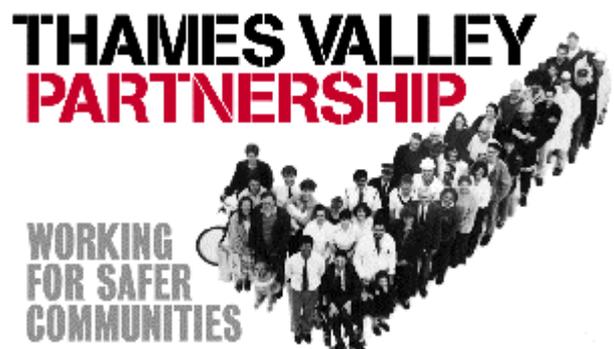


# **Safe Returns**

**Report of a conference held at Bullingdon  
Community Prison on 1<sup>st</sup> December**

**December 2004**





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## **1. Introduction**

John Hedge, Community Safety Director, Thames Valley Partnership

The conference was arranged as a joint venture between the Thames Valley Partnership and the Prison Service. It followed an event earlier in the year which had focussed on the relationship between community safety organisations and the Probation Service. It was felt that particularly with the implementation of the National Offender Management Service, a conference to consider the importance of effective resettlement of prisoners to the community safety agenda was timely. The event therefore was targeted at key prison staff and representatives from CDRPs and other community safety agencies.

The contributions by Bruce Davison and Maxine Myatt provided information not only about the economic and social context of resettlement but also described developing interventions in the context of a range of government policies.

The presentations by Stephen Pryor and John Hedge, on behalf of Adrian Lawson, described two contrasting projects which enabled prisoners to make a contribution to communities during sentence and as part of their overall resettlement.

Delegates participated in three discussion groups on accommodation, training and employment, and prisoner contributions to the community during sentence. A summary of the main points raised and the identified priorities is given.

In summarising the work done, Sue Raikes, Chief Executive of the Thames Valley Partnership, thanked John Hedge and Mary Faux for planning the event and the Governor and staff at Bullingdon Community Prison for hosting the event so effectively. She noted four key themes: -

- There were some examples of good practice which needed identifying and drawing upon.
- Bullingdon and other prisons were successfully trying very new ways of sustaining contact with the community and links with the community safety world needed strengthening.
- The conference had demonstrated the need for a prolific approach towards prisoners and their families – ideas which had recently been raised at the Family Matters conference. Early intervention initiatives did need to take into account the prison dimension.
- It was important that CDRPs particularly took account of resettlement issues within their overall strategies.



## **2. Summary of the Day and Main Issues Raised**

Sue Raikes, Chief Executive Thames Valley Partnership

The inputs and discussions indicated that there is a lot of good work and good ideas already incorporated into Prison/Probation Service practice on resettlement. There are also good links in some places with local organisations on the ground. It is important that we build on these ideas, identify and learn from examples of good practice and look at whether they can be introduced more broadly within the Thames Valley.

There were four themes that seemed to weave through the discussions and debate.

### **Making the Financial Case**

The costs of imprisonment and re-offending are huge. We need to be bold in arguing for money to help resettlement. A few hundred pounds to help an individual prisoner with something crucial to their resettlement can reap huge financial dividends in the longer term. There is always a difficulty in arguing for 'upstream' money because the organisation or budget funding the earlier intervention is rarely the same as the budget where the long-term savings might eventually be felt. But we need to argue with confidence to support innovation and strengthen resettlement and use the figures that we have on the costs of imprisonment and offender to convince the wider public.

### **Developing Links**

There is evidence in many places of effective links being developed between prisons, local authority housing departments, employers and training providers, drugs, treatment agencies etc. We need to ensure that those links are available in every area and also ensure that the strategic structures are in place to bring those organisations round the table to support the resettlement strategy and the reducing re-offending action plan.

### **Work in Prisons and at the Interface with Resettlement**

There is evidence of good, well targeted and focused work being done within prisons in preparation for release. This work focuses on accommodation, drugs, treatment, skills and employment and work with families. If this work is to be effective, there needs to be better links between this and the work outside following prisoners' release. For example housing advice includes making the link with the local authority; training and skills development in prison should be linked in directly into programmes or employment on release etc.

