

# scottish justice matters

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## **SPECIAL ISSUE ON DESISTANCE**

Edited by  
Fergus McNeill

### **ALSO**

Mike Nellis on  
Electronic Monitoring

Andrew Coyle on  
early prison reform in Scotland

Bernadette Monaghan on  
Children's Hearings

Interview with  
HMIP David Strang



# **DESISTANCE**

**MOVING ON: DESISTANCE AND REHABILITATION**

Scottish Justice Matters is a publication of the Scottish Consortium of Crime and Criminal Justice (SCCCJ). The Consortium is an alliance of organisations and individuals committed to better criminal justice policies. It works to stimulate well informed debate and to promote discussion and analysis of new ideas: it seeks a rational, humane, constructive and rights-based approach to questions of justice and crime in Scotland.

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# A ray of light?

## WOMEN OFFENDERS, MENTORING AND DESISTANCE

**Alan Mairs and Heather Tolland** on why mentoring seems of particular benefit to women offenders and how it's being approached and developed within Scotland

**MENTORING** is a widely used method of supporting people in order to assist them to achieve goals in their lives, typically at a time of transition such as leaving prison. The recently established Shine women's mentoring project breaks new ground in that it seeks to support compliance with Community Payback Orders and remands on bail.

Mentoring in UK criminal justice was initially used in youth justice and chiefly in England and Wales (Newburn and Shiner, 2006). Since then, criminal justice mentoring services have been used predominantly to facilitate the transition of offenders from prison to the community. By developing a supportive relationship between mentor and participant, mentoring contributes to an overall reduction in offending by increasing self confidence, self esteem and enhanced engagement with those agencies that can assist with resettlement.

An evaluation of seven voluntary resettlement Pathfinders projects in England and Wales (Lewis et al. 2007) suggests that the value of a mentor for offenders may be having someone to talk to and confide in, not just practical support. It also found that offenders who had contact with mentors had better reconviction outcomes and were more likely to remain in contact post release. This is in line with research that found that quality relationships are related to desistance. As a mentor spends more time with the service user and is viewed as someone outside the system, the relationship is regarded as more trusting and mutually respectful.

### Mentoring of women offenders

Two Australian research projects shed light on women offenders specifically. Trotter (2011) explored the views of male and female ex-offenders in the community who had taken part in mentoring programmes in Victoria, finding that women focused more on family issues and support needs, with men more concerned with financial needs. Women also reported a higher number of needs being addressed and longer mentoring relationships. Reoffending appears to have been reduced amongst participants.

In their qualitative study of women leaving prison and their mentors, Brown and Ross (2010) found that the women who coped well after prison had the support of friends, family and agencies and valued these highly. The study also highlighted the multiple difficulties faced in the absence of such support on liberation, raising the question of the suitability of prison for women in the first place.



### The Scottish approach

Voluntary organisations across Scotland have been delivering mentoring services for offenders for some years now; working mostly with women and sometimes within closely defined groups such as sex workers, women and children escaping domestic violence and those with substance misuse or mental health issues.

These services are broadly similar in their approach. For example, Sacro's service in Lanarkshire meets women in prison prior to release. An initial assessment of needs takes place after which, a suitable mentor is identified. The mentor then meets the woman in prison to develop an action plan and discuss the support required. This one-to-one approach continues into the community where the mentor takes more of a lead from the woman herself. Support is wide ranging and needs-based but, typically, involves arranging and accompanying women to appointments, providing an advocacy role, signposting to other services and providing emotional support.

**“Any appointments, one-to-one, she's always there. My young son has a (medical) condition. She got me all the information and she comes with me to all the appointments for that. She's a really good support for me. It's worked for me.”**

Sarah, Circle Scotland Mentoring Service.

Group work sessions are also offered. These sessions may feature guest speakers and focus on areas such as harm reduction, personal safety, debt management, employment and health and well-being. Community-based activities are arranged too. These can be social or involve work. For example, participants recently arranged and completed a garden tidy-up for a local sheltered housing unit. The groups are supportive and work on self-esteem and confidence building; with the women being encouraged to support each other. In the Lanarkshire service, this group support has extended to using Facebook as a way of keeping the women engaged and supported. This “virtual group” is only accessible to the women and their mentors and is closely monitored and administered by the service team leader. It has proved very successful and is currently being rolled out to other mentoring services.

