

Prisons and their communities: testing a new approach

Vivien Stern

International Centre for Prison Studies
King's College London – School of Law
26-29 Drury Lane
London WC2B 5RL

Tel: 00 44 (0)20 7848 1922

Fax: 00 44 (0)20 7848 1901

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Foreword

If a Londoner living one hundred years ago were to be transported to Pentonville or Wandsworth Prison today that citizen would know immediately where he or she was. It would be clear to our time traveller that these were prisons. True, there would have been changes over the century: there would be no crank, no treadmill and no striped uniforms. Instead, the time visitor would observe televisions in the cells, prisoners making phone calls and working at computers. These are certainly important changes, but in many respects prisons are intrinsically the same as they were 100 years ago. Those held in them are still deprived of their liberty, put into a prison uniform and required to spend a great deal of their time doing nothing very much.

Prison is an 18th century concept that has not changed in its essential features since its use was generally expanded in the 19th century. The idea of the prison as the place of punishment and the experience of prison as humiliating and stigmatising remains, untouched by the advances and changes which have occurred in wider society.

The International Centre for Prison Studies works to deepen understanding of prisons, their use and their potential contribution to the well-being of the wider society. In the course of the project described in this document we began the long process of changing radically the way we think about prisons. Part of any such change is likely to be a completely new perspective on the role of those who work in prisons. It will undoubtedly also involve a profound change in the experience of imprisonment for prisoners.

This document is not intended to be a report on the details of the project, nor a theoretical analysis of the idea of the restorative prison. Rather, it is an account of an idea, of how that idea was taken up by people who understood it and found it inspiring and of the places where the idea was put into practice for all to see.

We hope that its publication will be helpful to the many people who think about prisons and wish they were better. We hope it will also go some way to filling a vacuum in thinking about prisons. Nowadays resources are scarce and delivery of targets is the priority. How to get the same amount of imprisonment for less money is the question

that preoccupies senior management. The prison service has little capacity for policy thinking and reflection. Senior prison governors no longer get sabbaticals to collect their thoughts and produce new ideas. Yet the project showed how eager prison staff are to be allowed to think, to develop new models of working and to see their jobs in a different way. If such an opportunity were given to staff throughout the prison service there would be enormous benefit not just for prisoners but also for the prison staff as an organisation and for society at large.

A wide range of people contributed to the Restorative Prison Project, the thinking which went into it and the activities which went to make it up. A number of them are mentioned in the course of the following report.

The original inspiration for the project came from the Inside Out Trust, led at the time by its inspirational founding Director, Margaret Carey, supported by her colleagues in Sussex and in the north of England.

The project would never have seen the light of day had it not been for the funding provided by the Trustees of the Northern Rock Foundation. Fiona Ellis, Director of the Foundation, supported the project from the outset. Our main contact at the Foundation was the Assistant Director, Anne Burleigh, who provided tremendous encouragement throughout the entire project. The Trustees showed continuing interest in all the project activities and a number of them attended conferences, workshops and launches.

The members of the project Advisory Board, under the chairmanship of Sir Graham Melmoth, are mentioned by name in the report. They provided sound advice at several crucial junctures.

A special word of thanks is due to the Governors, staff and prisoners in Holme House, Deerbolt and Kirklevington Grange who engaged themselves in a wide range of activities and were then prepared to discuss how they had been affected by them.

Anne Mace managed the project on behalf of ICPS and covered many miles in tirelessly visiting the prisons, the local authorities and other partners throughout the country. She had the task of gaining their initial commitment and then nurturing it throughout. In the latter stages of the project she was ably assisted by Tony Galley. Vivien Francis was the project co-ordinator in ICPS and had a key role in organising events and developing channels of communication which kept everyone informed about progress. The contributions of Helen Fair and Anton Shelupanov were also important throughout. Vivien Stern, Senior Research Fellow at ICPS, has written the report which follows.

Professor Andrew Coyle
August 2005

The idea

Making the prisoner put something back into society while he's serving his sentence ... there is justice in that ... We are training the prisoner, providing him with all the things he hasn't got to make him a better person, hopefully, when he comes out, not to re-offend. But, during that process, we're putting in place a system where he puts something back ... So the justice in that is: 'You've committed an offence and you must pay. We will help you improve, but we want something back in return'. That's the restorative justice bit ... The justice of imprisonment should be to put something back ... A prison should, in fact, be called a Restorative Prison. All prisons should be restorative prisons, putting something back.

Prison officer, Holme House Prison 2003¹

1 *An Evaluative Study of the Albert Park Project, Final Report*, School of Social Sciences and Law, University of Teesside, 2003, pp. 33-34

Introduction

One day in April 2002 an unusual event took place in Albert Park near the centre of Middlesbrough, a town in the north east of England. Watched by 50 invited guests, the Director General of the Prison Service of England and Wales, Martin Narey, set off in a boat to be rowed around the park lake by the governor of one of the local prisons, watched by a large crowd of people. They were all there to celebrate the launch of a booklet which described how the park had been renovated and how local prisoners had been involved in the work. The boat they were in had been rebuilt by prisoners in the workshops of one of the local prisons. Men in nearby prisons had also produced mosaics for the newly completed Visitors' Centre, had built tables for its cafe and had constructed the ornamental railings surrounding the lake.

Speaking at the press conference on the day, the Director General said:

It gives me enormous pleasure to launch this publication. I was brought up just round the corner from Albert Park. I saw it gradually fall into disrepair. Now it is being refurbished with a major contribution from the prisons in the area. Prisoners are responsible for the mosaics in the newly completed Visitors' Centre, the ornamental railings surrounding the lake, and the rebuilt boats. This work is needed for the park. But it has many other benefits for the people of Middlesbrough and the neighbouring areas from which the prisoners come. The prisoners are putting something back into the community. They are learning useful skills. And hopefully when they leave prison they will feel that they have more of a stake in the community and be able to make a new start in life.

In November 2003 the Mayor of Gateshead, another town in the north east, and the Lady Mayoress visited two local prisons, Acklington Prison and Castington Young Offenders Institution. They went there to present certificates of thanks to prisoners who had helped with the renovation of Gateshead's Saltwell Park. The prisoners had designed and built 26 picnic tables adapted for wheelchair users and were also cultivating wild flower seeds to be planted in the spring. They had also nurtured rare species of Victorian bedding plants and recorded the park's 70,000 trees and shrubs on a database so they could be managed more effectively. The Mayor said that the prisoners had

made a real contribution to Saltwell Park, providing valuable resources which have enabled the council to chart the development of the park and create new facilities that will attract local people and wildlife.

These events were part of the activities of the Restorative Prison Project, which was carried out in the north east of England from January 2000 to June 2004.

The project emerged from a number of influences. It was developed and managed by the International Centre for Prison Studies, an academic centre in the School of Law in King's College, University of London, which carries out research on prisons, their use, management and relationship with society. The Centre is especially interested in

making links between principles, policies and good practice. It had been concentrating particularly on the need to find new models of imprisonment as a means to counteract worldwide trends towards technological warehousing of prisoners with no social, ethical or purposive input. It had also been looking for a rationale of imprisonment that would re-connect with public expectations.

The original inspiration for the project came from the Inside Out Trust, a charity set up in 1994 by a North Sussex magistrate, Margaret Carey, who had formerly worked for the organisation Sightsavers in Africa. She had wanted to help a group of blind people in Malawi to obtain sewing machines so that they could earn a living. Margaret believed that if Sightsavers asked people in the UK for unwanted sewing machines the public would provide enough for the Malawi project to go ahead. They did.

On her return to England she reflected on her experience in Africa and came up with the idea of a virtuous circle. Members of the public would provide unwanted goods that were needed in parts of the poor world. Prisoners would refurbish, remake, or rebuild the donated items. Organisations working in the poor world would receive the items and put them to good use. So she set up the Inside Out Trust and soon prisoners in many parts of England and Wales were engaged in work that made a difference to people less fortunate than themselves; for example transcribing books into Braille, binding old textbooks for schools in Zimbabwe, or refurbishing old National Health Service wheelchairs for children in Kenya.