### **Responsibility and Citizenship for Prisoners**

The workshop highlighted a number of ways in which prisoners can be given more responsibility during their sentence with examples of offenders as CAB advisors, working on community projects, repaying rent arrears. All of these contribute to the development of self-esteem, prepare the prisoner for taking responsibility for themselves on release and can contribute to community safety. Resettlement initiatives can also help to break down

the barriers between offenders and the wider community treating prisoners as ordinary citizens with something to contribute.

These four strands running through the day provide some pointers for future directions and reinforce the importance of resettlement strategies which link with local agencies and CDRPs. Most of the ideas are already there in some form – it is a question of building on, creating better links and helping to make good practice sustainable.

### 3. Key Resettlement Issues and Their Importance for Community Safety

Bruce Davison, Head of Social Inclusion: Thames Valley, Hampshire & IOW, HM Prison Service

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SAFE RETURNS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>ECONOMIC CONTEXT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; THAMES VALLEY (AND THE SOUTH EAST GENERALLY) IS THE ECONOMIC POWERHOUSE OF THE COUNTRY.</li> <li>&gt; ALSO (ONE OF) THE SAFEST REGIONS.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>BUT</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SAFE RETURNS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>ECONOMIC CONTEXT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; IN EUROPEAN TERMS REGION HAS HIGHER CRIME LEVELS THAN INTERNATIONAL COMPETITORS.</li> <li>&gt; OFFENDERS ARE SEEN AS THE PROBLEM.</li> </ul>																																																																															
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>RESETTLEMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ RESETTLEMENT IS ALL THE WORK THAT ENABLES THE PRISONER TO PRACTICE HIS/HER LEARNING IN THE PRISON AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF RE-OFFENDING AND OF CAUSING SERIOUS HARM.</li> <li>➤ SOCIAL FACTORS ARE HIGHLY ASSOCIATED WITH RE-OFFENDING RATES: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•ACCOMMODATION</li> <li>•UNEMPLOYMENT</li> <li>•SUBSTANCE MISUSE</li> <li>•EMOTIONAL WELLBEING</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>RESETTLEMENT</b></p> <p>WHEN IT GOES WRONG IT IS OFTEN BECAUSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ INSUFFICIENT JOINT WORKING <p>‘THE ENGAGEMENT OF DIFFERENT SERVICES WITH PRISONERS IS NOT JOINED UP AS THEY PASS THROUGH THE SYSTEM.’</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>SOCIAL EXCLUSION UNIT 2002</i></p> </li> <li>➤ INSUFFICIENT INNOVATION <p>‘THERE HAS OFTEN BEEN LITTLE ENCOURAGEMENT OR SUPPORT OF INNOVATIVE PRACTICE THAT CAN BREAK DOWN BOUNDARIES AND HARNESS THE INPUT OF THOSE WHO CAN REDUCE RE-OFFENDING.’</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>SOCIAL EXCLUSION UNIT 2002</i></p> </li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>‘THROUGH THE GATE’ WORKING FOR RESETTLEMENT</b></p> <p>AIMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ RE-INTEGRATE OFFENDERS INTO SOCIETY</li> <li>✓ REDUCE RISK OF RE-OFFENDING</li> <li>✓ PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN AND DEVELOP AND CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY</li> <li>✓ IMPROVE SOCIAL AND OTHER SKILLS</li> </ul> <p>HOW?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP</li> <li>➤ COMMUNICATION BETWEEN US</li> <li>➤ UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER’S REQUIREMENTS</li> </ul>	





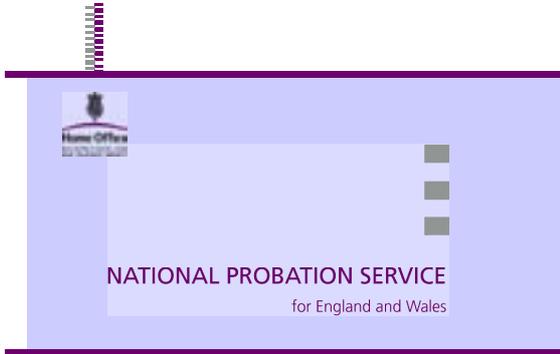




Maxine Myatt, Assistant Chief Officer, National Probation Service:  
Thames Valley Area

