that the process of identifying the problems to be focused on, had at times, caused delays and they had wondered if they should provide some suggested harms, problems and conflicts to help focus participants. One interviewee suggested prompts were needed, but these needed to be areas rather than specific topics. They suggested one way might be to provide, in respect of the poster above, an explanation as to the question, 'what do all these coloured lines mean?'

With one exception, the participants recognised both the threefold focus of Justice Matters – downsize, build, transform<sup>20</sup> – and the way the structure of the workshop ultimately focused on delivering them. One participant was critical of the workshop organisation for two primary reasons. Firstly, they thought its audience was

wrong and that it needed to be directed more at 'decision makers' able to create change. Secondly, they felt the focus was too much on 'low level stuff' and needed to be 'much more hard hitting'. They expressed concern that, 'I don't hear a clear framework of answers'. There was a clear conflict here between the ambition of the workshop to look *outside* criminal justice and this participant's commitment to a reform agenda focus on change from the *inside*. Such differences in perspective are unavoidable and given how they represent opposing paradigms, the best we can aspire to is to develop ways of learning from these differences.

<sup>20</sup> www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/  
why-justice-matters

## Working in a group

At the heart of the workshop is the establishment of groups to address a specific issue using the Justice Matters toolkit. Seminar participants joined groups rather than being allocated to them. For most participants this process worked smoothly with an obvious alignment between the problem/harm they had identified and the available group topics. One interviewee was concerned about the possibility of a group being joined by several people who knew/worked with each other and the risk this carried of others being excluded. However, this had not happened, and another person reported that they had intentionally avoided people they knew.

Breaking into groups to focus on working together on a defined task was identified by nearly all participants as the key strength of the workshop. One person particularly appreciated that there were separate groups in the room, each working on different problems/harms. This they felt contributed to a

feeling of energy and excitement which inspired their specific group. Group sizes were felt by participants to be about right. The composition of groups was reported as a 'good mix'. One interviewee highlighted how some members of their group 'brought considerable specialist knowledge' but that this expertise 'helped guide but not dominate' the group's discussions. One suggestion that emerged was the provision of a note taker for each group. This would enable a record of discussion to be made, or as one participant observed, it would allow for the 'bottling the information'. A question raised by one interviewee, was the possibility of people working on their own. In this case it was suggested as an alternative to 'joining a group that didn't interest', but would also apply to someone who, for whatever reason, wished to work alone. Whilst this appears to contradict the collaborative spirit of the process if, for some, it is the most effective way of enabling their participation, there may be a case for facilitating a 'group of one'.

## The Justice Matters Framework

Groups were supplied with a worksheet to both structure and record their discussions. The worksheet, a single piece of paper, reflects the structure of the process outlined above. Interviewees were very positive about the worksheet which was perceived as 'a help to focus' and 'kept us focused'. For one participant the 'really good' worksheet's primary strength was how it focused their group on the three themes of downsize, build, and transform. For another it provided a 'really useful structure to develop a narrative', whilst another highlighted how it 'helped move (us) away from criminal justice approaches'. Another comment on the worksheet was that it was 'good to go through what we would do now and then thinking what you could do differently'.

The fact that it was a single sheet of paper was also viewed positively. Likewise, interviewees found the worksheet very useful as a record of their group's discussions. There was some concern that the later stages of the process which required groups to classify their solutions in terms of short, medium and long-term objectives was rushed and more time was needed to reflect on these. Its practical use was illustrated by one interviewee who reported that within their group, 'some people struggled with compassion' and were 'looking for someone (or something) to blame'. This need to blame is a powerful instinct reinforced by criminal justice thinking which the participant recognised was a major impediment to developing solutions. However, they reported that the 'worksheet (was) helpful for processing this initial need to blame', and that by getting it into the record it became possible to both critique it and move onto to more positive considerations.

