



The Centre for the Study of Crime, Criminalisation and Social Exclusion

Liverpool John Moores University

EU PREVENTION OF AND FIGHT AGAINST CRIME



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European Reoffending Research Project

Action Learning Set 1

The Hague, 7th February 2013

1. Introduction

The overarching aim of this project is to evaluate processes and procedures implemented to reduce reoffending rates through coordinated targeting of resources at offenders with the greatest criminogenic needs. Within this remit, the role of the Action Learning Sets is to increase mutual understanding and cooperation between the trans-national partners (Knowsley MBC, Merseyside Police, Municipality of the Hague NL, European Research Institute of Turino, Italy and MALS Merseyside) by testing different methods for reducing reoffending and reflecting on lessons learned.

This first Action Learning Set was crucial to understanding the baselines, or starting points, of the partners in the European Reoffending Research Project. The research team explained the project methodology and each partner then provided an overview of their current contexts and provisions. These are summarised below.

2. Presentations

Giles Barrett - Liverpool John Moores University, UK - Action Learning Sets

Giles gave an overview of the research team and the nature of the Action Learning Sets. The research team consists of Giles Barrett, Helen Beckett Wilson, Matthew Millings and Lol Burke, all of who are members of the Centre for the Study of Crime Criminalisation and Social Exclusion (CCSE). The CCSE is interdisciplinary and works to give something back to the communities about/with whom research is conducted.

Current European project elements

1. Recidivism analysis (to understand how change implemented in the UK impacts on reoffending rates)
2. Social impact measures study (to gain more detail about how and why individuals change (or fail to) as a result of change in the UK)

3. Action learning sets (for practitioners from the Hague, Turin and Knowsley to make time to consider, share and adapt their practice)

Action learning cycle process

- Take action
- Reflect upon action
- Learning develops as a result
- Practice then adapts in order to take further, more effective, action
- Action learning requires
- The group to be supportive but challenging
- Colleagues to reflect and take action
- Participants to explore and develop new ideas together, introduce them in practice i.e. try them out, then report back at next action learning set how this change took effect
- Same people should be at each action learning set
- As this leads to most productive outcomes

Role of the LJMU research team

- To listen and ask helpful questions
- To allow time for individuals to reflect and contribute
- Not to lead discussions or give advice
- To write up 6 Action Learning Set reports which set out what was covered.
- Logs to be cumulative.

Gert Kortenbach - Assistant to the Director of Public Safety, The Hague – Context of the First Action Learning Set

Gert gave an overview of the size of the city and the important legislative bodies housed there:

- The Hague is the third largest city in the Netherlands
- The Queen is Head of State
- Houses of Parliament, government and ministries, Supreme Court, embassies and consulates are all in The Hague.

Paula Sumner – Manager of Community Safety Services, Knowsley Borough Council, UK – Context, Service Needs and Service Provision in the UK

Paula gave the policy context of Integrated Offender Management (IOM) in the UK, an overview of offending types (needs) and community safety services (provision) in Knowsley and what she, and those she represents, hopes to gain from their participation in the European Reducing Reoffending Project:

Knowsley offending context

- Domestic violence is seen as the primary problem and this can take different forms (i.e., within gangs, partner, parent against child and vice versa).
- Volume crime is also high as Knowsley is one of the most deprived boroughs in the UK and cuts in benefits will increase this problem
- Alcohol also a key driver of criminality as is recreational powder cocaine use.
- Chronic use of cannabis is also a problem. Grown in suppliers and users own homes. 80% of young people on probation are chronic cannabis users. Home growing is contributing to violent crime due to gangs and dealing

Community Safety Partnerships

- Made statutory by Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- In Knowsley the partnership includes the council, police, fire and rescue, health and probation services and is known as 'Safer Knowsley'
- Fire services are an increasingly important partner due to their good relations with young people
- Probation services are about to undergo privatisation as outlined in the 'Transforming Rehabilitation' document (Statutory services will deal with high risk offenders, Private/third sector organisations will manage low risk cases; This may alter the working arrangements and culture of IOM)
- Safer Knowsley partnership collectively agrees which people, resources and priorities should be deployed in the interests of community safety. Hence their involvement in this European Reducing Reoffending Project

For Knowsley, the European Reducing Reoffending Project has 3 key areas:

- Life change programme
- Mentoring using ex-offenders, 'through the prison gates' (from prison into the community) with continuing support
- Focusing on offenders with no statutory services (i.e. less than 12 month prison sentences). As these are most prolific re-offenders yet have least input i.e. no probation

Academic evaluation

- Will evaluate the impact of the Life Change and Mentoring interventions
- Will assess the impact on reoffending
- Will assess the effectiveness of the project

Case management

This involves monitoring of individual offenders; sharing information/intelligence quickly and securely; and potentially using a partnership-wide computer system (called 'Mi-case')

Information-sharing is a statutory requirement under s17 of 1998 Crime and Disorder Act but currently this does not always work for the following reasons

- No 'real time' computer system
- Already have real time system for domestic violence but not yet for all offenders
- Due to some partners being outside Criminal Justice System
- Due to Health data being 6 months old and anonymised
- Can only look at trends not individual cases
- Police refer to health services, but is only told whether offender attended dentist or other provider. Police feel this is currently satisfactory

Aspirations for the outcomes of project

- Shared learning
- Reduced reoffending
- Greater understanding of what works in terms of specific interventions to facilitate commissioning of the most cost effective services
- Latter is vital as the partnership is spending public money.