 <p>NATIONAL PROBATION SERVICE for England and Wales</p>	<p><b>RESETTLEMENT OF PRISONERS</b></p> <p>SOCIAL INCLUSION = REDUCTION OF REOFFENDING = COMMUNITY SAFETY</p>
<p><b>CRIME REDUCTION IS CURRENTLY FOCUSING ON LOCAL PRIORITY OFFENDERS BUT THIS IS ONLY THE START</b></p>	<p><b>NATIONAL CONTEXT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 75000 PEOPLE CURRENTLY IN PRISON – ALL BUT A HANDFUL WILL BE RELEASED</li> <li>• REOFFENDING BY EX PRISONERS COST £11 BILLION PER YEAR</li> <li>• EX PRISONERS RESPONSIBLE FOR 1 IN 5 ALL RECORDED CRIME</li> <li>• 59% PRISONERS RECONVICTED WITHIN 2 YEARS</li> <li>• 74% YOUNG ADULT PRISONERS CONVICTED WITHIN 2 YEARS</li> <li>• 75% PRISONERS SENTENCED FOR BURGLARY RECONVICTED WITHIN 2 YEARS</li> </ul>
<p><b>SOCIAL INCLUSION AGENDA- THE SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT PRISONERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE UNEMPLOYED AT SENTENCE (67%)</li> <li>• 13 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO HAVE BEEN IN CARE ( 27%)</li> <li>• 10 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO HAVE REGULARLY TRUANTED (30%)</li> </ul>	<p><b>SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PRISONERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 52% (72%Women) - NO QUALIFICATIONS (15%)</li> <li>• 65% NUMERACY AT/BELOW LEVEL 1 (23%)</li> <li>• 48% READING AT/BELOW LEVEL 1 ( 21%)</li> <li>• 32% HOMELESS (0.9%)</li> </ul>
<p><b>SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PRISONERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 OR 2 MENTAL DISORDERS 72%MEN (5%) 70% WOMEN (2%)</li> <li>• PSYCHOTIC DISORDER 5% MEN (0.5%) 14% WOMEN (0.6%)</li> <li>• DRUG USE 66% MEN (13%) 55% WOMEN (8%)</li> <li>• HAZARDOUS DRINKING 63%MEN (38%) 39% WOMEN (15%)</li> <li>• 20 % OF MALE PRISONERS AND 40% OF FEMALE PRISONERS REPORT PREVIOUSLY ATTEMPTING SUICIDE</li> </ul>	<p><b>ALL THESE CHARACTERISTICS ARE MORE PRONOUNCED IN YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN IN PRISON</b></p>