The third and crucial element of the project was the Northern Rock Foundation, a grant-giving trust based in Newcastle with a leaning towards funding new ideas likely to challenge the status quo, which sponsored the project. From this initial positive mix, the International Centre for Prison Studies developed the concept of the Restorative Prison Project (RPP).

The historical reality of prison is that it is a place where one group of people locks up another group of people that does not want to be there. The project began by asking the question as to whether this model of the prison was fixed or whether it might be possible for the prison to change into a different type of institution. Imprisonment as the main punishment for crime started at the end of the eighteenth century. Older notions that a proper punishment meant intense physical suffering such as hanging, flogging or branding were replaced by the concept that, instead of being punished through the body, transgressors would be punished through the mind. Thus emerged the idea of locking convicted people up in small spaces called cells, in buildings with high walls, and leaving them in solitude to reflect on and repent of their crimes. Many of the prisons still in use today were built in that era. As the years have passed there have been many practical reforms in the way prisons are run but the basic idea which shapes and guides the practice of imprisonment and daily life in prison has not changed, nor have the views and expectations of the public about what a prison is and should be.

Although prison itself may not have changed, ideas of punishment and the range of punishments available have changed considerably. At one time the two main options for the sentencing of convicted people were imprisonment or a fine. In 1907 the probation

service was founded and supervision in the community became a possible outcome for a convicted person. In 1972 the penalty of community service was introduced. The concepts of probation and community service were responses to changing views of what could be done to encourage offenders to live in a law abiding manner. The concept of prison remains rooted in a belief about what can be achieved when an offender is deprived of liberty.

An important feature of imprisonment is the obligation of 'work'. There is an organisational belief in the value of work both for its own sake and as a means of instilling personal discipline. Yet for most prisons for many years, real work has been little more than a myth.

One of the traditions of the prison in the United Kingdom throughout most of the 20th century was the daily round by the Governor. He (and in those days it usually was 'he') made his way round the accommodation wings, through the kitchen, the classrooms, the segregation unit, everywhere prisoners were gathered; including, of course, the industrial workshops. As he entered, the officer at the door told him the number of prisoners present. Like any large institution, prisons run according to routine. The Governor made his rounds at the same time every day. The bush telegraph preceded him; all staff and prisoners knew exactly where he was. When he came into a workshop there was the impression of activity; materials were moved from one corner to another; depending on the type of work, there was the banging of hammers, the swish of the paintbrush or the whirr of machinery. When he passed on, the activity subsided, the tempo slackened; the myth of prison work no longer had to be maintained.

That was the reality in prisons until a few years ago. The tradition of formal 'Governor's rounds' has now largely disappeared. In most 'training prisons' the majority of men and women still go to 'work' but the degree of application expected and the level of output would not guarantee the survival of a commercial enterprise. In a debate in the House of Lords in April 2000 Viscount Bridgeman asked the government spokesman whether he agreed 'that a programme producing 1¼ million pairs of socks over the past three years, not for sale but for the use of a prison population of around 60,000, is neither productive nor, for the prisoners, a fulfilling use of their time'. In many 'local prisons', which hold remand prisoners and those serving short sentences, it is often not possible to maintain the façade of work for most prisoners and they spend the majority of their days in their accommodation units. Remand prisoners rarely, if ever, are offered the opportunity to work. Yet in theory the prison as an institution still revolves around the premise that prisoners will spend a significant part of each day in gainful employment, absorbing the discipline of work and learning work skills which will help them to live a good and useful life after they have been released.

From 'The Myth of Prison Work', project paper, May 2001

So the Restorative Prison Project set out to ask a series of questions:

- Do prisons have to be the centrepiece of a retributive justice system or is another approach possible?
- Do prisons have to cling to the idea that prisoners should be doing industrial work, even when it is widely known to be a myth that such work is available and is rehabilitative?
- Should the prisoner's day be filled with a wider range of activities?
- If there were to be a reconfiguration of the prison in line with the ideas of the Inside Out Trust and in accord with discussions about a more restorative form of justice, what would such a prison look like?

As the project developed a model began to emerge of the changes that would have to take place in a prison if it were to move from a retributive model to one based on the notion of restoration. These changes came to be described as 'the four pillars' of the project.

The four pillars

- Fostering a new relationship between the prison and its local community
- Providing opportunities for prisoners to work for the benefit of others
- Raising awareness among prisoners about the sufferings of victims of crime
- Developing a new basis for resolving conflicts in prisons

The prison and its community

The first pillar looks at the prison in the context of the community in which it exists. The notion that a prison should belong to its community in the same way as a hospital or a school has been much discussed. There are obvious differences in this analogy. Broadly speaking, communities want better education, which might involve an expansion in schools, and they want better health care, which might mean an expansion of hospital provision. In contrast, one result of a reduction in crime and an increase in public safety might be a reduced use of imprisonment. Nevertheless, prison does not exist in a vacuum and it should serve the needs of the community. The Woolf Report of 1991 which followed the riot in Strangeways prison in 1990 set out a penal reform prospectus that still commands worldwide respect. One of its central recommendations was the proposition that the basis of imprisonment for the vast majority of prisoners should be preparation for their return to the community as law abiding citizens and the way to achieve this was to create strong links between prisons and their communities. Woolf referred to 'community prisons'. This implied that prisoners should whenever possible be placed in prisons near their homes so that relationships with their families

and the communities they came from would not be irretrievably severed. It also meant that the walls of the prison should become more permeable so that the community and its organisations could come in, participate and feel some sense of ownership. But this relationship should not be one-way traffic with the prison as the recipient. The prison itself should also be going out to the community, offering to help where it could and to share any facilities and resources wherever possible.

The RPP set out to build on Woolf's proposals about the community prison. Over the years there have been many examples of prisons working closely with local groups but these instances have often depended on the enthusiasm of individual prison governors or community representatives. When these individuals have moved on, more often than not the initiative has withered away. The suggestion from the RPP was that links between prisons and their communities should be structured in a more formal way, with a view to making them permanent. This could be done by prisons entering into agreements with local authorities and other statutory and voluntary groups about continuing exchanges which would be of long term mutual benefit. Similarly, local authorities, Learning and Skills Councils and other community bodies could build links with prisons into their normal planning process.

It was particularly encouraging that whilst the project was underway a decision was made to transfer responsibility for the health care of prisoners from a central department within the Home Office to the local primary care trusts, which are responsible for all the people in their area, including those imprisoned. As the planning for this transfer and its initial implementation began, the Restorative Prison Project anticipated that this could become a model for similar relationships between other local bodies responsible for services such as education, social care, housing and employment.

Prisoners working for the benefit of others

Thanks to the pioneering work of bodies such as the Inside Out Trust and many dedicated prison staff, the involvement of prisoners in working for others was already well developed in a number of prisons. There were many examples of prison workshops making aids and toys for disabled children and of specific projects, such as prisoners in Gartree helping the children of Chernobyl. The RPP set out to explore possibilities for developing this concept in a much more integrated manner, to generate a broader discussion about how prisoners should use their time in prison and whether the emphasis of work done by prisoners should be shifted substantially towards work that was of benefit to the community and meant something both to the community and to the prisoner.

For some years a number of prison theorists have discussed the importance of prisoners being able to practise 'altruism' as a more constructive basis for a prison regime. Giving prisoners the opportunity to be altruistic, to help others rather than to focus on their own problems, encourages them to develop their own personal qualities, such as concern for others, and not just to have the identity of a thief, a burglar or a hooligan. It might also lead prison staff away from an operational model which tends to view prisoners as inadequate individuals who need to be exposed to selected

experiences in programmes and courses that are designed to repair their flaws and weaknesses. Instead, it might encourage a view that starts from the premise that a prisoner has the capacity to function as an accountable person, capable of good as well as bad actions and able to use an opportunity in prison to offer redress or make amends for past harm or damage done, whether that be to individual victims or the community as a whole.

An approach such as this can be more constructive for the prison as it is likely to help to build a relationship with the community outside and to encourage members of the public to become more interested in the social reintegration of prisoners. It can make the work of the staff more meaningful and satisfying. It will be more constructive for the prisoners who will be able to see that they too can do something that is valued and which benefits rather than harms others.

This pillar is also linked into an idea often discussed, which regards prisoners as citizens who are temporarily imprisoned but who still, as far as possible, retain their status as citizens.