Sacro has recently measured outcomes from its four mentoring projects to identify the needs of individual women, track progress and allow information to be pooled at a group level to evaluate the overall impact of the service. For all women who completed an initial and exit self-assessment, there was an evidenced improvement of approximately 10% with regard to shelter, food/clothing and possessions, alcohol misuse, finances and social relationships; a 14% improvement in physical health, drug use, personal safety, and offending; and a 33% improvement in emotional health. Users also reported that they felt they were less likely to offend, felt safer and were in better mental and physical health than before (Sacro, 2013).

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**“Prior to referral I was having some issues in terms of engagement and compliance with an order, but this woman’s involvement with mentoring services really helped to turn things around and helped me build up a better working relationship with the service user.”**

Referrer to Sacro Lanarkshire Women’s Mentoring Service.

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In the context of a doubling of the female prison population in Scotland in the decade to 2011, the Commission on Women Offenders recommended that “mentoring should be available to women offenders at risk of reoffending or custody to support compliance with court orders” and defined mentoring as “a trusted one-to-one relationship where practical and emotional support is provided by the mentor on a wide range of issues relating to offending behaviour.” The Commission found that although men and women both breach at a similar rate, the reasons for breaching are different with women more likely to breach due to missing appointments and men by reoffending (Angiolini Commission 2012).

Following the Commission’s recommendations, the Scottish Government made funding available for evidence-based mentoring services for women offenders over 18 (and young males) as part of its Reducing Reoffending Change Fund. An important requirement of the funding involves “effective partnership working between organisations”. To this end, the

mentoring services will be delivered nationally as part of a Public Social Partnership (PSP). This model involves public and third sector bodies co-designing services or interventions to deliver agreed social outcomes. This approach encourages effective partnership working across sectors, places the third sector at the heart of service design and delivery and explicitly emphasises outcomes rather than activity. The key components of an effective Public Social Partnership model are argued to be partnership working, service user involvement, co-production and sustainability (Clark, Simpson and Shipway, 2013).

The “Shine” women’s mentoring service was launched in April 2013 and is now available nationally. Eight voluntary sector providers are involved in its delivery: the Wise Group, Barnardo’s Scotland, Turning Point Scotland, Apex Scotland, Circle Scotland, Access to Industry, Venture Trust with Sacro as the lead organisation. The PSP is supported by the Scottish Prison Service, the Association of Directors of Social Work and the eight Community Justice Authorities with additional funding provided by the Robertson Trust and the Scottish Prison Service. The Shine programme aims to support compliance with Community Payback Orders where there is a high risk of custody. It is also available to support bail orders and following short prison sentences which do not attract statutory post-release supervision.

It is too soon to report systematically on the impact of the services but the anecdotal feedback is positive (see insets).

Overall, the limited research on mentoring to date, suggests that it is valuable as a means of both practical and emotional support. Studies have shown the promise of mentoring but long-term research, with consistent evaluation tools are required. If mentoring does provide positive outcomes, then these must be shown to be long-term changes and this evidence should detail the essential characteristics of any mentoring programme for offenders and how it facilitates desistance.

