

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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We have the will and the way, so what's stopping us from reducing re-offending?

John Downie argues that the shift required in how we deliver public services isn't happening quickly enough

WE'RE ALL FAMILIAR WITH THE ISSUES which can lead to offending but we need to invest more in tackling them and preventing social problems rather than trying to deal, very expensively, with the consequences further down the line.

Scotland is one of the most unequal societies in Western Europe. In order to seriously tackle complex, generational issues, one-year funding commitments simply won't cut it. We need to see investment over periods of 3-5 years, with all partners working on social justice focusing their efforts on the root causes of offending rather than its outcomes. SCVO's long-term funding report, to be published soon, will show that a more strategic and longer term approach to funding would allow us to build better, more sustainable public services.

The only way we can provide tailored services in all communities is for partners in the public, private and the third sectors to work together. We should all be focusing our efforts much further upstream before people offend. Unfortunately, the Scottish Government's 'Reducing Reoffending Change Fund', with its short term focus on people who have already offended, misses this point.

Last year a Demos report identified seven indicators of disadvantage, including low income, overcrowding and poor neighbourhoods (Demos 2012). A follow up report stated that we need to move from services that focus on individuals to services that take into account people's relationships with others. The best services recognise the complexity and interdependence between people's problems and the relationships they have with their families, social networks and communities. It argues that governments must devolve decision-making to front-line professionals and to service users themselves, ensuring that different services work in harmony.

This requires providing practical and emotional support to vulnerable people, offenders and their families. It means helping people with the basics like getting a roof over their head, finding a GP and building up the skills and confidence to find a job. This is where the third sector comes into its own. It can act quickly and flexibly to help people when they need it most, because it isn't shackled by the same level of bureaucracy and red tape as some parts of the public sector.

One-size-fits-all blanket approaches, delivered at national or local authority level, are missed opportunities to invest

valuable time and resources in programmes that we know work. All the evidence tells us that services delivered at the most local level possible get the best results.

Take YMCA's PlusOne Mentoring programme as an example. It works with young people aged 8-14 at high risk of moving into the criminal justice system and puts them at the centre of activities to change their behaviour and realise their potential using trained local volunteer mentors. It replicates evidence-based practice so that more children and young people receive the type of support they need where and, most crucially, when they need it. It strives to work with young people long before the police or social services have got involved.

The programme is being developed in 10 locations across Scotland but the shift in mind-set required by partners in the public sector to implement it is proving to be slow. There's agreement that it works: up to 86% of young people on the programme who had been right on the cusp of the criminal justice system have moved away from it. Partners like the approach but funding is the stumbling block. That's why we have to work much more quickly on changing how investment is allocated and getting accustomed to spending it in different ways.