Prisons and victims

Imprisonment is in many ways a very harsh punishment. It implies the loss of many basic human rights. It means the loss of freedom of movement, the loss of the right to enjoy family life, very limited freedom of association, no freedom to work for oneself and carry on a business. It is also likely to include a gross loss of privacy and many humiliating experiences, such as intimate body searches and being obliged to urinate in front of other people for drug-testing, which, however well the prison staff carry them out, assault and destroy self-respect. For many years afterwards the disabling effects of the stigma of a prison record will prevent access to many parts of the labour market and create difficulties in obtaining insurance or credit.

Imprisonment carries the penalty of high social exclusion and marks out the convicted person very clearly as different from others. Therefore, imprisoned people may feel very aggrieved that they have been imprisoned. They may well feel that they have been treated too harshly compared with others. They mix all day with companions who feel similarly aggrieved. They can begin to think that is they who have been victimised and forget those who have suffered from their criminal acts. A link between the victim or victims and the offender or perpetrator is at the heart of the thinking about restorative justice, but sadly prison is an environment where the victims can be forgotten. The third pillar of the RPP suggests that the prison should have a conscious policy to incorporate an understanding of the effects that crime has on all those involved.

A new basis for resolving conflicts

All institutions have their internal conflicts but prisons are particularly prone to be places of conflict. Prisoners do not want to be there. They have not chosen their companions and may find some of them deeply objectionable. Some prisoners will

have grown up to see themselves as in permanent conflict with others and with society. Staff frequently require the prisoners to do things they do not want to do. For staff the work is often very stressful. For all these reasons there is a daily potential for conflict between prisoners, between staff and prisoners and between staff and staff. From time to time some of these conflicts are resolved by violence. Some are resolved by formal processes such as disciplinary and complaints procedures. Staff conflicts are often resolved by using a formal grievance procedure.

In society generally there is a growing tendency towards resolving a range of disputes and difficulties through mediation and alternative dispute resolution. Given that prisons are places where the same people have to live together for a long time and where the potential for grievances to simmer and incubate into long-term disabling hatreds is great, they are particularly appropriate environments for moving towards more mediation and less confrontation.

The project

As these four pillars were being constructed and tested out on a range of knowledgeable and interested individuals and groups, plans were being put together to turn thinking into action.

The project plan required two different types of action. A public debate needed to be generated on the lines of that which followed the publication of the Woolf Report in 1991. At that time there was a great deal of discussion about the role and purpose of imprisonment and the idea of the 'community prison' was the focus of a great deal of interest and experiment. However, the events of the mid 1990s, including prison escapes, politicisation and the emphasis on security and austerity led to a withering of new thinking and an emphasis on management for its own sake, reducing costs and avoiding bad publicity. The Restorative Prison Project hoped to regenerate innovative thinking.

The project also aimed to convert thinking into reality. The concept of the Restorative Prison had to be implemented and people needed to be given a demonstration of what it might look like on prison wings, in prison workshops and in local communities. The four pillars had to be turned into activities that could be seen, participated in, photographed and made meaningful to all the different parties involved in the imprisonment of men and women.

The anatomy of a project

In Middlesbrough last year ... we began a restorative justice project. It involved offenders in local prisons working to restore Albert Park ... They are putting something back.

'I've helped improve something my family will use for years.'

The words of one of the prisoners taking part. Words, which seem to be those of someone who wants to make his peace with the community he has wronged. Think of how much misery we can avoid, how much expense we can spare if we instil that attitude in all prison leavers.

Giving offenders the chance to make reparation to individual victims or the wider community should be the first clause in a fresh contract between them and society. At the moment I feel that we are throwing away the key to reducing crime – in more ways than one.

**The Mayor of Middlesbrough, Ray Mallon, The Northern Echo,
11 July 2003**

This chapter looks at the way the concepts contained in the four pillars were developed into a project with activities, outcomes, changes in people and changes in policies.

Getting started

Work to turn the concepts into concrete activities took place on many levels simultaneously. The first and most important decision was the one taken by three prisons in the north east of England to become pilot sites for the implementation of the restorative prison ideas. The three prisons are quite different in their functions. Holme House, the biggest of the three, is a local prison in Middlesbrough and holds remand and convicted adult male prisoners. Kirklevington Grange is a resettlement prison for men coming to the end of long sentences and beginning to prepare for release. Deerbolt Young Offender Institution is a young people's prison for males under the age of 21 years. Their agreement to take part in the project came after many hours of discussion which Anne Mace, the ICPS manager of the project and a former chief probation officer, had with a wide variety of people in each of the prisons.

The enthusiastic commitment of the three prisons was important, but for the project to take root the various levels of the prison service hierarchy needed to be convinced and involved. All prisons are grouped into areas and Holme House, Kirklevington Grange and Deerbolt are all in the North East Area, overseen by an Area Manager. Fortunately the area manager for the North East at the time, Ray Mitchell, had a reputation for thinking and for innovation and he readily agreed that the prisons could be involved in the RPP.

Above the area manager comes the Director General of the Prison Service and the Prisons Board and they too needed to be convinced that the idea had at least some merit. To launch the project at the Prisons Board level and to stimulate debate an international seminar on the principles behind the concept of restorative prisons was held in September 2000. It was addressed by Martin Narey, the Director General of the Prison Service, as well as by Sir David Ramsbotham, the Chief Inspector of Prisons and the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Woolf. Following extensive discussion, those present at the seminar concluded that the project had merit and the concept of the four pillars was worth pursuing. A paper setting out the philosophy of the four pillars in more detail was subsequently circulated to a wide audience.¹ An advisory group was set up to give expert input to the project as it developed.²

The next challenge was to convert the talk into action. Each prison was expected to do things differently and to do different things.

1 *Restorative principles in the prison setting – a vision for the future*. ICPS, 2000

2 The members were Ms Anne Burleigh, Assistant Director of the Northern Rock Foundation; Sir Alastair Graham, Chairman of the Police Complaints Authority; Sir Graham Melmoth (Chair), Chief Executive of the Cooperative Wholesale Society; John Staples, Retired Prison Governor and Area Manager, the Baroness Vivien Stern, Senior Research Fellow at the Centre.

In the course of the first two years of the project a series of workshops was held to encourage the pilot prisons to examine the four pillars of the project in more detail and turn them into action.* One example of this action was that following the workshop on prisoners and their victims a group of prison officers from Holme House prison volunteered to be trained as mediators under the guidance of Barbara Tudor, coordinator of the Victim Liaison Unit at the West Midlands Probation Service.

Albert Park

Then, in 2001 a happy coincidence brought together the project and the refurbishment of a Grade II listed park in Middlesbrough, Albert Park. Albert Park opened in 1868 and was called a 'people's park.' It was once beautiful, with a lake, a bandstand and a place to roller-skate and gardens with benches. It was a monument to the theories of the nineteenth century about local government caring for its people. But in the 1980s came other economic days and other economic theories and it sank into ruin. It became a haven for drug dealers and prostitutes and no respectable parents would allow their children to go near it.

Now times have changed again. The ideology of 'private good, public bad' is being modified and the local council was given £3.3 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund and a contribution from the Northumbrian Water Environmental Trust to refurbish Albert Park. But the money was not enough to do all they wanted to do and there was a condition; some volunteer labour had to be used. The Restorative Prison Project was ready to help. The prisons were interested and they could contribute.

The partnership between the prisons and the Landscape and Countryside Development Department of Middlesbrough Council blossomed. Very few of the prisoners were of a security level which allowed them to go out. But they did not need to go out to refurbish boats and railings, produce furniture for the café and community room, bunting and flags for events and a mosaic for the Visitors' Centre. All of this work could be done in the prisons and then installed in the park. Young offenders from Deerbolt made reproduction clinker boats and trailers for the park's lake and fittings for the visitor centre. Prisoners from Kirklevington Grange were allowed out and they undertook community service placements in the park, doing such work as landscaping, painting the park railings and working on the artwork exhibition at the visitor centre.

* The themes were: Prisoners and their victims; Promoting a culture of respect and responsibility; Prisoners working for the benefit of others.

