QUAKERS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

AUGUST 2018 EDITORIAL

Welcome to the August 2018 digital edition of the QICJ Newsletter. The newsletter, both in its physical and digital format has been significantly impacted by the loss of the completely amazing Carmel Schmid, who stepped down from the role of editor a few months ago, after a number of years of service to QICJ. Right now we are treading water until we determine how to take the Newsletter forward in the absence of a primary editor. As co-editor I have agreed to take charge of both editions of the August 18 Newsletter until a replacement comes forward to take the reigns of the physical edition. We are grateful to Rodney Mahon who has stepped in to help with stuffing and posting of the paper edition. Please read Ann's membership update and open letter for more detail on this matter.

I've been extremely grateful to the regular article writers and contributors who provided much of the material for this newsletter. As temporary 'solo-editor', I also reached out to some of the organisations in Northern Ireland involved in prisoner focused work and hopefully you will enjoy reading about NI based projects run by both Quaker Service NI and Housing Rights. We have a book review about the Kray brothers and a commentary on Police and the black community. For me the heart of the newsletter is always articles which highlight the first-hand experiences of those who are dealing with, or have navigated through the criminal justice system, and this edition we feature 2 articles by Steve which do exactly that along with lost of other great stuff which you'll discover for yourself as you browse through.

The next Newsletter is due in November and any articles can be sent directly to me until Carmel's replacement is in place. You'll find my email and snail mail addresses at the end of this newsletter. We hope you find the newsletter useful and informative.

Jonathan Lamb
Editor



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CATCH TWENTY TWO

I miss my wife. I realise that should be “ex-wife”, but it is so hard to think of it that way. Did she have a choice but to divorce me? No. Some betrayals are just too extreme to be forgiven, some situations so complex, that living together would not have been an option anyway. Sadly though, some dreams die hard. I live with an illogical, forlorn hope, that maybe some day we will be back together. Knowing deep down though, that this can never be. Some pain inflicted cuts too deep, and there is no chance of going back, so I should move on.

This I am finding is easier said than done. Not only because of my inherent failure to let go, but due to a “Catch 22” of sorts. A major insight from the Behavioural Programme I took part in within prison, was how flawed my thinking was regarding relationships. Flaws that beckoned me towards darker places. This relationship analysis assisted me in two critical ways. As on a secondary level, it would help me deal with such issues in any future relationships. But primarily, although that past relationship was defective in many ways, I had learnt how important it was that I be in an intimate relationship in the future. Having that closeness, and therefore giving me no temptation to look elsewhere, especially not towards something so damaging, illegal, and immoral, as what I initiated.



This all seems very reasonable to me, but also seems in conflict with the restrictions I must live under in some ways. The disclosure of all new relationships to Probation, whether intimate or not, is not an issue. It is purely the fact, that I must also disclose my past to any possible future partner. It is a bit of a grey area when that should be though. On first asking someone out? After that first coffee meeting or drink? After that first romantic meal? Upon the first kiss? It is very much a judgement call, but whenever that moment may be, I honestly can’t see any light beyond it. I keep envisaging the situation. We maybe get to the romantic dinner stage, and I say, “Oh, before the starter arrives, I just need to mention something…..”. Or after the first kiss, “That was nice, but before this goes any further, my past is a bit complex…..”. Yeah, right. I see them running for the door, or the cartoon depiction of a person shaped hole in the wall. Before all these scenarios could even have a chance to play out, I would have to discreetly find out their personal situation regarding children or grandchildren, as that would be a deal breaker at the very outset. “Plenty of fish in the sea.”, is not a phrase that applies to me. Beyond this would be the collateral damage, as if they were a work colleague, I could probably never return. If it were someone who knew where I lived, or even just from the area, it could mean my home would be gone. I just can’t seem to get a handle on it all. So, despite my knowledge of how helpful an intimate relationship could be, I sit in my flat in a twilight world. Caught between two equally understandable lines of thought. Relationships can be complex, but I never realised how complex it could be to start one again.