Claire Donohue - Mentor, Achieve, Learn and Support (MALS) – Knowsley, UK – Service Provision in the UK

Claire works for MALS which is a third sector service provider. She gave an overview of the program currently being implemented and evaluated in Knowsley as part of the Integrated Offender Management team, with the aim of reducing reoffending. The MALS program consists of two elements – the Life Change project and the Mentoring Project. The principal objective of the project is to reduce youth crime using youth workers, social workers, ex-offenders and volunteers through identifying and then tackling the root causes of offending.

Life Change Project overview

Duration - programme runs for six weeks

Addresses offenders issues - Behaviour and influences, victims impact/restorative justice, communication skills, goal setting and targets, employment support such as CV writing, interview techniques and team building

Work experience - Happens for two of the six weeks; Businesses accept offenders on basis of free work and giving something back to community

Restorative justice - Project has a pool of victims of crime a long time ago who confront offenders; Though some offenders in Knowsley are now being confronted with their own specific victim which is facilitated by a trained person and early indications are it works to reduce reoffending; Police are increasingly doing this and it appears to be effective, particularly for burglars who now put a face to a name and their crime

Victims - Victims get to find out that they personally were not targeted but instead it was about what they own, which helps them accept it; The pool of victims get a lot out of feeling they are doing something to prevent others becoming victims.

Mentoring - Claire will be in prison meeting and assessing/screening newly referred offenders; She will then match them with mentors.

Mentoring Project overview

Mentors

- Most are ex-offenders
- Have 24-hour helpline for support
- Anthony is lead mentor (Turned his life around from offending and drugs; Was mentored by Claire three years ago; He will meet each person as they leave prison and introduce them to their mentor)

Clients

- Will be with mentor an hour or two a week during the 6 week programme
- Doing whatever the person needs to reduce reoffending

Graduates

- Those who pass the programme (i.e. complete all appointments and do not reoffend) will be asked to train as new mentors
- These mentors will staff the mentoring program to provide services for new referrals.

Benjamin Kiebler - Safety House Manager, The Hague - Overview of the Safety House Model of Service Provision in the Netherlands

Benjamin explained the history, policy context, development and contemporary terrain of the Safety House model in the Netherlands. He gave an overview of the ethos, aims, partners and target groups and outlined both obstacles to and areas of good practice.

Safety House Context

Tag line: Everything under one roof! This demonstrates the unifying nature of the model in its capacity to bring partners together to reduce re-offending.

History of the model - In 1990s lots of discussion on how offenders should be dealt with. Recognised that agencies need to work together because:

- Prosecution council was a bureaucratic organisation and removed from situations in neighbourhoods
- Law enforcement chain alone does not bring lasting changes in behaviour

- Care/health and repressive agencies historically frustrated each other's endeavours (For example, a care agency starts rehab, then a person reoffends so are lost from the program as they enter prison)

Experimentation - A number of different models of cooperation were tried

- One of these led to the first Safety House in 2002
- Was successful so government financed a national network of Safety Houses in all major cities
- The Hague Safety House began cooperating with a program for frequent offenders in 2004 then in 2009 got their first actual Safety House building.

Contemporary Safety House model

Mission

- To reduce reoffending
- To do this by helping people change behaviour
- To be efficient and continually improve and combine interventions (for example health and criminal justice)

Partners

- Local administration (public order and security, social services and youth/welfare)
- Judicial organisations (prosecution services, police, prisons, probation (which is given even if offenders only go to prison for a few weeks - prosecution service ask for offender to have a report done and input whenever needed. Probation are government owned, financed by Ministry of Justice)
- Health organisations (psychological and physical)
- Youth care
- Care organisations specialising in domestic violence

Target groups

- Complex or multi-problem cases (identified through screening)
- Those with just a few problems can be dealt with by individual organisations
- Offenders only enter Safety House program if don't have probation input
- Accepted cases can then be referred to Safety House adult, youth, group, domestic violence or aftercare programmes

Day to day operations

- In the office, partners are represented every day by the same staff so everyone learns what to expect from each other
- Have a co-operation agreement rather than being a legal entity (i.e. partners engage voluntarily rather than statutory as in the UK).
- The Safety House coordinates the efforts of partners. They do not do the actual work with offenders, they do the planning
- Process managers work out processes (who does what) and ensures partners take part. Chairs meetings of professionals where they care plan for each offender and ensure partners carry this out. Have a file for each client and everyone contributes to an action plan. View

file at each meeting to ensure the plan is being carried out. Trouble shoot problems so partners can work well together. Ensure same partner representatives attend each time

Data sharing

- Partners tell each other verbally what they cannot write down in the file for data sharing purposes.