...when we first started this project, we anticipated a simple straight forward restoration of a run down defunct park; planting trees, resurfacing footpaths, draining the lake, new buildings and play areas, all simple stuff for an ordinary landscape architect like myself. It has however become much more than that.

I recently launched, in Albert Park, a stained glass project that had involved many sections of the local community, from pensioners in the adjacent residential home to the local Asian population through to Sure Start. It has become clear with this project that it is not just about physical restoration but community and partnerships. The restoration has developed unique multi-agency working and partnerships to a level never seen before. The Restorative Prison Project and the Albert Park initiative have been at the centre of an incredible partnership, with the community central to the whole, and including the prison community as a major part of it.

Paul Rabbitts, Landscape and Countryside Manager for Middlesbrough Council

The prisoners were not simply regarded as free labour. Their families and friends were invited to a presentation in the park Visitor Centre. A leaflet was produced for visitors to the park giving information on the prisoners' involvement and pointing out the community benefits of such involvement.

The project won several awards. In 2002 Albert Park was one of the winners of the national Green Flag Awards for quality green spaces. The judges of this scheme look for spaces that are welcoming, healthy and safe, clean and well maintained, sustainable and which involve the local community. The Green Flag scheme is overseen by a group of respected environmental organisations and is managed by the Civic Trust. Also in 2002 Albert Park won another award, this time for the Best Small Leisure Regeneration Scheme. The Leisure Property Forum's 'Leisure Property Awards' are organised by the LPF and Property Week, the leading weekly newspaper for the UK's commercial property market, and celebrate excellence across the whole of leisure property. Staff from the three prisons were successfully nominated for a Butler Trust Award by Middlesbrough Council and received this from the Princess Royal at Buckingham Palace in 2003. Deerbolt Young Offender Institution won a Jerwood Prison and Community Art Award in 2003 and the winning mosaics were put on permanent display in the park's Visitor Centre.

The project newsletter started in January 2001 once the three pilot prisons had come on board. In the three-and half years of the pilot phase there were 19 newsletters. These were two-page internally produced documents with plenty of pictures and news of the activities in all the prisons and in the project centrally.

Expanding the project

In 2002 officers from Middlesbrough Council made a presentation to the Urban Parks Forum (now known as GreenSpace) at a meeting arranged by the Institute of Leisure and Amenities Management. One hundred and thirty delegates heard about the

Albert Park project and expressed particular interest in the fact that prisoners were undertaking the work for the benefit of the communities.

As a direct result, Gateshead Council approached the Project about the possibility of involving the prisons in its area in the planned restoration of Saltwell Park, another 'peoples' park', which had just received a grant of £9 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The relationship was more structured than with Middlesbrough and the Gateshead Council Cabinet approved a formal note of involvement.

The work in the parks was the most photogenic aspect of the restorative relationship between the prisons and their local communities. The actual work done covered a much wider range. Durham prison became involved in non-confidential database work in Gateshead Council archives. A considerable amount of work was done on the Weardale railway conservation.

Prisoners thanked for train help

Bosses of a heritage railway line are visiting a Northumberland Prison to thank inmates who helped open the line in County Durham. Six inmates from Acklington Prison worked alongside staff and volunteers to open the Weardale Railway. They were among 300 inmates from eight North East prisons who helped clear the track between Wolsingham and Stanhope. Helpers were being presented with certificates on Thursday by Weardale Railway managing director Brian Morris.

The initiative to employ prisoners was taken by former prison officer Tony Galley, under a new scheme, the North-East Restorative Community Partnerships, which is partly sponsored by the Prison Service. Mr Galley said: "Offenders have made a massive contribution to the development of the railway."

They also helped put up signs, with painting and floral displays and cleaning carriages. The railway opened in July, but had to end its summer season earlier than planned because of technical problems with a steam engine.

The 50-year-old engine's steam injection system has been given an overhaul and its boiler has been washed out and will be back in operation for a series of special Christmas services.

Story from BBC NEWS, 4 November 2004

Involving local authorities

The work in Albert Park and later developments in Saltwell Park provided a strong foundation for a new relationship between local authorities and prisons. These local authorities had realised that they had prisons in their areas, or that people from their areas were held in prisons not far away and would be returning. Of those sent to prison in 2003, 49,000 were there for terms of six months or less. So their absence would be short and their return often problematic. The local authorities began to see the benefits for their responsibilities of closer working with the nearby prisons. The prisons too could see the logic of a closer relationship. Prison staff often lived in the

area and welcomed the chance to play a larger part in their community through their professional prison work. Prison workshops are often involved in repetitive contract work that has no meaning for prisoners except that of earning money. To be able to involve and motivate prisoners in work that their families might benefit from is a clear regime improvement. Prison staff also have responsibilities for resettlement work, finding prisoners work to do on release, a place to live and social and health support. For this to be successful links with the local authority are invaluable.

In July 2003 a major conference on building relationships between prisons and local government was organised by the project and Middlesbrough Council.³ Over a hundred people attended.

The conference brought together for the first time other organisations in other areas pursuing a similar theme. The conference heard about the Birmingham based project which aims to improve the image and performance of Birmingham's local prison. City Pride is a voluntary organisation in Birmingham which has established a partnership with Birmingham Prison. The partnership aims to help the prison develop links with external agencies, to improve the prisoners' employment opportunities and to increase community involvement in the life of the prison. As part of this objective the partnership organised a charity fundraising sleep-in the prison which raised over £30,000 for local children's charities.

'This is precisely the kind of project the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister supports and believes is the way to help achieve genuinely sustainable and inclusive communities with everyone in the community making a worthwhile contribution. A project such as this one shows that that prisons harbour considerable talent that can benefit the whole community, both in the prisoners themselves and in the dedicated staff who work day in day out to ensure the smooth running of the estates, often against the odds. It also helps to show the broader public the genuine contribution prisoners can make to society and this in turn can help prisoners feel they have not been totally rejected'.

So it has value in allowing prisoners to make amends to the community for the wrong they have done. It has value for prisoners' relationships with their families, when their families can see the good they can do. But above all, it has value in showing the whole community that prisoners are members of the community too and that it is worth making the effort to help them resettle there when they return from prison.'

Genie Turton, then Director General of Housing, Homelessness and Planning in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, speaking at the conference Building Relationships Between Prisons and Local Government

3 See *Building relationships between prisons and local government: papers from a conference held in Middlesbrough on 9 July 2003*, ICPS, 2003

Following the Middlesbrough conference, meetings and discussions with the Local Government Association (LGA) led in February 2004 to a meeting between the LGA and senior officials in the prison and probation services to discuss future collaborative working. From this point the LGA put considerable resources into developing policy and practice on local authorities' responsibilities for criminal justice.

Did the project lead to change?

The aim of course was to spur people to change, so it is legitimate to ask to what extent the Restorative Prison Project led to any change. It can be difficult to establish direct cause and effect when attempting to demonstrate that an intervention has resulted in significant change. While allowing for that, there is no doubt that a number of developments have come about that can legitimately be described as outcomes of the project or influenced by the project.

In the local area the work of the project has been sustained and transformed into permanent arrangements. The North East Area Prison Service office showed a firm commitment to take ownership of the activities when the project ended and put the work into its forward business plan. In July 2004 it set up the North East Restorative Community Partnerships to provide a basis for further development. To achieve this the Prison Service area office employ one of the people who had been involved in the project as a Prisons Liaison Officer. By the end of the project every prison in the North East Area was involved with restorative work. To mark the end of the Restorative Prison Project, Gateshead Council organised a civic reception in Saltwell Park to announce the next phase of partnership between the Council and the prisons. Castle Morpeth Borough Council was involved in a prison partnership for the development of Carlisle Park and other council sites. Women prisoners from HMP Low Newton were coming out of prison to work in both Saltwell Park and on the Weardale Railway.

In a neighbouring prison service area, the North West, the prison service area office took on a full time restorative coordinator who had been trained by the project. Help was given to the area office with its partnership with Wirral Council in restoring Birkenhead Park. A criminal justice consortium, the Thames Valley Partnership, started similar work with Reading Council and their first restorative park project in Reading was launched in January 2004.

Early experiences at the Thames Valley's first restorative parks project at Edenham Crescent in Reading (launched 19 January 2004) have shown improvements in community cohesion, community empowerment, health and public attitudes to crime and justice. Furthermore local residents say that it has resulted in a cut in anti-social behaviour ... The restorative parks project ... is inspired by the Albert Park Project in Middlesbrough ...