<p align="center"><b>SOCIAL INCLUSION – OTHER FACTORS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 % PRISON POPULATION ARE FROM A MINORITY ETHNIC GROUP</li> <li>• 150 000 CHILDREN A YEAR ARE AFFECTED BY A PARENT'S IMPRISONMENT</li> <li>• MANY MORE CHILDREN BADLY AFFECTED BY OFFENDING –eg Domestic Violence</li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b>GOOD NEWS - MOST PEOPLE GROW OUT OF CRIME</b></p> <p align="center"><b>LESS GOOD NEWS - IS IT TAKING LONGER ?</b></p>
<p align="center"><b>NATIONAL ACTION PLAN TO REDUCE REOFFENDING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NATIONAL &gt; REGIONAL &gt; LOCAL</li> <li>• LCJB – RESETTLEMENT SUB GROUP</li> <li>• LPO SCHEME</li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b>NATIONAL ACTION PLAN TO REDUCE REOFFENDING –SEVEN PATHWAYS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACCOMMODATION</li> <li>• EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT</li> <li>• MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH</li> <li>• DRUGS AND ALCOHOL</li> <li>• FINANCE, BENEFIT AND DEBT</li> <li>• CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OF OFFENDERS</li> <li>• ATTITUDES, THINKING AND BEHAVIOUR</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>NATIONAL OFFENDER MANAGEMENT SERVICE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PROBATION/PRISONS/PARTNERS</li> <li>• COMMUNITY / CUSTODIAL SENTENCES</li> <li>• OFFENDER / CASE MANAGEMENT</li> </ul> <p>ASSESSMENT SUPERVISION/RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN INTERVENTIONS MONITORING AND REVIEW</p>	<p align="center"><b>THAMES VALLEY PROBATION AREA – THE LOCAL VIEW</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6000 COURT REPORTS PER YEAR</li> <li>• 4200 COMMUNITY SENTENCES SUPERVISED</li> <li>• 1750 CUSTODIAL SENTENCES (approx)</li> <li>• MOST WILL START THEIR SENTENCE AT HMP BULLINGDON, WOODHILL OR READING</li> <li>• 1297 PRISONERS RELEASED INTO THAMES VALLEY 2003/4 ( 50 % FROM THAMES VALLEY PRISONS)</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>WHO ARE THE PRISONERS COMING BACK THIS YEAR – CURRENT ESTIMATES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50 – 80 WOMEN</li> <li>• 300-350 YOUNG ADULTS (18-20)</li> <li>• 40 – 50 YOUNG OFFENDERS (15-17)</li> <li>• 900 ADULT MEN</li> <li>• 19% MINORITY ETHNIC BACKGROUND</li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b>THE PATHWAYS – LOCAL ISSUES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BOTH PRISON AND PROBATION ARE ACTIVELY WORKING TO DEVELOP THEM</li> <li>• CLOSE TO HOME BEING PROMOTED AGAINST THE ODDS</li> <li>• CONSISTENT DATA AN ISSUE BUT OASYS SHOULD HELP</li> <li>• DIFFERENT SENTENCING PATTERNS ACROSS THE AREA</li> <li>• TREND TO MORE COMMUNITY SENTENCES/LONGER CUSTODIAL SENTENCES</li> <li>• REAL PROGRESS REQUIRES PARTNERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LOCAL OVERVIEW</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>ACCOMMODATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CENTRAL TO EVERYTHING ELSE</li> <li>• SHADOW TARGET FOR PRISONS</li> <li>• FEW NFA BUT MANY LACK PERMANENT/SUITABLE ACCOMMODATION</li> <li>• POLICY INCONSISTENCIES</li> <li>• SUPPORTING PEOPLE INCONSISTENCIES</li> <li>• DIFFICULT TO ACCESS IF YOU HAVE OTHER PROBLEMS</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LOCAL OVERVIEW</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>EMPLOYMENT TRAINING AND EDUCATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TARGET FOR PRISONS – DOING WELL</li> <li>• BASIC SKILLS TARGET FOR BOTH SERVICES – DOING WELL</li> <li>• HR ISSUES</li> <li>• PARTNERSHIPS ESSENTIAL – LSE/JOB CENTRE PLUS</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LOCAL OVERVIEW</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NHS PROVISION IN PRISONS</li> <li>• UNDER RESOURCED POST-RELEASE</li> <li>• ACCESS TO GPs</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LOCAL OVERVIEW</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>DRUGS AND ALCOHOL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HUGE EFFORTS ON DRUGS</li> <li>• HIGH LEVEL OF NEED</li> <li>• QUICK ACCESS TO DETOX/CARE</li> <li>• LACK OF TREATMENT PLACES</li> <li>• ALCOHOL PROVISION GREAT GAP</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LOCAL OVERVIEW</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>FINANCE, BENEFIT AND DEBT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAJOR ISSUES FOR MANY PRISONERS BUT FEW SERVICES</li> <li>• BENEFIT SYSTEM BARRIERS</li> <li>• PRACTICAL BARRIERS SIGNIFICANT</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LOCAL OVERVIEW</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OF OFFENDERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WORK ONLY JUST STARTING</li> <li>• FAMILIES OFTEN STIGMATISED</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LOCAL OVERVIEW</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>ATTITUDES, THINKING AND BEHAVIOUR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GOOD INTERVENTIONS DELIVERED LOCALLY BY BOTH SERVICES</li> <li>• CANNOT MEET DEMAND</li> <li>• NEEDS TO BE PART OF HOLISTIC PACKAGE</li> </ul>	



## **4. Working for the Community**

Examples of how prisoners can contribute to the community and help their resettlement in the process

### **A Partnership with Prisoners**

Stephen Pryor, Co-ordinator, OxCAB and Springhill Prison Partnership

Stephen Pryor, former prison governor who asked to be trained in citizens' advice work 'to get away from a lifetime spent locking people up', and co-ordinator of the Oxford Citizens' Advice Bureau (OxCAB) – Springhill prison partnership (OSP), offers a personal reflection on some emerging outcomes following the launch of the evaluation report on the partnership at the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation last week.