What makes the Safety House work?

Gets involved when it is called for so is not invasive

- Are sent report of a problem, screen the client, collect info, develop action plan (which may be just punish them as they don't want to change, or can be an offer of treatment and promise of punishment if they fail to engage, or can just be treatment)
- They then do analysis of needs, set goals and agree course of action
- Weekly reviews take place in the group programme to check progress
- Service stops after a year on each case to take stock. This is not the end but a re-evaluation period to check 'is this working for this person?'. May then end intervention or put the person back in the system if they are not rehabilitated
- Some who have probation contact do have to be there, but others are there voluntarily

Co-location

- People see, know and trust each other, which is crucial
- They know what other agencies can and cannot do
- They strive within own organisation to help those from partner organisations
- Shared responsibility – issues all seen as 'our problem'
- Everyone in the partnership does what they can to help
- The combination of criminal justice and care partners mean they no longer frustrate each other's efforts

Leverage

- Offenders told 'if you attend treatment Criminal Justice will not bother you but if you do not attend they will be round to see you'
- Short reaction times therefore can respond quickly to issues with service users
- Being a learning organisation means when a problem with a partner repeatedly happens they can communicate with that organisation and ask for policy change to resolve difficulties.

Heidie Pols - Safety House Process Manager, The Hague – Practice Examples of Service Provision in the Netherlands

Heidi gave an overview of the Safety House project and some operational examples of how partners work together in practice. She works two days in the Safety House as a process manager ensuring agencies work together effectively. Works the rest of the time for the mayor

Safety House context

The role of the Mayor

- Is the policy lead for the city
- Works for city council (used to be head of Police but now head of Safety and Public Order)
- Is appointed by national government for 6 years
- Belongs to a particular party but this is/should not be relevant to his election so is (or should be) 'above' politics
- Can be likened to new UK Police and Crime Commissioners
- As a practitioner Heidi has capacity to feed back to the Mayor on policy issues arising from practice

Safety house operations

- Every day one meeting looking at five clients
- Make a plan of action for each using integrated approach
- Prevent individuals missing out on services

Referral route

- Prosecutor asks for advice from probation
- Some get probation. Of which there are different kinds, each with own funding stream . One each for homeless, young people and adults
- Offenders in each of the three streams are allocated own budget. Services are bought in for individual offenders depending on need (i.e., a number of nights of care, an amount for education services, etc.
- People can be referred to either full care 24-7 facility, supported accommodation (couple of hours a day), out in community or detox from drugs
- Those without probation have no services to help them so are referred to Safety House

Offending context

- Bike theft is a significant problem

An operational example: Groups and neighbourhood level interventions

Terminology - The word 'groups' is used instead of 'gangs' as most of those involved are not seen as criminals but young people who are 'wannabes' (who aspire to criminality). However, there is a core of genuine criminals

The Process - Each year a different group is identified. Sometimes group based on priority identified by Safety House, sometimes identified by politics. (E.g. how do we deal with young people in groups on streets who are intimidating others? Mayor requests collaboration on these groups via the Safety House. Safety House focuses on one group a year and choose a specific method (Deal with one neighbourhood of 4000 people, Often problems that have been generational

Context - In area Heidi deals with there are 60 young people with a criminal core who intimidate others. Many of the criminals are family so won't tell on each other and their parents and children are criminal too. *Quote 500* is a magazine showing richest 500 in den Haag. The criminals went to the houses in the pictures and burgled them. So Safety House was called in to deal with them (Jackie (UK Councillor likened this to Kirkby, in Merseyside)

Analysis - Who are they? Who are wannabes? Who are core criminals? What can we do?

Area level/environmental input - Service provision (Community volunteer patrols in some areas. A football net in an area where young people caused problems at night. Talk to shopkeepers etc.

Enforcement - Have 'clap day' where they arrest those who are genuinely unwilling to change (Police called in from all over Netherlands to arrest, crowd control and search houses. Made 17 arrests based on a yearlong investigation. Builds trust (Demonstrates to neighbourhood that they can trust professionals to lift offenders out. Result is people then more prepared in the year following to ring in with intelligence as they trust that issues will be resolved

Criminal types – Distinguish between 'wannabes' (dealt with by youth workers and help them get back to school) and 'criminal core' (dealt with by police). Use zero tolerance (e.g., ticket them for everything – riding bikes in wrong place, being impertinent, etc)

Individualised plans – Plans are devised for all individuals. Every member of the group and their family is tackled individually through screening using force, care or both approaches

Support - Where help us needed it is offered. Help a mum here; put a child in football school there, etc. Punishment (some sent to prison as do not want to change

Case example

A fifty-two year old male

- Partners all knew the man as he had repeatedly been through services
- Addicted to drugs and alcohol
- Having a negative impact on the community
 - Shoplifts alcohol and steals bike to buy drugs
- Police bring him to Safety House
 - Ask what they should do
- Plan
 - Mayor stops him entering a specified area for a specific time e.g. to keep him out of city centre
 - Health services offer him a new programme
 - Housing help him to move
- So focus all attention on entrenched individuals.