Thames Valley Partnership, Restorative Parks, December 2004

Local and national charities such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the National Trust became involved with prisons and the involvement of prisoners in their work continued.

A major impact has been at policy level. Through the Local Government Association (LGA) local authorities have taken a new interest in crime policy and the role of local government in formulating and implementing it. In 2004 the LGA established an innovative project to identify the potential benefits to local government and communities from closer working with correctional services, both prisons and probation. In February 2005 the LGA published *Going Straight: Reducing Re-offending in Local Communities*. The document notes in its introduction that the LGA

has been examining whether local councils can make a greater contribution to the reduction of re-offending by working more closely with prisons...

The thinking about the importance of local links and close working relationships between prisons and the local communities and local authorities where they are situated has been influential in Scotland. After a long consultation the Justice Minister for Scotland published in December 2004 *Supporting Safer, Stronger Communities: Scotland's Criminal Justice Plan*.

The new plan had a particularly novel approach to how prisons are managed and opened up to wider public involvement. At the centre would be an advisory board chaired by the Justice Minister to give strategic direction and monitor performance. This body would bring together local government and a wide range of agencies. One of its objectives would be to consider and have an input to policy on prisons. The Scottish plan would try to give local roots to the centralised prison service. A new statutory framework would be introduced to require prisons and local authorities to work together in the management of offenders.

Interventions that lead to change

The elements

Changing institutions or policies through projects is not easy. Those who study such activities¹ have identified a number of methods which make success more likely. The first essential element is that the people whose institutions and methods need to change must be involved, committed, feel the project belongs to them and that they have crafted its shape and direction. At the same time there must be a champion or champions, people who know exactly what the content of the project is and what success will look like. Running a project that is aiming to change deep-seated attitudes and methods, and review longstanding structures cannot be done by adding its management to a portfolio of tasks and allocating it to any staff member in an organisation.

Speaking of running successful human rights programmes, Craig Mokhiber of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights says:

*No externally conceived and imposed programme of assistance could ever hope to take root, effect meaningful change, or remain sustainable after the departure of the aid provider. For this reason alone, it is essential to take due account of – indeed direction from – the perspective of the beneficiaries. To do so is a point of principle but also is an important practical requirement for successful human rights assistance. This is the central reason for putting the beneficiary perspective near the heart of any analysis of such programmes.*²

Those whose co-operation is required should be able to see that there is an idea that can be clearly understood at several levels. The main grade staff need to be

1 A lot of attention has been paid to this recently in the development field. See for example, *Aiding Democracy Abroad, The Learning Curve*, Thomas Carothers, Carnegie Endowment 1999, *World Development Report 2004: Making Services Work for Poor People*, World Bank 2004

2 *Local Perspectives: Foreign Aid to the Justice Sector*, International Council for Human Rights Policy, p.9

enthused. The management needs to see the benefits. The policy-makers have to see how the idea fits in with current preoccupations and governmental direction. There must be a reason for getting involved. People will not easily change their ways and give themselves more work just for managerial or cost-saving reasons. An ethical or philosophical basis is needed that is greater than 'it is more efficient' or 'it is cheaper'. What the project stands for and wants to achieve should be clear and adhered to unswervingly whilst making room for deepening the understanding of what is to be done and always being open to new techniques for achieving the project's aims and flexible in how to achieve them.

All the parts of the project need to be held together through some communication method and their participation reinforced by a succession of events, publications and developments. The original objective needs to be restated often, and progress in reaching it measured and shared with those involved.

At least some of the outcomes need to be tangible, concrete and capable of being described through words and pictures. There have to be elements that can make sense outside the narrow confines of a particular organisation and its way of doing things. From the beginning there has to be a plan for the activities to continue and become embedded in everyday practice once the project is over.

The people

The Restorative Prison Project was fortunate in being able to fulfil many of these requirements. First of all, the individuals involved were all people with an enthusiasm for a more just and effective prison system and a shared idea of the route towards that. Anne Mace, the project manager, had been a Chief Probation Officer with a name for innovation, inspiring her staff and establishing projects based on the idea of restoration and paying back to the victim or the community. The prison service area managers involved, Ray Mitchell and then Mitch Egan, had long track records of working for reform in the prisons they had governed and in participating in activities about prison and criminal justice reform.

The project was given enormous impetus by the professionalism and enthusiasm of two staff of Middlesbrough Council, Paul Rabbitts and Tansee Cartwright. Neither had any previous contact with prisons and they were at first surprised to discover that Middlesbrough had a prison in its midst, Holme House. The more they discovered about prisons the more fascinated they became with the implications of the prison for the local authority. They discovered an untapped resource full of people with talent and commitment to the local area. They learned that prisons were places of punishment which took people from the local area and then sent them back, unprepared for their return and with little change in their prospects. They saw that they themselves could play a part in creating a more effective approach to crime by showing the park users that criminals were not all bad.

Tony Galley played a very important role. When he first encountered the project

Tony was a Senior Officer at Deerbolt Young Offenders Institution. He joined the project with great enthusiasm and when he retired he began to work for it part time. He used his Prison Service knowledge to encourage and support prisoner involvement in a host of community projects in the North East and trained others in other regions.

The people from the Inside Out Trust were integral to the delivery of the project. Their daily work is to encourage and organise restorative work in prisons. Their knowledge is unequalled and their experience is substantial.

The workshops which were held in the early part of the project helped all the participants in the pilot prisons to think about the concept of a restorative prison and they were able to bring some outstanding figures to the discussions. One of these was Lesley Moreland, whose younger daughter Ruth was savagely murdered in 1990. Lesley decided that in order to come to terms with what had happened she wanted to meet the young man who had committed the murder to find out what had been in his mind. The prison authorities were very reluctant to agree to such a meeting but eventually did so. Lesley Moreland wrote a book about her experiences and how she became involved in writing to a prisoner on Death Row in Texas. She left the participants in the workshop in no doubt about the importance of helping prisoners to think about their victims.

Without the funder there would have been no project. Finding a charitable foundation or trust prepared to fund an experimental project like the Restorative Prison Project is not easy. Some funders like to know at the beginning where the project will end up. Some are not interested in funding projects that aim to change policies. The RPP was very lucky to have funding from the Northern Rock Foundation, a foundation in the North East of England committed to projects that try and bring about some long-term change and that lead to a more just society. It was also fortunate to develop a close and trusting relationship with a senior staff member there. The funder also understood that change at this level takes considerable time. A short term intervention would make no impact. Five years is often the time it takes to embed a new idea in an organisation.

Ownership and embedding

Projects in prisons can face many difficulties. They may be received enthusiastically by some staff and operate successfully for a short period but it is rare for a project enshrining a new way of working to become sufficiently embedded in a prison for it to survive a change of governor or the latest overcrowding crisis. The Restorative Prison Project managed to overcome these difficulties. It continued to be supported even when there was a change of area manager, when new governors came to each of the pilot prisons and when problems such as overcrowding had increased substantially. From the outset of the project, work was done to ensure ownership by the Prison Service at national level. Support was gained from the Director General, area offices and individual prison governors. The project arranged a study visit for the governors of the three pilot prisons to Belgium, where each prison has a restorative justice worker. There

was something to see and learn in Belgium but the visit also provided an opportunity to think and talk more extensively about the ideas behind the project.

All the people who were doing the work inside the pilot prisons were kept involved via local steering groups, which met regularly. The series of four workshops which focused on the four 'pillars' of the project were re-run at the request of the Prison Service and were attended by over 200 prison-based staff. Rebecca Leathlean from a criminal justice consortium, the Thames Valley Partnership, attended one of the workshops in Chester-le-Street in 2002. She wrote that the workshop on 'Prisoners working for the benefit of others' was 'hugely inspirational.' She went on, 'the three prisons involved spoke of how good it had been both to work together as prisons, and to gain a degree of acceptance in the local community'.