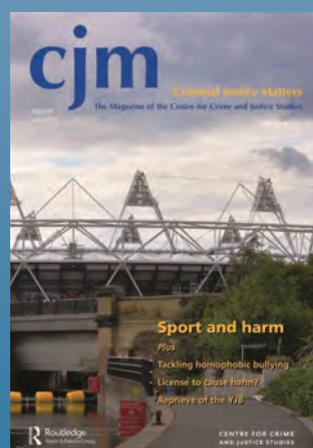
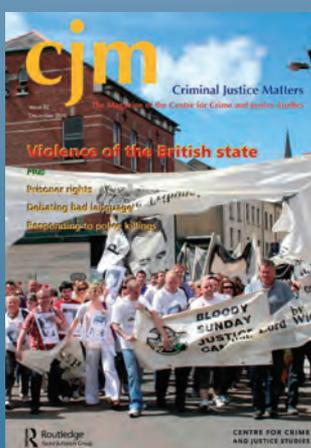
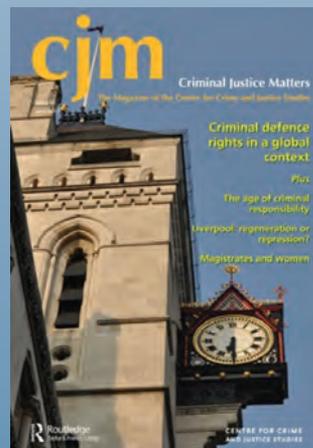
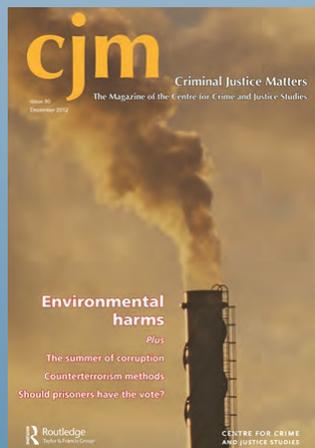
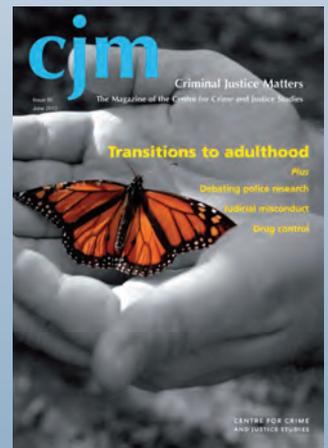
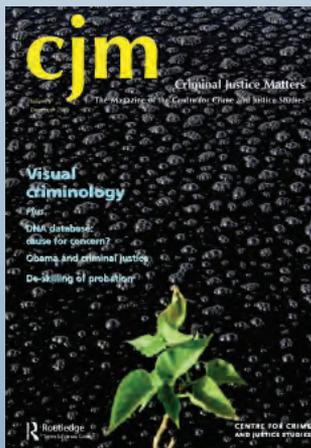
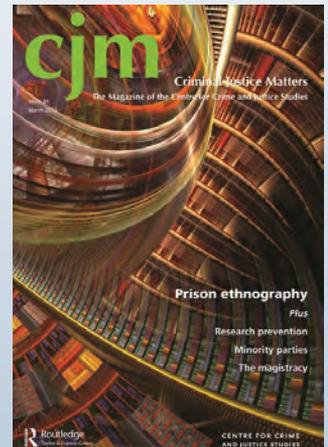
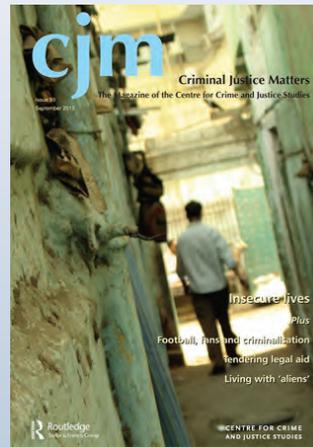
For too long we have used a sticking plaster approach to fixing problems as they arise. Anyone working on the front line delivering services will tell you that it's unsustainable and does not deliver good outcomes for people.

If we treat people as individuals and look at the environment they live in and the bigger picture around the support they, their families and their communities need, then we can prevent people from getting into trouble in the first place. We can get better results and even make scarce resource go further. But this demands genuine partnership working and new ways of working. Simply paying lip service to change or embracing it in a superficial way won't get us anywhere.

Bazalgette, L. et al (2012) *A Wider Lens Demos*
<http://www.ymcascotland.org/>

John Downie is director of public affairs at the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)

'If **cjm** did not exist, someone would have to invent it'
 Professor Tim Newburn, London School of Economics.



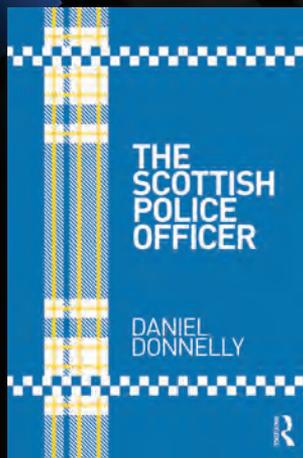
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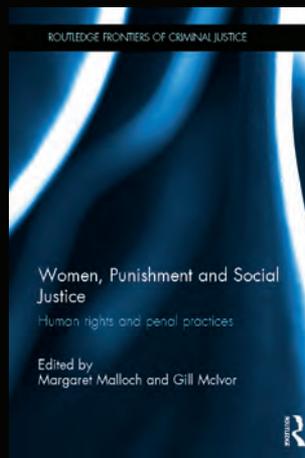
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