Benjamin Kiebeler – Safety House Manager - On Measuring Results

Benjamin outlined one of the principal problems of the Safety House initiatives, which is demonstrating their impact:

The evidence base: Quantifying the unquantifiable?

- A few independent studies have said Safety Houses work but more evidence needed
- Like Knowsley they struggle to prove efficacy - workers say 'yes it works as we stop people falling through the net'
- Can offer case examples which demonstrate effectiveness (but plans are individualised for offenders, not generic)
- Hard to prove statistical outputs and compare/contrast groups and what do you measure
- Performance of Safety House or of individual partners? Bureaucracy is also a problem
- The Safety House does much that is not measurable – hard to measure trust and goodwill
- Professionals do not like monitoring and rightly so as ends up a significant paperwork exercise

Recommendations from the Safety House

Decide what you want to measure then start to do it. Remember cooperation is not guaranteed or an exact science. Use the power of examples

- Case studies can demonstrate that your programme works
- Doing so also helps you consider your work reflectively (i.e. to think through what you are doing and why)
- Ensure you put an end point on a programme to stop and evaluate
- Otherwise you have no start or end point with which to demonstrate change.

Iskender Fioriso – European Research Centre, Turin – Service Provision in Italy

Iskender is president of the European Research Institute and supervises the social activities they provide. He provided an overview of the current provisions in Italy and outlined their aspirations for the future of service provision.

Current provision

In Turin there is a programme for young people who commit petty crimes. They undertake young people's interventions

Federico both provides anti-mafia prevention activities in European schools and works in prisons as an educator with young people who have turned twenty-one. This is a rarity as prison seen as a last resort for young people

The young people are given a 'last chance' option where they are let out of prison and given a chance to 'go straight' or stop their offending. Federico helps them access support to facilitate this change

Aspirations

Iskender and Federico hope to begin a mentoring programme for the young people that they work with in the 'last chance' option.

3. Action Learning Sets

In the afternoon session, the delegates were split into two groups in order to explore ways in which good practice could be transferred across the partners in terms of working with prolific offenders; resettlement of released prisoners; youth and juvenile offenders; and domestic violence and families. The Action Learning Sets were planned to ensure professionals at different levels of operation would have the opportunity to engage with partners to collectively reflect on the impact and usefulness of interventions and of the values that underpin their operation. Given the brief of this first Action Learning Set was primarily for partners to learn more about the Dutch mode of delivery it was particularly enriching for the quality of debate that practitioners from The Hague Safety House project attended the afternoon session and joined in with the discussion groups. In respect of discussions of prisoner resettlement and domestic violence work where both strategic leads and practitioners with direct experience were in attendance, the model worked very well. It was apparent, however, that for some of the other themes covered – policy approaches to dealing with young offenders being a prime example – the inclusion of professionals directly involved in such service provision would have facilitated broader and more informed discussions.

In the allocation of individuals into groups for the discussions, care was taken to ensure that all partners were represented. The idea was that equal time would be spent discussing each of the four issues. The purposefully loose and evolving discussions were originally structured around the following core questions:

- What does each partner have in their area to address the particular issue under focus?
- What works well in this particular case?
- If you could plan your dream intervention, how would you reduce reoffending in your area?

From the subsequent lively and engaging discussions it is possible to tease out a series of distinct themes. Below, the 6 most powerful themes are briefly explored and then a number of areas for improvement that emerged from the discussions are identified:

Establishing common baselines for identifying the target group(s)

- In respect of identifying and classifying prolific offenders it was clear from the discussions that **different baselines were being applied**. Though both The Hague and Knowsley schemes operate screening tools that use frequency of offending in combination with other factors such as age, needs and risk offending, the base definition in the Netherlands is an individual who had been convicted of 10 criminal offence in the past five last, one of which had been committed in the past 12 months. In Knowsley a prolific offender is someone who has 20 criminal offences in the last five years, with four

or five committed in the last year or - using a matrix to score the seriousness of offending based on risk factors - an individual with only one or two convictions but who police intelligence suggests are more criminal active than their convictions indicate.

- In respect of domestic violence there was a consensus that in all three jurisdictions there had been **discernible generational shifts in societal awareness, understanding, and intolerance of crime**. Though the pace of legislative change may have been different in the three locations and though work is still to be done to ensure there is the zero tolerance on issues of domestic violence that respondents want, there was a collective confidence that society and indeed systems of criminal justice are more responsive to the need to tackle domestic violence.