## Generating solutions

The process was intended to enable participants to develop solutions to whatever harm/problem they were exploring. All the respondents recognised this and reported that their groups had achieved this. Even a respondent who couldn't 'remember the specifics' recalled that their group had come up with a 'lot of solutions' that were 'quite comprehensive'. There was inevitably some ambiguity over the usefulness of the solutions given the nature of the topics discussed. For example, one interviewee's group had addressed the topic of homelessness. The solution – to build more houses – was both simple to identify and incredibly difficult to deliver. This theme was touched on by all those spoken to. As one recalled, the solutions their group had devised, whilst useful and possible were unlikely to be achieved due to major societal or structural issues. Another interviewee was positive about the 'mix of realistic and idealist solutions' that their group had come up with. They felt that the Justice Matters framework helped develop both and it was important to identify both 'immediate changes and more structural change'. Another participant also valued the framework's use of solutions that can be delivered over different timescales. However, this was for the pragmatic reason that it allowed their group to focus more on immediate changes. Across several interviews there was a concern about where the solutions developed went? One person asked, 'how much of this sticks?' A concern that both related to the solutions but also the thinking. Another spoke of feeling 'deflated' as they felt that despite undertaking 'really important work' there was no follow up and momentum had been lost.

Several participants highlighted how valuable they found the framework's focus on solutions rather than merely providing a critique of existing responses. There was a feeling it led to very different strategies than those offered by criminal justice. As one person observed the 'solutions were not reactive, like the criminal justice system, but pre-empted negative outcomes ... meeting needs as needs'. The process had, another interviewee reported, made clear to their group the 'need for services that allowed people to ask for help without being subjected to blame/shame'. One participant had a significantly different standpoint and felt the focus needed to come up with 'far clearer outcomes'. They proposed the outcome should be to produce a short 250-word report detailing solutions for government departments and criminal justice agencies. This perspective presupposes that firstly the problems/harms being explored are generated by a malfunction, and secondly that the relevant authorities will respond positively to suggested solutions to this failure. This thinking reflects mainstream reform thinking and as Justice Matters intentionally rejects this logic, this critique is not one that can productively be incorporated. However, it raises important questions: to what extent does the workshop and other resources need to explicitly address this perspective? Is there a need to be clear about the nature of structural inequalities/power relations and why 'common-sense' solutions fail?

## Future workshops

There was almost unanimous agreement between interviewees that the workshops should continue and be widely rolled out. For participants they offered the opportunity to 'disassemble really ingrained approaches to certain forms of crime', to challenge the 'lack of imagination' of many practitioners and policy makers and provide an effective way of developing 'viable alternatives'. There were a range of suggested ways of developing the project. Whilst the examples detailed below reflect the interests of those I interviewed – women and gendered violence – these were not meant to be exclusive and it is easy to imagine a similar potential in other areas. Indeed, some of the participants were very keen to stress that the workshops had potential in 'a very wide range of settings' or 'I can't think of any example of where this would not be a better approach than criminal justice'. Several participants saw the workshops as grounded in a public health approach. There was also an awareness that potential participants were at 'very different places on the journey' and consideration needed to be given to who exactly was being targeted in future workshops. Similarly, another person thought the most productive way forward was to 'targeted specific groups' and workshops 'became tailored'.

Suggestions made concerning the organisation of future workshops included exploiting the model's potential to radically transform restorative justice encounters, moving them away from a focus on blame (and the requirement for apology) and towards a more objective exploration of harm and conflict that could escape the rigid perpetrator/victim division. Another interviewee developed this idea further with a suggestion that it could be used 'with survivors to identify what support services they want'. This removes the traditional focus on the perpetrator transferring it to the survivor. But it could go further, empowering survivors to determine key interventions and alternative approaches. Another proposal was to use it (separately) with both victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. Several participants highlighted its potential for engaging leaders within the voluntary sector. These included a proposal for a session involving the leaders of the domestic violence sector and another for the leaders of the Criminal Justice Alliance member organisations. In both cases the suggestion was motivated by a belief that the workshop could help these leaders better understand the 'unintentional consequences of reform agenda(s)'. There were various other suggestions for using it with service users, although one participant argued it would need to be tailored to effective work with some groups of service users.

## Thinking

The framework was designed to help people 'think differently' and escape the criminal justice mindset. For the participants, who had been largely sympathetic to its philosophy, it had not resulted in a dramatic change in their thinking. In part this was because interviewees tended to place the workshop in the context of a wider development of their thinking. For one, the workshop 'reinforced rather than

changed' their thinking; another reported it had 'helped me be more clear' whilst a third saw it as 'part of a journey' although it was 'difficult to see its (specific) contribution'. Another participant reported that although they had, prior to the workshop, 'understood the Justice Matters framework' participation at the workshop had 'allowed me to communicate (it) with others'. A number saw it is having real potential with a wider group of people than those already converted to its philosophy. One could 'see how it could help others go on that journey', whilst another reported that it 'would be exciting to use with people whose thinking was more in tune with the punitive paradigm'.