'Partnership, Contestability and Accountability – what future for NOMS' was the theme of your conference in April. In July Paul Goggins announced that probation would not be broken up. What then of Rod Morgan's hope that 'what will come into existence is some sort of embryonic national commissioning agency will emerge, and not very much more?'

The OSP may be able to shed some light on it.

First a brief summary. The idea of prisoners helping on OxCAB was first mooted in 2001, and the request to explore it was welcomed by the Prison Service. Since then a series of careful protocols has been drawn up which brings together prison risk assessments for temporary release for resettlement and CAB precautions for selection of suitable candidates. For those who may not be aware of it, CABx offer a heavily accountable, confidential, free and up-to-date service without discrimination. And contrary to a widely held view it is not a government agency: each bureau is an independent charity whose main business is often to take issue with a local authority which may be one of its chief funders.

I soon realised that the CAB selection, training and operating system (where each case is checked by an experienced senior member of the bureau) would allow suitable people from among the dozens who commute from the open prison to undertake community and full-time work to be considered for advice work. The result of careful work in partnership between the prison and the bureau is that, for over two years, prisoners have each worked alongside the rest of the volunteers and paid staff in advising up to 1,000 clients per year with an average of three problems apiece, without complaint which could connect to their being prisoners and with no disciplining for any breach of license. The national CAB audit found no drop in the standard of the advice they gave.

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation funded the installation of a telephone advice centre in the basement of the bureau and the salary of its manager. (Prisoners work face-to-face and over the phone). They also funded the evaluation of the partnership which was undertaken by Ros Burnett of the Oxford University Centre for Criminological Research (whom many in the Probation Service will know) and Shadd Maruna of the Cambridge Institute of Criminology, whose report has been available on the Esmée Fairbairn website since June.

The main finding was that the partnership is a success and, given care, should be extended. The Prison Service and Citizens' Advice have therefore decided to allow a few more such partnerships to grow along similar lines.

Many in the Probation Service will know that this is not the first time that prisoners have undertaken responsible and caring work in the community. The restorative justice agenda embraces reparative work in the community. The recognition of the work by the Butler Trust (which recognises ordinary work by prison staff which is done extraordinarily well, and which shares patronage by Princess Ann with the Citizens' Advice) is one of many such awards for this sort of thing. So what are the aspects which nibble at the boundaries and which might give food for thought in the NOMS partnership debate?

As far as I know the OSP is the only occasion where a contract is actually signed by the prison, the community agency and the prisoner. Such is the responsibility of the CAB, and so determined the prison not to let them down, that it is seen as essential that both they and the prisoner understand and commit themselves to the respective undertakings which each has to ensure that the work is done and seen to be done to the highest standards of both organisations and to the best ability of the prisoner. That is the basis of a claim to deserve public confidence in what is a coming-together of two very public organisations whose inner workings often remain a mystery to the public. I wonder if the offender's responsibility has such clear recognition elsewhere in the embryonic national commissioning agency? And if not yet, whether the importance of the offender owning responsibility can be discerned among the early heartbeats of the partnership?

As far as I know the proportion of men who have gone on to undertake paid employment in the CAB organisation during the pre-parole preparation period when they may apply to work full-time, and who have returned to Ox-CAB to take on advice work voluntarily after release, must be one of the highest outcomes of any voluntary sector – prison partnership.

As far as I know the simple test of effectiveness – the number of clients helped per adviser – must be one of the few occasions where the Prison Service sees the benefits to prisoners as of less significance to the common weal than the help given directly to individuals in the community who are not per se victims. The report makes it clear that the prisoners are among many who have found the experience helpful, *'It's huge to be able to say I helped that person, I achieved something today'*, but that is not the test by which the partnership is judged.

In an emerging world where those of us who have endured and enjoyed the separation of prison and probation cultures, the prospects of the sum of NOMS being greater than its parts is immensely hopeful. If it is not simply to be a re-screwing down of deck chairs, the significance of the offender as someone with responsibility, and of punishment to a purpose is seen very clearly in the OSP.

It is a rare example of thinking beyond the arid either-or. Either victims or prisoners. Either rehabilitation or simple punishment and retribution. Either voluntary or compulsory.

It begs more complex and fundamental questions too. When is a prisoner not a prisoner? When does the onus for the sentence TUPE to the offender? What is the role of NOMS in partnership with the prisoner? What is lawful about discrimination against different types

of offence or sentence? If we accept serving prisoners today for what we know to be highly responsible work with highly vulnerable people, where might that end? What are the consequences of seeing risks as responsibilities? And should the courts extend their requirement for accountability for the sentence to NOMS and the offender?