At several of these events, staff asked if mediation was a credible option, so a small pilot project on mediation was set up in Durham prison. The project newsletter, which was distributed to a mailing list which reached 400 subscribers in the last year, became an important vehicle for maintaining contacts and linking seemingly disparate organisations. In these ways, the project was able to reach many individuals in key positions and to create a network and sense of ownership. There was interest from abroad and the newsletter had an international circulation. Visitors from Norway and South Africa came to spend time with the project. There was an invitation to make a presentation about the project at a conference in Brooklyn, NY, attended by over 1,000 people.

In local authorities too there is considerable movement of staff. Fortunately the staff responsible for the Albert Park Project in Middlesbrough were there from start to finish. Some have now moved on and taken the ideas with them to their new posts.

Developing a coherent idea

Projects can easily go off-course and be diverted by fashion and opportunism. The RPP team worked hard to remain true to the original idea and to spread it by means of papers, seminars, and conferences. Particularly influential was the July 2003 conference for local government held jointly with Middlesbrough Council. By then the project was part of the scene in the North East and those involved had plenty to say about their achievements. The conference was opened by Sir Jeremy Beecham, who at that time chaired the Local Government Association. He spoke about the need for much closer links between local government, the prisons in their areas and the prisons to which prisoners from their areas are sent.

Making the idea visible

Stories and pictures play a large part in communicating ideas. In this project the story of the restoration of Albert Park became central. An external evaluation of the Albert Park Project concluded:

*The Albert Park Project would seem, therefore, to have created a unique institutional framework in which: a) organisational links have been initiated or become more firmly established; and b) the aims and rationale (and language) of the 'restorative prison' explicitly articulated and promoted.*³

Council employees linked up with enthusiastic prison staff to produce a practical and very visual partnership. Some of these elements have already been described. The contributions of the prisoners working in the park were acknowledged with certificates of thanks presented by council representatives and stories appeared in the local media. A leaflet was produced for visitors to the park giving information on the prisoners' involvement and pointing out the community benefits of such involvement which was available in the park Visitor's Centre. There was media coverage of the Director General of the Prison Service visiting Albert Park and sailing on the lake in one of the boats made by the young men of Deerbolt. The Friends of Albert Park community user group became firm supporters of the initiative and praised the efforts of those they would normally avoid. The idea of prisoners refurbishing a park came to symbolise the new relationship between prisons and the community where they found themselves.

... the ideas behind restorative work in a prison setting are no longer simply a project or pilot but are central to several important Prison Service and resettlement goals ...

- Provides interesting, purposeful activity in which both prisoners and the staff involved invest a lot of commitment and enthusiasm and derive satisfaction.
- Can introduce new and sustainable skills and knowledge which can aid effective sentence planning and resettlement.
- Brings the work of prisons and prisoners to the attention of local authorities, community organisations, and the wider public in positive and helpful ways which have the potential to aid resettlement planning and contribute to safer communities and crime reduction
- Provides a framework for reducing the social exclusion of prisoners which was starkly identified in the Social Exclusion Unit Report (July 2002) on reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners ...

... We seem to have come a very long way since the Albert Park project but one thing remains the same, the concept of the Restorative Prison Project and its worth. *Prison Service North East Area Office website, available at <www.prisonse.com>*

3 *An Evaluative Study of the Albert Park Project, Final Report*, School of Social Sciences and Law, University of Teesside, 2003, p.29

The policy implications

Measuring change

The aim of the Restorative Prison Project was to begin the long process of radically revising the way we think about prisons and to demonstrate that this could lead to change on the ground. From the outset we were aware that we would need a variety of methods for measuring whether any change actually took place.

In the first place, we were told by those involved in the project in the North East of England, both inside and outside the Prison Service, that it has had an effect. Thinking about prison has been affected in a number of ways. Ideas that were considered to be new and risky at the start of the project have been put into practice and have been found to be not so risky, and often beneficial. A view that prisoners benefit if they can spend some of their time in prison working for others has grown beyond its roots into a different way of seeing the prison in its community. Some of the prisoners involved in doing work for others now say they have a different attitude towards their communities. Members of the communities which benefited from the contributions of the prisons have adjusted their view of the prisoners involved. These and other changes have taken place. Different ways of working and different policies can be recorded.

But we knew that this anecdotal evidence would not be sufficient to convince others of the significance of the changes coming from the project. We realised that there would be an expectation that some form of external 'evaluation' would take place. The project's Advisory Group thought hard about evaluation and how to reach legitimate conclusions about outcomes. This consideration led to a debate about the evaluation of projects that aim to change attitudes, ways of working and policies. It was accepted that finding ways of measuring changes in values and relationships was not easily or cheaply done. Proving cause and effect in social change projects is difficult and never irrefutable. Speaking of the difficulty of evaluating programmes that aim to change the ways societies work Thomas Carothers of the Carnegie Endowment in Washington D.C. says

Simple, objective indicators of success are easier to find for programmes to increase

crop yields or vaccination rates than for programs to strengthen civil society or the rule of law.¹

The debate about measurement and particularly how to measure what goes on in prisons led to the decision to hold an international roundtable in November 2001 on measuring the impact of imprisonment.² In the Foreword to the publication of the papers of the roundtable Andrew Coyle asked of measuring the performance of prisons,

What is to be measured and how? Are we to measure the adequacy of the inputs, proper nutritious food, hours of education, cleanliness of the cells? Or should we try and measure the end product, prisoners leaving prison with a home to go to, number of educational certificates gained by prisoners, number of hours of community work done by prisoners? Should we consider how satisfied the staff are with their jobs? Would it be appropriate to ask the public in the neighbourhood of the prison or nationally if they think their prisons are doing well?

Before measuring instruments are designed, there is a prior question. For whom are the outcomes of measurement designed? Are they to satisfy the government that pays for the prisons, the public that expects them to do some good, the prisoners' families who expect their family member to be well treated, the broad constituency that wants international human rights norms to be maintained, or all or some of these?

The roundtable looked at measurement of the activity and output of prisons within the framework of those questions. It noted the problems with measuring, the concentration on process rather than outcome, the narrow approach to measurement often used by governments. Much evaluation of projects that work in prisons and with prisoners asks only one question, 'did the work change the prisoners so that they stopped committing crime'? From the perspective of the Restorative Prison Project this narrow view was not of any use. The project had a much broader view of the changes needed.

Using a range of measuring tools

The first question to be asked was what was the project trying to achieve. The second question was how to measure that achievement. In setting up the parameters of the project we took a broad view, trying to identify the basic social and criminal justice policies to which the prison was meant to contribute. As our starting point, we identified the need for a number of improvements in the criminal justice system. First was the desirability of a crime policy that had a reasonable chance of delivering lower

1 *Aiding Democracy Abroad, The Learning Curve*, Thomas Carothers, Carnegie Endowment, 1999 p.284

2 See *Measuring the impact of imprisonment – papers from a roundtable held in London on 9 November 2001, the Restorative Prison Project*, ICPS, 2002

crime rates. Second was the importance of reducing the fear of crime. Third was greater satisfaction with the criminal justice system among the general public. Finally, there should be in place a criminal justice system that consumes the least public money needed to deliver these three objectives.

The big question the project then tried to address was ‘how can imprisonment contribute towards these objectives?’

The prison system does a very effective job in protecting the public from those who have been convicted of very serious crimes, from the dangerous and the violent, and in doing so assists with all the aims set out above, some more than others. However, prisons also hold many people who are not dangerous or violent and many who are no more a threat to public safety than many other people who are not in prison. A reduced use of prison is therefore a highly desirable policy aim. It would save public money, while being in accordance with the values of a democratic society which seeks to use imprisonment, the severest punishment available to the court, as sparingly as possible.

So, accepting the contribution imprisonment makes to public safety and well-being at the most serious levels and also that its use should be reduced, the question for the project was to discover how the ethos, objectives and way prisons are managed can contribute to lower crime rates, less fear of crime, more public confidence in the criminal justice system and more inclusive communities. How can prisons be brought into that social policy framework?

This was the starting point of the Restorative Prison Project, to shape prisons in a way that enabled them to play a part in promoting these objectives. The project concentrated on reducing the distance and alienation between prisoners and society, the prisoner and the prison, and the prisoner and the crime. It sought to do this by helping the prison to explain itself to the community and to ask the community to get involved and to find out more. The method used was through prisoners doing work for the benefit of others, which was public and publicly recognised. The project also sought to raise awareness of the sufferings of victims of crime. It aimed to generate thinking about creating an institution with an educational rather than a disciplinary ethos, which dealt with disputes and infractions through mediation rather than adversarial methods.