I look back upon my life with my wife now, and in hindsight, which sadly is all I have, I truly wonder how I could not see the wood for the trees. How I let myself become so irrational and

blind to the blessings I had. My wife was everything a man could ask for, but I let myself become so twisted, so unreasonable in my thinking, I chose to throw it all away. A question I have asked myself repeatedly, a question any observer may put to me would be, “If she was the dream, why did you do what you did?”. The answer to that is something I may never really fathom, although many lessons have been learnt. The key is, that it was me who lost the plot. Me who didn’t address the issues. Me who let things fester for too long in my mind, until it was too late to reconcile anything.

I miss my wife. Intimacy though takes many forms. A kindness shown, a gift of support received, a platonic touch on the arm or hug. These are all invaluable everyday occurrences that I cling to, and maybe that is all I need to cope and carry on. Partnership intimacy may never be mine, and maybe that is a price I must pay, God knows I deserve so little for my sins. Accepting this life of bachelorhood as due regress for my wrongs. Embracing the flawed hope regarding my wife, although knowing it is not healthy. Sometimes though, it is simplest of hopes that gets me through, however deluded, restrictive, or damaging they are to me. The ultimate “Catch 22”.

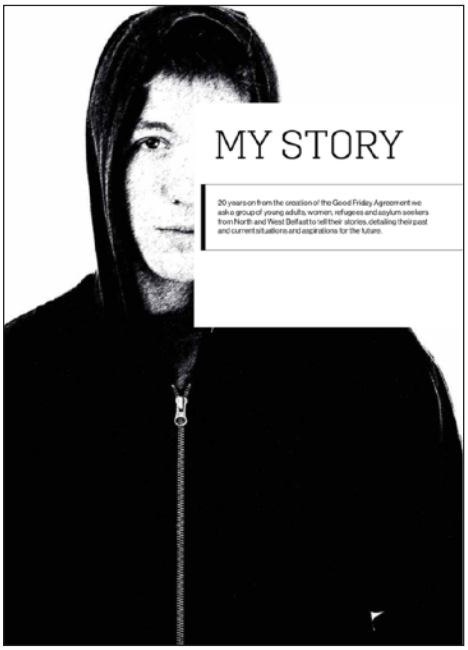
STEVE

JOHN’S STORY

John’s Story - From “My Story: 20 Years On” - A grouping of short recollections compiled by Quaker Service NI

My name’s John, I’m 19 and I’m from West Belfast.

About 7 years ago my Ma got put in jail for nine months. So, I had to go to school and help my Da with my wee brother and sisters, and we seen her like once a month.



It was quiet in the house. My Da was more used to going out working, but then he had to look after five of us, so he couldn’t.

Well we all still had to go to school. I was in like second year I think, and everyone knew about it. Like me, Ryan, Kirsty, Lisa and David, I think basically most of us got bullied in school because of it, because my Ma was in jail. Then once she got out, she came back and lived with us for about a month, then she got kicked out by the social workers.

Social services made my Da choose between her and us. My Ma kicked them - told them to get out. She went to the shop, they came back and made my Da choose between us or my Ma. So, then she moved and lived in a hostel for about three months and then got a house. She lived there about a year and then got another house cos she got sick in the first one because of the damp.

The story about her being in jail. It was all round the newspapers before we found out. We were at school when it was all happening. Most people on the road even knew about it before us.

I found out after school. Like I had messages and all of people asking me if everything was okay. And I was like, yeah why? “Did you not hear about your Ma?” We knew she was at court, so we didn’t know until my Da came back and told us.

It was weird with her not being there cos we had to look after ourselves, like with cleaning and all.



Yeah it was a struggle, like my Da’s family came down and helped him. I can’t remember for how long. Cos, he ended up fighting with his brother and they haven’t talked since.

We got bullied from primary school through secondary school. We got used to it. I blame it on my older brother cos he was the first one there, so he must have done something.