Though a viewpoint expressed more powerfully by the Knowsley contingent than others, there was also a belief that there has been an increasing recognition that domestic violence has evolved from a very traditional model of male violence directed towards a female partner. Whilst this remains the most prolific form of domestic violence, contributors identified that violence can also now be seen to take place between other family members (female on male violence, children against parent for example) and 'abuse' encompasses not only actual physical violence but other forms of intimidation and psychological pressure. It was felt it is dependent upon the criminal justice system to understand and respond appropriately to these evolving forms of domestic violence and the emergence of what one of the Dutch contributors called 'domestic terrorists'.

- A feature of all discussions was that the different jurisdictions were starting from **different baselines in terms of the offender profiles and patterns of criminality** in their respective areas. In Knowsley there was a high volume of crime reflecting and resulting from wider structural deprivation within the area. Involvement in criminal gangs and domestic violence were seen as priority action areas in Knowsley. In the Netherlands there were less prolific offenders and in Italy imprisonment tended to be reserved for those who had committed the most serious crimes. Despite these differences in offence profiles, the re-offending rates in each scheme were very similar, 70% (The Hague) 80% (Knowsley) and 75% (Turino).

The importance of proactive multi-agency partnership working

– The nature of the **work undertaken was influenced by, and reflected, different societal attitudes in each of the jurisdictions towards the use of imprisonment**. In the Netherlands there is also a specific sentence for prolific offenders. This usually consists of a suspension of imprisonment for two years if the individual concerned avails themselves of the offer of help and support to address their offending. This was viewed as means of society fulfilling its obligation to an offender before sentencing them to imprisonment. This approach was very different to Italy, for example, where imprisonment is viewed much more as a deterrent, reflected in austere provisions.

As a result, although intervention and support provided during imprisonment was seen as important in all three jurisdictions, in both the Dutch and Knowsley schemes there appeared to be more of a community focus on delivery post-release. Within Knowsley the emphasis was on establishing a plan of action prior to the individual leaving prison and ensuring that they accessed the appropriate services on their release. This was facilitated and greatly enhanced by the co-location of key multi-

agency partners. In contrast, in Italy, there was no formal post-release support offered and, although released prisoners could apply to social services for assistance, this rarely occurred. A large proportion of those serving prison sentences in Italy were foreign nationals and this raised additional challenges in terms of their resettlement.

- **In seeking to respond to incidents of domestic violence, speed was cited as an important factor**, not only to avoid any further physical harm during that episode, but to engage the victim(s) and secure their input in building an understanding of what happened, and in time, a case to prosecute. From all partners came fears that as time passes victims become less inclined to participate with criminal justice agencies and as the intensity of the episode subsides so too does the immediate sense of vulnerability that prompts people to report.

As a consequence there was agreement that in responding to incidents it is essential for the police to intervene early and decisively, and to be seen act with the support of multi-agency partners. One of the Dutch delegation (a police officer) remarked 'when the blood flows we have to go' and a counterpart from Merseyside made clear the zero tolerance approach adopted by the force in the UK that sees officers duty bound to enter the premises, get accounts from both parties, and take measures to diffuse the situation, even if the initial trigger was a call from a neighbour. In both the UK and Dutch contexts the emphasis was very much on the immediate alleviation of risk through swift intervention, even if that intervention involved removing partners and/or children from the setting whilst the facts of the case are established.

The value of robust and meaningful engagement in working with clients and victims

- All jurisdictions reported on **the difficulty and challenges of working with, and meaningfully engaging, prolific offenders**. Where the contact was mandated as part of a court order (as in the Netherlands) or a requirement of release on licence (as in the United Kingdom) there were legal sanctions which could be used to encourage compliance, but this was more difficult where no such sanctions existed, therefore requiring a skilful blend of care and control. The participants identified a range creative initiatives including mentoring and restorative justice, both to engage resistant individuals and sustain their motivation. In Italy, for example, workers had used photography as a means of facilitating discussion. Building trust with individuals who often have a history of negative experiences of authority and sometimes gain 'status' from their offending, meant that employing appropriate staff, both in terms of knowledge and personal skills, was crucial. It was acknowledged that these qualities do not just happen, meaning that appropriate training and support for staff is essential.

- In dealing with domestic violence, the **robustness of the response** was said to be as important as the speed of the response of criminal justice partners. In the Netherlands, domestic violence support agencies provide a 24 hour, 7 days a week advice and helpline and there are partners in the Safety House who are dedicated to working with victims and perpetrators in this field. Not only does this evidence what many amongst the Dutch delegation consider to be a coherent and planned response, but it is a robust approach to domestic violence bolstered by the Temporary Domestic Exclusionary Order Act. The Act gives the Mayor (in The Hague) the power to exclude perpetrators

of domestic violence from their home for 10 days (extendable to 30 days on application), with no arrest necessary. Cited by a number of Dutch delegates (not just those with a domestic violence working brief), this intervention was not only seen to provide a swift response but importantly was seen to 'break the cycle of violence, providing a time out period for all parties and giving space for interventions to fall into place to support the family'. The majority of the Dutch contingent believed that this increasingly zero tolerance approach to the crime, and the ability of the police to utilize support and input from domestic violence workers, is, symptomatic of a genuine commitment by criminal justice partners to tackle the issue.