If my experience of the Probation Service as the central partner between the courts, the Prison Service, the community and the offender allows it to speak with authority, I hope it will.

I hold my breath.



## **The Courage Park Project**

Adrian Lawson, Parks and Open Spaces Development Manager, Reading  
Borough Council

### **Edenham Crescent 2002-03**

- Problems in the park
- Anti-social behaviour
- Areas not under our control
- New housing estates being built
- Complaints arriving in the parks office almost every day
  
- Police and local residents meet
- Safer Reading Forum approached
- Parks department get involved
  
- Parks team are in a parallel universe talking to restorative justice project throughout 2003
- The idea that the solutions to the problems can be implemented by the restorative justice project emerges
- The fledgling project is named the Edenham Project

### **January 2004**

- Meeting with local people – 55 residents attend
- Presentations given by prison staff, probation staff and parks department
- Residents fairly hostile, and want to see some action
  
- Project starts on site one week later
- First stage is to clear the site
- Next stage is to improve the access, the quality of the paths and the landscape, modify entrances and manage the woodland

The project is amazingly successful. Work progresses faster than anticipated, residents are very supportive and the project is able to respond very quickly to residents' ideas.

The project concludes with various celebratory events including a play, a community barbecue, a visit from the Russian Ministry of Justice and the renaming of the park Courage Park.

The community still meets once a month. They now work in the park themselves and report that anti-social behaviour has been dramatically reduced, the park feels much safer and is used by many more people.

The project spends the summer maintaining the right of way network.

A new major initiative is planned on a much bigger site. A new community steering group has been set up and the project kicked off on 15<sup>th</sup> November.

## **Lessons Learnt**

1. The biggest winners are the offenders!
2. It can be very cost effective
3. Effective supervision is essential
4. Get community support
5. It isn't easy – this is very hard work
6. You will make a lot of friends

## 5. Summary of Group Discussions

Delegates were allocated to three groups which considered core issues. The groups were all asked to identify and discuss key issues which CDRPs and other community-based organisations needed to consider in supporting effective resettlement. Each group was then asked to identify the three top priorities.

### Accommodation and Hostels

The group noted a number of difficulties which had to be addressed including prejudice against helping offenders, complex eligibility issues, outstanding debts of rent which could prevent re-housing and an overall lack of appropriate housing stock. It was recognised that prisoners could face a number of issues which impacted on their housing including isolation, drug use and high support needs.

The group considered the key issues and identified the following: -

- The need for readily available advice and assistance during sentence
- Early intervention and action – it was possible in many cases for prisoners to begin during sentence to pay off rental debts if negotiation with the housing provider could be facilitated
- Housing policies needed to recognise that prisoners had high vulnerability and this should affect the priority they were given
- Successful resettlement in accommodation also depended on an appropriate and planned package of support measures including mental health, drug treatment support etc
- The importance of the private sector was noted and the importance of deposit schemes
- Housing benefit fast tracking was clearly important
- Those supporting resettlement needed to ensure a legal income so that the accommodation could be sustained
- Integration of housing representatives into MAPPA for higher risk offenders was important
- Emergency accommodation needed to be available in a wider range of locations
- Advice in prisons was a key issue and there were successful experiences of prisoners training to do this work and helping other inmates. This should be seen as an example of good practice

### Key Priorities

- **The development of better strategic links which included the CDRP, Supporting People, DAATs, voluntary organisations and housing providers. Prison resettlement staff needed to have a clear understanding of structures and how to speak to.**
- **Increase the stock of available accommodation including private accommodation. It was recognised that the range of accommodation was as important as the volume.**

- **Maintenance of links by prisoners during sentence and preparation on housing to be undertaken at an early a stage as possible during sentence.**

## **Education, Employment and Training**

The group identified a number of significant issues in linking prisons with outside organisations and the community safety field. They were as follows: -