R: That’s awful though having to go through that experience for so long from primary school right through.

Like, fifth year and all in school wasn’t as bad. It was mainly like before my GCSEs. And then my Ma got sick, got put into the mental health ward at the Mater for like a few months, got out for a few months, back in again. Then the next time she got out, she ended up being put back in jail but got sick, so she had to go back to one closer to the jail and she’s back out again.

Well it’s probably because my Ma’s an alcoholic. She’s been diagnosed with dependency on alcohol. And depression and all. I can see her a few times a week. And she rings me every day.

R: How do you feel about it all?
You see I’m okay with it. I’m getting used to it by now cos it’s been that long. And me Da’s moving house. I’m okay because I’ve got my own house, but my older brother and sister don’t, so they’ve to get their own house.

R: And then you've got another younger brother and sister?
They're in care at the minute. They have been for over a year. It's like the whole family have been split up. I was talking - I messaged my older sister earlier, asking if my washing is being done. Well you see I saw her at Halloween, and she was drinking. Then she went home. Plus, at the minute I'm still sorting out the house. All my mates are round helping me. I got my own house a few months ago. It's good because I have my own space.

R: And how do you get money and all to pay the bills - electric and gas and food?
Jobseekers. - A hundred every two weeks.



R: That's fifty quid a week. How does that last?
I don't know but it lasts. I only put a fiver in my gas and electric. It lasts me two weeks because it's a one- bedroom house. I spend twenty pounds on shopping or twenty-five, and that lasts me a while.

R: So, is it a struggle?
No. It's not as hard as most people make it out to be.

R: What would be your dream job?
Don't know. I've got too much qualifications to move. I've got catering, IT, child care…

R: You've got quite a few then, that's good. We were talking about this project about the Good Friday Agreement, do you have any memories of the Troubles?
No.

R: Nothing? So, the Troubles haven't affected you at all?
No.



R: Would you have like, friends that are different from you?
Yeah, I went to an integrated school.

R: And what about the likes of refugees and asylum seekers who are living here as well.
You see not many people can actually judge you on anything.

R: Yeah do you think though that they should be included in society? Like say, living beside you in your street?
Yeah, I wouldn't mind. Cos if people are sweet with me I'm sweet with them. Because you don't judge a book by its cover, you need to by the contents inside.

This text has been re-published with permission from Quaker Service Northern Ireland and the original interviewee. You can read the full collection of stories on the Quaker Service publications page at

http://www.quakerservice.com/Quaker_Service/Publications.html

THE KRAYS -THE PRISON YEARS

Book Review: The Krays - The Prison Years by David Meikle & Kate Beal Blyth, Arrow Books, 2017 ISBN: 9781784757229

The cult of the Krays goes on and on. the Brits have always idolised villains and they do love a good murder, the more gruesome the better. “Cluedo” the well know murder board game for children, has been made into an entertaining ballet: at the end the stage is heaped with corpses. Additionally there is something compelling about twins. The town where I once taught, Yate in Gloucestershire, is noted as one the the few places in the world which produces strontium. But is also notable in my time for the extraordinary number of twins in our school. Perhaps the strontium has something to do with it.

Most improbably, I have five connections with the Krays. I was once in the same room as Ronnie Kray while visiting a former pupil in Broadmoor. I have spoken with both Frankie Fraser and Bobby Commines. (Frankie was a gangster, Bobby, a former armed robber, later founded UNLOCK, the prisoners’ union, and is now an OBE.)