In respect of the UK experience, there were voices that expressed concern that the lengthy and overly bureaucratic systems following a domestic violence incident can dissuade some people from reporting and remaining engaged with the criminal process through to its conclusion. That said, there was also confidence from those experienced in dealing with domestic violence that much progress had been made and more robust responses were being implemented. As with their Dutch partners, swift officer intervention, working with and separating the individuals involved to establish the sequence of events and diffusing the situation is a well-established first step in dealing with such episodes. Great emphasis is once again placed on officer discretion which can see arrest used as leverage to get one or both parties to open up about events. Having dealt with the initial incident and established whether there is an injured party and case to answer, the schools any children involved attend are informed and a specialized domestic violence officer picks up the case. This was in light of previous high profile failures where there was a firm belief that 'procedures are watertight and clear'. Throughout both strategies the emphasis is on coherent, consistent and robust responses.

Issues created by the social context of offending behaviour

– In all three jurisdictions, (relatively) higher than average levels of mental illness, homelessness, and unemployment were observed - trends that are perhaps inevitable given the potentially problematic nature of the target groups under discussion. This emphasised **the need for coordinated approaches that bring together a range of complementary social services**. Criminality was also often seen to be more entrenched within the target groups and linked to criminal networks/families. For this reason, it was felt that there was a need for early intervention and to view the individual's behaviour within a broader context.

- Those contributors who had on-going involvement with young offenders were keen to stress **the situated context of offending behaviour**. The family environment that the young people had been brought up in, the peer pressure they may have be subjected to and, crucially, their own experiences of victimisation were all cited as contributing factors in the offending careers of young people known to the individuals. Though the respondents were keen not to excuse or deny the harm and damage caused by young offenders, there was a keenness to stress that in responding to youth offending and in particular in developing sentencing/punishment options, due care was given to seeing the underlying root causes of offending as issues of social inclusion. These vulnerabilities and experiences can take different forms in different places: workers from the Netherlands identified the problem as caused by growing numbers of young people with mental health problems; those from the UK talked about the pressures of gang culture as a catalyst for the onset of offending behaviour.

There was a common belief however that more needs to be done to educate individuals, their families, and wider society of the need to intervene and tackle problematic behavior early, so to avoid the onset of more serious and endemic offending.

Demonstrating effectiveness

– Whilst amongst all partners (to varying degrees) there was a belief that their interventions ‘worked’, actually evidencing this and proving their worth/value to political and public audiences was very difficult. It was acknowledged that **developing measures of effectiveness** was likely to be crucial given current and future financial restraints on public spending. In their own different ways the partners were trying to build an evidence base of impact: The Knowsley scheme was in the early stages of collating data in terms of reducing reoffending; The Hague had some figures but found it very difficult to monitor; whilst in Italy the data available on youth offenders who are supervised following release was being used.

However, it was felt that the nature of the work presented particular problems in terms of establishing its effectiveness. Firstly, as already noted each of the schemes were starting from different baselines in terms of defining problems, offender profiles, and broader structural factors, all things that need to be considered and contextualised when accurately judging ‘effectiveness’. Secondly, because of the nature and necessity of multi-agency working when responding to offenders with often multiple and complex needs, it was difficult to single out and identify which services/organisations were having a direct impact in terms of reducing reoffending. Thirdly, the ‘success’ of the schemes was often about building up trust and good relationships with individuals and these ‘soft’ targets were much harder to quantify.

Despite these challenges, the importance of being able to demonstrate effectiveness was recognised by all the participants. Gaining feedback from individual offenders (and in the case of domestic violence work, victims) who had benefitted from the schemes was seen as an important mechanism to counter-balance negative media representations.

Learning lessons from what works well

- The importance of **meaningful partnership working** was emphasised not only to aid effective communication but also to ensure that services were delivered appropriately and responsively, given the multiplicity of problems faced by the target groups. Those who had experienced the co-location of partners cited this as enhancing service quality. Of all relationships, good links with the probation service was also seen as important given the statutory responsibilities they hold for supervising offenders in the community and on release from prisons (although in Italy the probation service generally only works with young people).

- **Securing the ‘buy in’ and support of the local communities** was seen as a significant contributory factor in the success of interventions. Where work has already taken place to involve the local community to enhance the services delivered it has proved successful. For example, in Knowsley this involved a mentoring scheme utilising the insights of ex-offenders and encouraging local

businesses and community organisations to provide employment and volunteering opportunities for those who were making progress on the scheme. In the Netherlands volunteers from the local community have been used on some projects to patrol areas where there were high incidences of anti-social behaviour reported.

- In respect of domestic violence, whilst the victim (either directly or through an advocate) has a role in the development of safety plans or interventions that follow the crime, there was strong support for the **perpetrators too having a – highly managed and sensitively negotiated - role/input**. In accordance with the shared belief that understanding the context of violence is essential, such an approach, it was argued, would help manage and alter the home environment and reduce the likelihood of the violence happening again. Where this has been tried in the Dutch and UK contexts, respondents believed successes had been achieved.