If such approaches became the norm for all prisons this could potentially contribute to less fear of crime. Members of the public would perhaps realise that many convicted people are not particularly terrifying; that they have many personal features that they share with all decent people, and that these can be put to use for the benefit of all. Such an approach might contribute to better social integration because the public would be more sensitised to what prisoners were like and the difficulties they faced; that they come back into communities – they have to come back – and they are going to be living round the corner. Possibly it could lead to more public acceptance of restorative rather than retributive punishments and produce more confidence in the criminal justice system.

Measuring such shifts in attitudes and policy is neither easy nor cheap. However it is no more difficult than trying to make a connection between some activity that a

prisoner engaged in whilst in prison or some change in a prisoner's circumstance on release and the continuation or desistance from crime of that prisoner.

The project could say with confidence at the beginning of its work that certain elements of the policy background were already known. Public confidence in the criminal justice system was low. Public confidence in the punishments available to the courts was not high. Knowledge of what these punishments involve was low. Social exclusion and social inequality is connected with higher crime rates. Some people conform and give up crime when they make social attachments and social bonds. The notion of convicted people doing work for the benefit of others is highly valued by the public. Some people who have been victims of crime find it very helpful to be able to contact the person who harmed them and work through to some understanding of it. Participatory, consultative ways of running institutions that carry legitimacy make for institutions that work better.

At the beginning of the RPP a small study was carried out in the prisons where the Inside Out Trust already worked, with the objective of discovering what people thought of the work and its effects. Based on a semi-structured questionnaire, forty-one members of staff and fifty-seven serving prisoners from twenty prisons were interviewed. All the interviewees were, or had been, involved with work provided to prisoners by the Inside Out Trust. The study found that prisoners welcomed opportunities to work for others, to be altruistic. Over half said very specific things about helping others. One in five said that doing such work made their families think well of them. Among staff interviewed, half valued the chance to have an impact on society outside the prison. Half noticed that the prisoners were highly motivated to work for others. Half thought the activities should be used as a basis to improve the image of prisons and prisoners. Prisoners and staff wanted more feedback from the others who were being helped.

An MSc student at Manchester Metropolitan University who was working in the Psychology Department of one of the pilot prisons over the summer of 2001 carried out a study of the feasibility of introducing restorative practices into an individual prison. A random sample of 200 prisoners from different offence categories were surveyed, which was 24% of the prisoners in that prison, and 55% of those replied. When asked about their crime, nine out of ten regretted the harm it had done; three-quarters would like the opportunity to make up for the harm; two-thirds would like to meet people affected by the crime in particular; three-quarters would like to meet people affected by a similar crime but not the one they committed; 44% would write a letter of apology but 55% would not. Nine out of ten wanted to participate in work that benefited the local community. Four out of ten thought it was important for the prison to build a relationship with the community. Mediating a dispute with another prisoner by someone from outside was not popular; two-thirds said no.

There is also evidence from work done by the Police Complaints Authority and by the Scottish Prison Service that mediating some complaints and disputes can be successful in terms of outcome and satisfaction of the parties involved.

The project commissioned a university local to the North East of England, the University of Teesside, to carry out research into one aspect of the project, the work in Albert Park and most particularly to find out the opinions of the prisoners involved, the staff and members of the public who used the park. The researchers interviewed prisoners who had been involved, prison staff, staff of Middlesbrough Council, probation staff, and members of the local community. There were 107 interviews in all. They were semi-structured and aimed to find out what the respondents thought about the project and the basis for their opinions.

The findings were substantially positive. All groups of respondents saw merit in the involvement of prisoners in high-profile work for the community. The prisoners themselves felt the work was worthwhile. It gave them a sense of pride and ownership. They were motivated by the idea that the public, and for some their own families, would benefit from what they were doing. Working for the community was seen by most prisoners as much better than working for commercial gain or working in services inside the prison.

Prison staff identified only positive experiences for the prisoners from the work. They felt that working for the project was useful in promoting citizenship and noted that their relationships with the prisoners had improved and supervision was easier. They hoped public perception would have improved.

The members of the community surveyed who were aware of the prisoners' involvement commented favourably on the quality of the prisoners' work. One quarter of those interviewed said their attitudes towards prisoners had become more favourable as a result. These members of the public felt that giving prisoners such work might make them think more about their contribution to society.

Extracts from the evaluation report

Well, I think it boils down to appreciation. If I know ... the stuff we've done is being used. The tables being used ... The fences around ... little parts for the children and what-have-you ... Right, that just puts it across to me ... it's being appreciated ... And when more work comes in, then I'll know it's being appreciated, I don't mind doin' it again and ... even when I get out, if I had the chance to do it, I'd do it still ... Makes me feel good and I know it's bein' appreciated and, yeh, I would do it again.
(Prisoner, Holme House)

I think that at least the lads are putting something back into the community, they, they help out. So why can't prisoners do the same thing? I think they would be impressed by the type of work that's gone into the park and the type of people that have done it. Like people like me who've never worked before, who've worked hard and helped to put something back in you know?
(Prisoner, Holme House)

I don't know why but it's a whole change of attitude for me now ... it means more because I've been involved in it. Before, Albert Park to me was just a park, but now I've been involved and I've seen what's went on and how many people it's took to make that park so nice (after being shown publicity literature) you just feel that little bit a part of it, don't you?
(Prisoner, Holme House)

The Albert Park Project was probably the highlight of the last two years.
(Prison staff, Holme House)

Citizenship? If in some way they (prisoners) could get out ... afterwards and see the work that they've done ... and have their families involved ... Events in the park where you could actually have the families of all the offenders who've been involved. And you could have an open day in the prison, where people like us would go in. And you would be able to talk through it and have an exhibition and show a video ... And the mums and dads and the brothers and sisters could go back out and tell all their friends ... what their lad has been doing ... And that would increase respect of ... local residents ... for the offender ... It would raise levels of citizenship.
(A representative of Middlesbrough Council)

Well, I can't speak across the board, because there's some prisoners, I would personally have no ... no time for at all. But prisoners who want to help themselves ... Yes, I've got a lot of time for them ... I've got no time for sex offenders, wife-beaters, or anything like that, murderers, anything like that. I've got no time at all and I wouldn't associate myself with them, whereas prison officers have got to, but ... prisoners that are willing to help themselves to get on in life. Yes, definitely.
(A member of the public)

The policy implications

For prisons

If prisons were to be run as places of restoration rather than retribution much would need to change. The whole daily way of working of a prison would look very different. At the heart of planning what prisoners are to do in the course of their sentence and how they should prepare for release would be the concept of reconciliation with the community and making restitution to either the victims of their crime or the wider society. In the restorative prison these plans would inform decisions about the kind of work prisoners should be undertaking. Priority would be given to creating good interaction with local communities and meeting the needs of those communities. Work on projects which would help people who are more disadvantaged than the prisoners: the old; the ill; the poor; would provide a clear focus and purpose for what is done in prison workshops.

Prison education programmes would be specifically designed to relate to the kind of restorative work being undertaken by prisoners. Improving literacy and numeracy, increasing knowledge of communities and their needs and providing opportunities to consider relevant local and national current affairs all suggest themselves as topics which could have a clear link with reintegrating prisoners into the community. Other opportunities might include learning about environmental issues, including conservation and recycling. Social skills teaching associated with the need of virtually all prisoners to rebuild relationships, to restore self-esteem and to resume citizenship outside the world of the prison could be based on each prisoner's involvement in restorative and reparative work during the sentence, whether that involved work on personal relationships or practical work to make redress. Individual sentence plans and group work in prison could also focus on the concept of restoration and a prisoner's willingness to take responsibility for actions and to be reconciled with other people – including victims – and with the wider community. Group work could provide opportunities for developing or taking personal responsibility, for raising victim awareness and for identifying ways to make reparation or to work at restoring the balance in relationships to which crime can do such damage. The reports on an individual prisoner's progress at various stages of a sentence could also offer a framework within which steps taken to make reparation, to restore relationships and to take personal responsibility for harmful acts could be taken into account.