## Are they useful?

In general, the workshops were felt to be useful. Whilst for a majority this was felt very positively, for others it was more qualified with one reporting that it 'felt like the sessions were pilots', whilst another described the workshop as 'vaguely useful' and a third concerned the work undertaken 'needs to go somewhere'. Several interviewees felt there was a 'potential to use them more widely' and suggestions included the identification of the possible use of the toolkit with survivors and groups who work with them to 'identify how things could have been done differently'. The participant who wanted a more direct engagement with criminal justice practice was the most critical, identifying the lack of 'concrete proposals' that could be communicated to criminal justice agencies.

## Can the toolkit be rolled out more widely?

In talking about the potential for the further, wider, use of the toolkit and workshop much of the discussion with participants focus on the 'how'. Broadly speaking we identified four possible models:

- **Free resource:** the full toolkit would be made available on the internet
- **Train the trainers:** the toolkit would be available to those who had attended a train the trainer course
- **Accredited deliverers:** to deliver the toolkit would require attending a train the trainer session and be subject to ongoing quality control to ensure that delivery conformed to the Justice Matters framework
- **Continued to be CCJS delivered:** that any future sessions would be delivered by CCJS staff.

The underlying concern was, on the one hand, the need to maintain the Justice Matters ethos and, on the other hand, to distribute the resource as widely as possible. Whilst participants were aware of the limited resources of CCJS there was considerable concern about the toolkit being colonised by those with their own agendas and indeed criminal justice itself. So, whilst one interviewee described it as a 'great resource', but one that 'needs train the trainer', another highlighted the 'potential of doing a disservice to the project and its aims' whilst another asked 'what if it is delivered (by someone in a way that) reflects their own agenda?'. This was not a risk that this participant believed could be avoided by training.

The general feedback was summed up by one participant's observation that the 'usefulness (of the toolkit) is only as good as the facilitator' and another's concern about the 'risk of inconsistencies', with the toolkit potentially being 'used for other agendas'. For a number of those interviewed the role of CCJS staff was highlighted. One person expressed 'concern about rolling out' the toolkit and questioned 'the value of it without Rebecca and Will'. Another, whilst seeing the benefit of a train the trainer approach, argued that it was 'necessary to focus on people able to hold it as well as Rebecca and Will'. This conflict between economy and quality control is a significant finding and is addressed in the recommendations.

Linked to this discussion was a feeling that more was needed than just replicating the workshops. For one participant the workshop had 'felt like a start of a conversation (that) ... needs to go somewhere', whilst another observed it was 'great coming together and working together', but asked, 'what about when you go away?'. This tied in with the experience of CCJS staff. Rebecca and Will reported that, after

workshops, they always felt 'really positive' and that they always received good feedback from participants, but, 'then it feels like we never quite manage to capture it and do something. People don't have something to take away'. There were suggestions that the workshops should be embedded in 'some sort of community' created to facilitate the 'sharing of practices, approaches and solutions'. Interviewees were really interested in hearing about how other people have used ideas developed in workshops and other developments. There was support for establishing a group that allowed participants to maintain contact with the project and continue to learn from others. Suggestions were made for a 'forum' and for a Facebook group or some other social media platform.

## Conclusions

Feedback received by CCJS following the workshops had been consistently favourable and this research confirms that workshop participants, with one exception, found the event to have been a positive experience. The opportunity to 'think differently' was appreciated and there was a high level of participants' association with the values, analysis and approach of Justice Matters. This may reflect the type of person attending the pilots but does show that there is a not insignificant base of support from which to build.

The workshop's interviewees reported that the workshops were well structured with the right balance between explanation and activity. The working in groups was the most valuable aspect of the workshop, although this was not unproblematic where participants' interests were not reflected in the topics explored by groups. The experience of working in groups was considered positive and their size about right. There was a feeling that the workshop structure should not be rigid, but flexible, to adapt to the requirements of the specific group attending. The worksheet was perceived to be extremely helpful, giving group discussions structure and focus. An issue that emerged was that, although this structure was highly effective for those already committed to the Justice Matters philosophy, this did not necessarily transfer to a participant committed to seeking solutions within the criminal justice paradigm. This is potentially an important area for further research if, in the future, workshops are undertaken with people with this perspective.