- Those respondents who had experienced working with/on restorative justice interventions (in both a criminal and non-criminal context) spoke positively about the impact they feel the process had on the individuals concerned (both victim and offender). Indeed, **the perceived success of restorative justice** in resolving disputes, ranging from a letter of apology to more formal face-to-face conferencing, is such that within the Knowsley context its use has spread into other sectors. Having listened to the UK experience, members of the Dutch and Italian delegations were able to make linkages with services they were more aware of, and they agreed that restorative justice principles provided an attractive framework for tackling offending behaviour. Introducing such principles into schooling with children at a younger age (as has happened in Knowsley), encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions, and getting them to understand the impact and consequences of their misbehaviour was seen as vital in combating the onset of offending in later life.

Areas for improvement

– There is a need to enhance data capture and analysis methods. Many participants cited the **absence of a robust case management system** as a blockage to successful partnership working. Collating and being able to access and explore data in one location was seen as a method to help demonstrate effectiveness and to allow for the pinpointing of successful interventions and a tool for facilitating closer partnership working and through information sharing agreements and explicit commitment by partners to multi-agency working.

- There is a need to **maintain and develop the speed and robustness of response(s) to offending behaviour in the target groups**. Whilst in respect of pre-release work with prolific offenders and domestic violence cases there was praise for the establishment of the importance of early intervention in current policy initiatives. Many respondents felt that what is needed now to ensure a more fulsome approach is the power to coerce perpetrators to address their anger/violence issues as part of the safety plan and/or formalised response to their offending. That coercive edge would, many believed, impact upon the individual levels of re-offending and would encourage wider society to recognize the increasingly punitive approach being adopted by the criminal justice system(s).

- The **use of mentors as new and different forms of support for offenders** was wholeheartedly encouraged. The increased involvement of mentors (primarily drawn from the voluntary sector) was

seen as offering new and novel ways of engaging a population which mainstream services appear to find great difficult in working with. Also, the increased use of mentors was seen as a further opportunity to stimulate community interest in, and support of, criminal justice policy interventions.

- Some powerful arguments were made for interventions (particularly, but not exclusively, those designed for young people) to ensure they **recognise the vulnerability and victimisation of offenders themselves** and that, by extension, any punishments or sentences take into consideration the duty to provide support and care in these respects. Whether the issue is young people's mental health problems, or the extent to which their offending is a direct result of peer pressure or their own experiences of victimisation, respondents felt the criminal justice system needs to be alive and responsive to attending to this. It follows that if these concerns are dealt with early, they reduce the chances of problematic behavior occurring again in the future, and show the criminal justice system to be more reflexive and proactive in responding to patterns of offending.

4. Summaries of the Day

Gert Kortenbach

Gert highlighted some of the key differences and commonalities from Holland, Italy and England.

- The **probation competition model being introduced** in England is a worrying prospect for Holland because there is little experience of how this might work in a Dutch system. Within the Dutch municipalities it presents the possibilities of choosing between competing institutions who might deal with this social care issue. Conversely, there is the uncertainty about what will happen when the different organisations do compete with each other and, if the selection is based on price alone, significant problems may develop;
- A growing problem in all the partner countries is gambling and in **recessionary times** with less money available there is a growing temptation to try and alleviate this money shortfall by gambling more. Very few will be able to achieve the desired goal. For many, the outcome is **more debt which in turn generates new problems**
- In Holland there is a concern about **domestic violence** and the mayoral powers are unique in terms of, for example, enforcing an area ban on the perpetrator. In the England, the judicial system prevails. The mayoral system gives the Dutch municipalities the possibility of taking significant measures, as detailed in the domestic violence section above. Nonetheless, the Dutch can look enviously at England where a zero tolerance approach to domestic violence is paramount. This means that even when a neighbour reports a domestic disturbance, the police will act. This zero tolerance approach arises directly from public inquiries into high profile cases where the response to violence has not been swift or efficient and victims have lost their lives. The England support and response system around domestic violence is very much **victim orientated**. In Holland, the system is **family orientated** and this is also a significant difference between the two partner countries.

- In England, the use of police officers within schools to deal with **problem youngsters** can be a preventative factor on crime and criminal behaviour. In Italy, a peer-orientated preventative system sees officers linked to schools who also work with problem youngsters. As far as we know, no such system operates in the Dutch case.
- In terms of **aftercare and resettlement**, both the Dutch and the English have a well-developed system that the Italians could learn from. Aftercare is a key component in desistance from reoffending.