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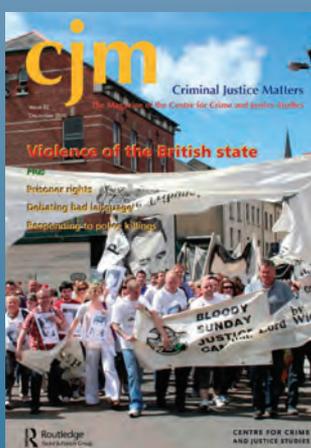
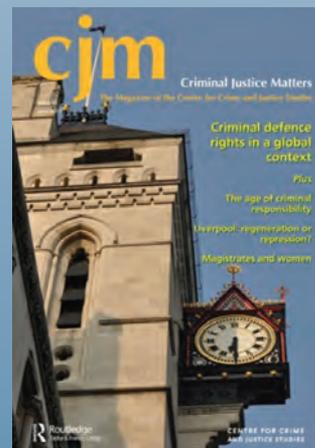
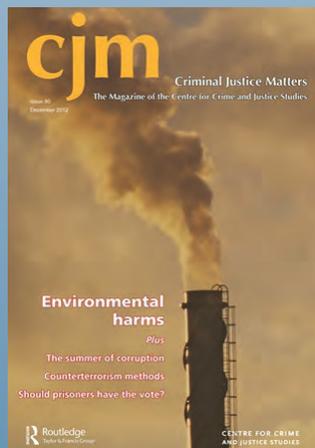
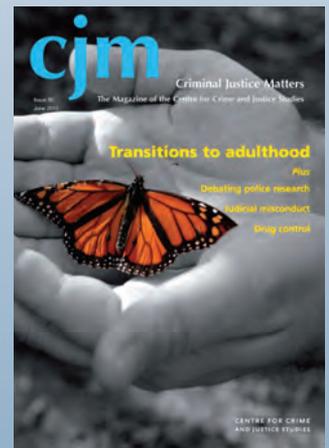
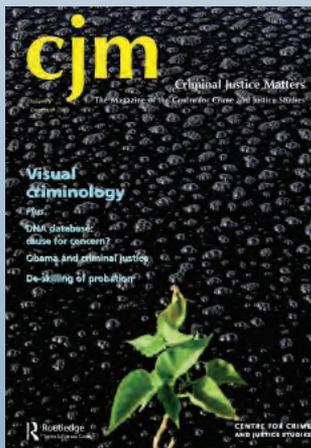
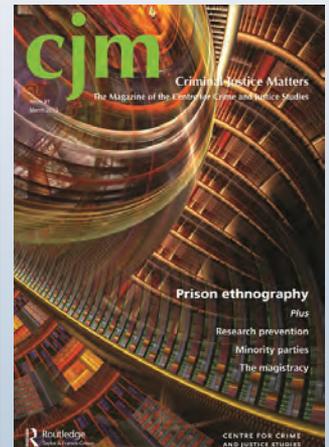
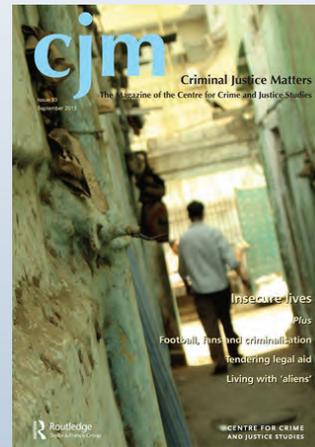
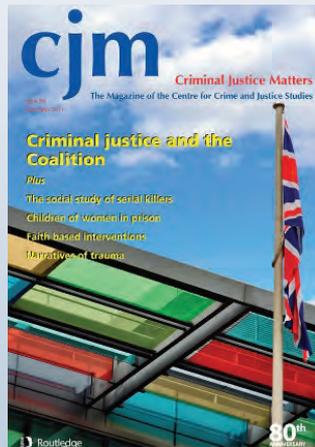
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 Professor Tim Newburn, London School of Economics.



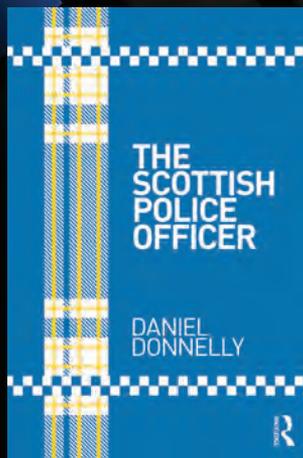
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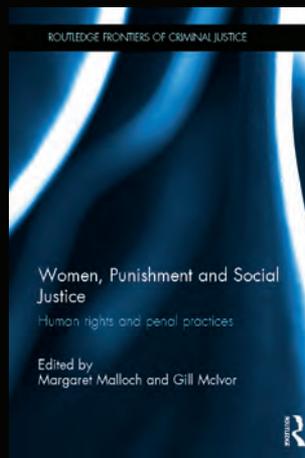
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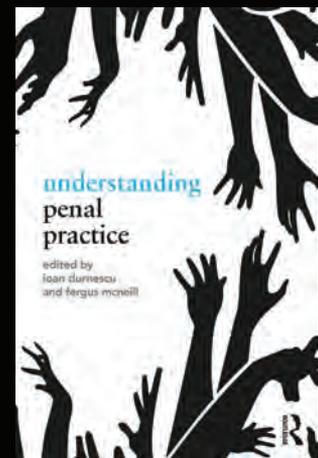
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