The focus on developing solutions was perceived very positively. The design of the worksheet which recognised that solutions were likely to range from those immediately implementable through to those which would require substantial structural changes was a real strength. This allowed for a good mix of 'realistic' and 'idealistic' solutions and how both could be incorporate in a timeline of activity. The main concern of participants (and indeed CCJS staff) was that the ideas and solutions developed in the workshop were not lost. There was a strong feeling that structural arrangements, possibly via social media, should be developed to keep a record of workshops and to facilitate their dissemination.

It was clear from my initial discussion with Rebecca Roberts and Will McMahon, and a subsequent conversation with Richard Garside and Neala Hickey, that CCJS saw Justice Matters as an important part of their strategic plan. They had invested lots of time and effort in the toolkit and were keen that it resulted in something more substantial than the limited number of workshops that they and colleagues had been able to run to date. Exploring ways of achieving this this played a central role in my discussion with the workshop participants I interviewed. Whilst there was considerable support for developing and extending the workshops and toolkit there was also significant caution. There was no support for just making the resources available on an 'open access' basis. There was also little support for a roll out through a 'train the trainer' programme. This caution reflects a strong belief that on their own, without skilled facilitation, the toolkit and workshop are of limited value and could potentially be used in ways incompatible with the Justice Matters philosophy. Whilst these are legitimate concerns, there are also considerable benefits to making the Justice Matters toolkit available on an open access basis. The toolkit has been designed to enable a wide range of people to think differently about social problems and conflicts and to assist them to seek out solutions outside of the criminal justice paradigm. Maximising its use, whilst not without risk, will facilitate users seeking to promote its objectives. The risks could be minimised by including within the resources a critique of the

(in)effectiveness of criminal justice responses and a clear statement explaining and justifying the Justice Matters approach.

During the period in which this research was being undertaken, CCJS has been reviewing their organisational strategy. This has several potential implications for the Justice Matters project. Firstly, CCJS wishes to strategically focus on the *harms of criminalisation*. It follows therefore that any development of this project, at least in the immediate future, needs to be aligned to this objective. Whilst there is a clear overlap between Justice Matters and the *harms of criminalisation* these need to be highlighted and made explicit. The obvious way of doing this is by targeting the use of the toolkit and any future workshops run by CCJS at specific areas within their *harms of criminalisation* agenda rather than continue the open-ended approach which characterised the pilots. This would also align well with a second strategic decision: to ensure a clearer emphasis within CCJS on more limited, but more focused and better resourced, areas of work. Open ended workshops risk diluting this focus and aligning with this objective requires a more prescriptive and prioritised approach. Furthermore, by limiting CCJS-run workshops to areas of particular strategic interest to CCJS, the outputs generated would directly relate to CCJS's work and therefore be much more likely to have an 'afterlife', be disseminated, and subsequently be followed up.

## Recommendations

- Consideration is given to using the Justice Matters toolkit, and the workshop, within CCJS's priority areas. In particular it could:
  - Contribute directly to CCJS's work on the *harms of criminalisation* within specific priority areas.
  - Facilitate the development of alternative **direct solutions** to the harms which criminalisation purports to be responding to.
  - Assist with developing CCJS's relationship with strategic partners (and potential new partners)
  - Provide a forum that enables the expertise of others to inform CCJS's thinking in key strategic areas.
- CCJS considers developing Justice Matters partnerships with a limited number of organisations to enable them to use the toolkit and deliver workshops. These could be community groups, campaigning groups, or education providers. Clearly care needs to be taken in both selecting partners and agreeing protocols to ensure such delivery promotes CCJS objectives and is in line with its strategic plan. In view of this it may be prudent to operate on the basis of fixed-term, but extendable agreements. Such partnership could allow for a more widespread delivery of quality assured workshops, particularly where partners could deliver these through volunteers.
- Consideration is given to making the Justice Matters toolkit available online as an open access resource. To do this will require some investment in reviewing, refreshing and updating the resources. In addition, consideration should be given to including a package of explanatory material (possibly linked to other available online resources). An online forum or website could be set up to allow those using the toolkit to share their findings and the solutions they have generated.

The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies is an independent educational charity that advances public understanding of crime, criminal justice and social harm. Through partnership and coalition-building, advocacy and research, we work to inspire social justice solutions to the problems society faces, so that many responses that criminalise and punish are no longer required.