Paula Sumner

Paula summarised the day by identifying the commonalities between the Netherlands, UK and Italy:

- Working in areas with **inherent levels of deprivation, unemployment and crime** meant that all those in attendance had something productive to offer those who set the policy agendas for local service delivery in the three countries.
- **Short term prison sentences** across the three national partners were felt to be consistently ineffective and did not allow appropriate interventions of any useful depth to take place, resulting in poor outcomes. It was felt that short term prison sentences for many offenders were merely a staging point in the revolving door of reoffending.
- All partners are faced with the specific **challenge of 'evaluating'** whether what they do is working for both victims and offenders and this three year project provides an opportunity to develop the learning and hopefully generate some significant solutions.
- From an offenders' viewpoint across the three countries, it was recognised that there is a critical need to **work with people over a much longer period of time** in terms of supporting them with their particular problems. Colleagues in Italy have the benefit of this more than in the UK situation, particularly with regard to young people.
- Colleagues particularly in the Netherlands demonstrated **the need for 'direct work' with victims of domestic violence**. Domestic violence is of course the most dominant crime facing Knowsley. The importance of safety planning is highlighted and of paramount importance particularly is the involvement of the victim in discussions that take place with the various agencies about their safety plan. In the UK, these agency discussions take place without the victim, hence the restorative nature of this process is somewhat reduced. 'We do things to them as oppose to with them' so the Dutch case provides good learning for not just how to deal with victims of domestic violence but victims of all crimes.
- From a victim and offender perspective, **there is a need to intervene quickly and at a critical point** whether that is at the point of arrest and confinement or if it is a victim at the point of crisis, when they are recognised as being a victim. For us 'bureaucracy and process prevents

us from doing that at certain points and I don't think that is insurmountable, it is something we can overcome'.

- **Mental health needs among victims and offenders** is a particular challenge and colleagues from the Knowsley team and the practitioners struggle with accessing mental health services particularly for offenders. All are battling with the issue of substance misuse. In particular, the chronic use and cultivation of cannabis and the effect this is having on long term mental health poses a formidable challenge.
- Regarding **data sharing**, there is no reason why agencies cannot share information about the safety of individuals. In the UK an Information Commissioner fines organisations for sharing information incorrectly. A police officer once said 'I'd rather be stood in front of the Information Commissioner explaining why I shared information than stand in front of the coroner explaining why I didn't and someone has died as a result of that. I think that is quite a powerful message that we can all use in our day to day business'.

5. Reflections

From the action review sheets, there was a consensus that the way the day had been planned and set-out and the opportunities for small group discussion had been really useful. Participants commented on the importance of co-location and working together. 'The will to get to know each other's working process' and that working in a set 'allows for all participants to participate. Another participant commented 'It's really important and inspiring to hear from other countries'.

6. Looking Forward: Considerations for Action Learning Set 2

At the next action learning set in Knowsley, it was felt that more time could be devoted to the discussions of substantive themes and ideas because less time will be needed for introducing participants and explaining roles.

The addition of practitioners to the workshop groups in the afternoon was considered to be an area of good practice. Everyone was in agreement that this would be replicated in the second meeting.

7. Appendix 1: Participants

All participants in the Action Learning Set were provided with information sheets about the European Reoffending Research Project and consent forms were completed.

Morning session attendees were:

- Gert Kortenbach - Assistant to the Director of Public Safety, The Hague
- Benjamin Kiebeler - Safety House Manager (employed by the Municipality (council) and delegated to the Safety House), The Hague
- Heidie Pols - Safety House Process Manager (works in the Safety House two days a week and is advisor to the Mayor), The Hague
- Iskander Forioso – Researcher (operating in three regions in Italy), European Research Institute
- Federico Floris – Practitioner (operating in three regions in Italy), European Research Institute
- Kate Myers – Police (deals with longer terms offenders and short term repeat offenders), Merseyside, UK
- Paula Sumner – Manager of Community Safety Services (including Knowsley Integrated Offender Management and Domestic Violence Victim Groups), Knowsley Borough Council, UK
- Sarah Haslam – Temporary Project Coordinator (representing Louise Thomas), Knowsley Borough Council, UK
- Claire Donohue - MALS manager (Mentoring offenders who leave prison and delivering the Life Change Project), Merseyside, UK.
- Councillor Jackie Harris, UK - Elected Member of Parliament (since 1993) and Cabinet Member over Community Safety, Knowsley, UK
- Giles Barrett, Helen Beckett Wilson, Matthew Millings and Lol Burke, all members of the Centre for the Study of Crime Criminalisation and Social Exclusion (CCSE), Liverpool John Moores University.

Joined in the afternoon sessions by practitioners from the Safety House:

- Paul Glissenaar – Palier, The Hague
- Sjoend van Gunjt - Palier, The Hague
- Maaïke Cassee – Stehnpunt, The Hague
- Nynke Rriemensa – Gemeinte, The Hague
- Claudia Van Hasselt – Gemeinte, The Hague
- Steven Ketting - Police, The Hague



Contact Us

If you would like to find out more about The Centre for the Study of Crime, Criminalisation and Social Exclusion and how we can help you organisation meet its research, training and information needs, please visit our website:

www.ljmu.ac.uk/HSS/CCSEresearchcentre.htm

Or get in touch with us:

Dr Giles Barrett

Director CCSE

t: 0151 231 5931 e: g.a.barrett@ljmu.ac.uk