- The need for up-to-date audit information on skill shortages so that prison training could be planned ahead more effectively
- The need to steer prisoners in the right direction for employment – hard-to-fill vacancies often included those involving IT skills and good communication skills. Often prisoners have these and a fresh look was helpful
- Wider use of psychometric testing – Woodhill was using this from an outside agency but a more pooled approach was necessary
- Better partnerships between prisons and employers were needed and local authorities should take a higher profile in supporting this. It might make sense, particularly with the bigger national employers to involve regional organisations such as SEEDA
- Oxford DAAT were interested in buying spaces for those in drug treatment on the construction workshop in Bullingdon – this was seen as a good example of co-operation between inside and outside agencies and there was more scope for two-way use of prison resources
- The career service needed to be better integrated with the criminal justice agencies and particularly prisons
- There tended to be replication of testing, particularly around education and skills training needs. This was not helpful for prisoners and was also wasteful. OASys should help remedy this
- Work completed while in custody, whether for skills training or education, needed to be taken much more into account in resettlement work by probation staff and other agencies
- Employers have an important part to play in getting prisoners from a pre-employable stage to being fully employable – there were some good examples of basic skills training post-employment and these needed to be held up as useful examples
- Job Centre Plus is the most centrally important agency and their involvement in prisons needed to be extended
- Local authorities, public bodies and public trusts were major employers. CDRPs could usefully raise with these employers the need for them to contribute to resettlement by taking a positive view on employment
- The police had sometimes directly contributed as referees or brokers with employers in the case of priority or MAPPA offenders. Police support might be particularly important in reassuring employers more generally about the importance of resettlement. Just as individuals and communities had fear of crime and fear of offenders the same could be said to apply to many employers and police brokerage might make a real difference

### Key Priorities

- **Further developing the involvement of a wider range of employers with prisons**

- **Better and more up-to-date information about employment and skills needs in the community including a higher level of public awareness about skills training in prison and its place in resettlement**
- **The need to base planning for training and education on an evidence base – development of a clear idea of ‘what works’**

## **Volunteering and Release on Temporary License**

Prisoners working in the community during sentence. The group made a number of points about the wider issues as follows: -

- There was a need to balance risk against community benefit in a realistic way and this needed to be incorporated in planning and early contracts with potential partners
- To recognise that not all prisoners necessarily wanted to go out
- A number of issues affected whether prisoners were eligible to go out and risk assessment had to be involved in facility licenses
- Partnership contracts were needed
- Health and Safety issues were extremely important and needed to be incorporated into the planning of any work
- On the issue of volunteering there was also much more scope to bring people in to volunteer in prisons
- The group felt that there was much scope for a wide use of the Circles of Support and Accountability approach – using it in wider settings than sex offending. It was felt that this should be explored

In terms of community safety and CDRPs it was felt that offender management staff both inside prisons and in the community were key resources for the creation of safe and strong communities and this needed recognising in community safety strategies. Better understanding among community safety organisations of the way ROTL (Release on Temporary License) would support the creation of volunteer opportunities. ROTL was seen as a major way of preparing people for release and giving them a positive experience.

### Key Priorities

- **Development of more partnership working contracts with outside organisations and agencies as this would break down the lack of knowledge in the community about resettlement**
- **Increased use of ROTL and a campaign to build awareness of what it could do. It would be helpful if prisons were given more discretion on its use, not least because it helped to diminish the impact of institutionalisation**
- **Much wider use of Circles of Support and Accountability**



## 6. Contact List

One of the agreements reached at the conference was that communications needed to be improved between key prison staff and community safety organisations in the community. The following list of email contacts is divided into: -

- a. Prison staff
- b. Probation staff
- c. Community safety contacts from the 16 Thames Valley CDRPs and the two county community safety departments
- d. Other organisations represented at the conference

It is hoped that this will be seen as a useful tool in building contacts.

### a. Prison Service

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#### Resettlement

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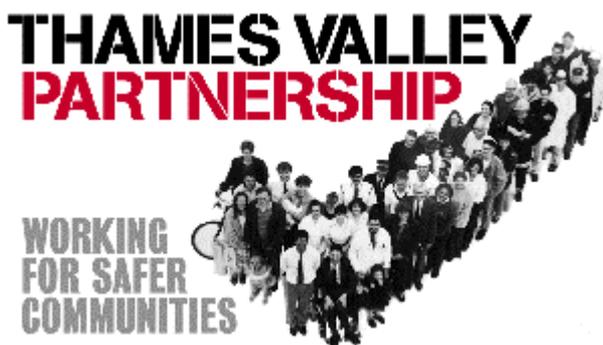
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