I'm convinced that it should be part and parcel of sentence plans ... I think it's important in terms of restorative work ... but for those prisoners that apply to do it, in other words the ones that are gonna be there long enough to achieve something realistic by it. And I hope that will ... I hope that will develop ... I'm totally convinced that as part of a prisoner's sentence, his sentence plan should reflect, hopefully, some sort of restorative work. And hopefully, as we move forward, that may move forward with it. We'll have to wait and see.

It (work for the Project) can be linked to education. And I think if you do that ... with prisoners ... you're making what they're doing more meaningful. They don't realise, but they are being taught something out of a classroom situation.

Prison staff comments, the Evaluation Report

In the restorative prison there would be a fostering of the notion of the prison as part of the community rather than being isolated from it. This restorative focus would also provide the basis for recruitment of volunteers and visitors to help in a prison, making it clear that their role and activities would contribute to a relationship between the prison, the prisoners and the community with great potential value for all. Local organisations, faith bodies and charitable groups would play a crucial part in the interaction between a prison and its surrounding community.

A comprehensive extension of the philosophy of restorative justice into the daily operation and management of a prison could also start to influence procedures for dealing with complaints and disciplinary procedures so that these too might become based on conflict resolution and the restoration of harmony, rather than on the apportionment of guilt, blame and punishment. Anti-violence strategies, the handling of issues of race and culture and all the internal tensions which are aspects of prison life might benefit from an approach based on reconciliation and the creation of greater opportunities for restoring the dignity, self-esteem and mutual respect of everyone involved.

A truly restorative regime in a prison would, on a daily basis, present prisoners with a series of duties, challenges and learning opportunities. It would invest trust in the prisoners' capacity to take responsibility for performing tasks, for meeting challenges and for using learning opportunities. The task for prison staff at every level and in all departments would be to work with prisoners to identify the skills, guidance and support they need to restore their lives, equipping themselves for renewed citizenship and a life away from crime. Potentially a restorative regime would offer growth of mutual understanding, learning and co-operation between prisoners, prison staff and society, with rich opportunities to experience the value of working together and developing positive attitudes and behaviour of lasting influence.

To manage a prison in the way described above would call for a rather different system of management and control. At the moment prisons are centrally driven. The

way individual prisons are run and what their managers should achieve is determined centrally. Judgements about the success or failure of a particular prison are determined centrally. There is no requirement to establish relationships with the local area. Neither the local authority nor the local community have any input in what they would like to see the prison in their area do. The public are not asked whether they think their local prison is doing a good job and what they expect of it. Prison staff are not encouraged to spread the word about their prison and its work in the local area and are not trained to do so.

At the workshops organised by the project one of the exercises for the participants was to produce an outline for a newsletter for the local community explaining what the prison does and what it needs from the local people. The prison staff involved identified many aspects of prison life that would interest the public locally and found the exercise highly stimulating. They seemed to welcome the idea of being accountable not just to the Home Office in London but also to the area where they worked and lived.

For local government

In this model of imprisonment thought would be given as to how far there is a need for local authorities to take a more central role in crime control. Most crime, most victims and most criminals are local. The effects of crime are felt locally. This suggests that local authorities may well have a role in relation to the prisons in their area and also in relation to the prisons where people from their area are being held. All prisons are in the area of a local authority, yet many local authorities are not aware of the prison in their area and relationships between prisons and the structures of local government are few and tenuous. The main prison for Middlesbrough and Teesside is Holme House, one of the pilot prisons in this project. Yet we quickly discovered that many senior figures in the local authority and most members of the public seemed not to know of its existence.

Since prisons became a central government responsibility in 1878 local government has had no statutory relationship with prisons, despite the fact that the people in prison come from local areas and return to them. Their chances of committing further crimes are high and their resettlement in their community will depend upon the provision of local services. There are also other local considerations. Prisons may well constitute a major source of local employment. Prisons can also constitute a resource for the local community.

Furthermore, local authorities now have a responsibility to draw up what are called crime and disorder reduction strategies. The Crime & Disorder Act 1998 placed an emphasis on partnership working to tackle community safety. Since the introduction of this legislation in the summer of 1998, each local authority in Britain has been obliged to *'formulate and implement ... a strategy for the reduction of crime and disorder in the area'* within its boundaries. Furthermore, the Local Government Act 2000 imposed a duty on local authorities to consult key stakeholders and prepare a community plan to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well being of their area and

contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 states that,

Before formulating a strategy, the responsible authorities shall – ... carry out a review of the levels and patterns of crime and disorder in the area (taking due account of the knowledge and experience of persons in the area) ...

Following this consultation process, these authorities are obliged to establish multi-agency partnerships to work towards their mutually agreed objectives. Links across a range of statutory, voluntary and community organisations must be developed and maintained in order to make cities safer and to increase public reassurance and security. Prison staff are people with much knowledge and experience and their involvement in these partnerships would bring considerable benefits.

Local government also has to deal with social exclusion. Prisoners leaving prison need help with such things as housing, job training and social support if they are to resettle in the community. Many prisoners need help to cope with personal problems, such as alcohol or drug abuse, violence or poor social skills that will have contributed to their involvement in criminal activities. Some may need to catch up on missed education or learn work skills or would benefit from developing creative talents for positive use. Many of the local authority services would be relevant here. Local authorities might wish to find out how many released prisoners they can expect, what their needs are, and what local services need to be available to ensure that these released ex-prisoners are resettled.

Local social services also have the responsibility for the welfare and protection of the young people in their region, including those who are in custody. Although such young people may have a social worker from the home area, the area where the young people are held also has a responsibility to ensure their protection.

For central government

Central government might adopt a different approach to the maintenance of acceptable and consistent standards of delivery and performance. Prisons are places where people are deprived of their liberty and as such the potential for abuse is always present. Robust inspection by an independent Inspectorate of Prisons is essential as is local monitoring by Independent Monitoring Boards. However, on most matters to do with the prison and the way it provides services to its prisoners, and on all matters relating to the future of those prisoners when they return to their communities, the prison should be looking for a lead, not to the Home Office in London, but to local community agencies and the organisations there responsible for the well-being of all local residents.

Conclusion

It was recognised from the outset that one relatively small project would not change the retributive paradigm of prisons, but it did sow some seeds which have the potential

to grow. It did not immediately create a new structural relationship between prisons and their local areas but interest in building links between the public and prisons is increasing, at both individual and structural levels.

The project did not lead in England and Wales to any radical questioning of the highly centralised prison system which absorbs into itself every year 150,000 or so people from all four corners of the country and places them wherever it has space for them with only a little regard for where they come from and will return to. Indeed, the birth of the National Offender Management Service, which occurred in the course of the project, has placed greater obstacles in the path of local accountability. There are more positive signs coming from elsewhere in the United Kingdom. In March 2005 the Justice Minister of Scotland published a bill which would put into operation a local model for justice. The model ties the prison in to its local community by putting a statutory duty on local authorities, the Scottish Prison Service and others involved to work together in local partnerships to deliver integrated services for offenders in prison and the community. This is a model which is potentially more in keeping with the principles of the Restorative Prison Project and its progress may have lessons for those of us elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

In the Restorative Prison Project we set out to question the retributive model of imprisonment, to test the extent to which prisons might be based on restorative principles and thereby to contribute to greater public safety and cohesion. The project showed that it was possible to develop these principles. However, the reality is that prisons can only ever have a relatively small role to play in ensuring public safety and generating social cohesion. In the course of the RPP many of those involved became aware of a series of major dysfunctions in the criminal justice system. Most crime is committed locally by local persons. The victims of crime are local and the effects of crime are felt locally. Yet at present the important decisions about criminal justice policies and expenditure are taken at the national level and local authorities have no control over how the £4.5 billion of public money currently spent on prison and probation is allocated.

Following discussions with a number of our previous partners, the International Centre for Prison Studies has now embarked on a new project to discover whether central financial and policy control is the most effective way of responding to local crime and disorder and to assess the possible effectiveness of more locally determined decision making in resolving what are fundamentally local concerns. This new project, which is again being piloted in the North East of England and funded by the Northern Rock Foundation, is called Justice Reinvestment.