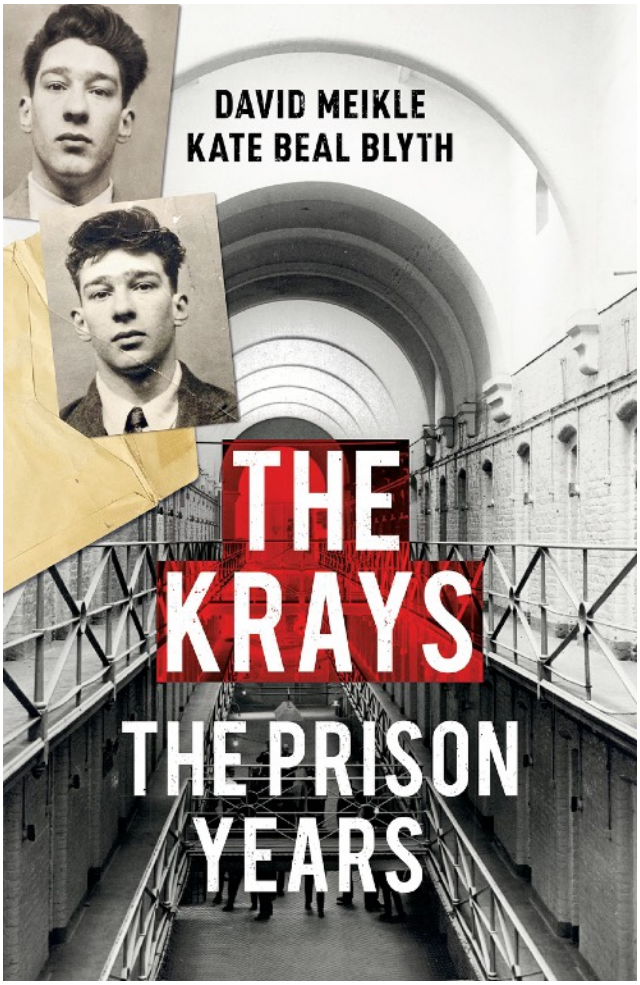


John Pearson’s book “The Profession of Violence” (1972) was commissioned by the twins themselves before their downfall, and appeared while their trial was still fresh in people’s minds. It became the most widely read book in British prisons apart from the Bible. (Henri Charriere’s “Papillon”, a criminal autobiography of 1969, was also much in demand during my time in HMP Cardiff a few years later.) In 2001, Pearson issued an update “The Cult of Violence” which could afford to be more explicit, as most of the people involved were now dead - Ron in 1995, Reg in 2000, Melford Stevenson in 1987.

“The Krays - the Prison Years” focuses on the second half of the twins’ lives, the half they served behind bars. Inevitably there are references to earlier events. In material terms, the twins’ upbringing was not hard - born in 1933, they were clothed and fed. Her love for them filled their mother Vioet’s world. The family had Romany and Jewish forbears. There was a history of instability: one great-grandfather dies in Claybury the mental hospital whose hilltop tower dominates the skyline of parts of east London. The Twins’ grandfather, “Southpaw Cannonball”, had been a successful boxer. (For those who are not aficionados of boxing, a “Southpaw” is a boxer who uses his left fist.) The twins’ own boxing career began well, but came to nothing once they acquired a criminal record. Their head master recalled them as helpful boys: they were not conventionally antisocial, and were never involved in prison riots.

Ron's unstable nature can be dated from an attack of Diphtheria at age 3, which nearly killed him. Ron and Reg were what is known as 'discordant twins'. They were emotionally dependant on each other, but a disturbing influence too, and neither could lose face before the other. Reg was the more stable, but Ron the wilder and more dominant and Reg became his victim. They were both devoted to their mother. Their father was a shadowy figure, largely absent during the years of the twins' boyhood as he was determined to avoid being called up. The book confirms what I had suspected about the twins' early sexual experiences. Ronnie grew up accepting he was homosexual, whereas Reggie's sexuality was ambiguous. Both were married twice, though Reggie's first marriage lasted just eight weeks and ended in his wife's suicide. Ron saw the marriage as betrayal. Their older brother Charlie, who is given a chapter to himself in the book, had a son Gary who was also homosexual, and died of AIDS related illnesses.

For deserting the army, the twins served nine months in the Mallet, but coped with prison very well - they thrived on a routine that was structured and stark. They lived by a lifelong adolescent code: loyalty to your mates came first, and arguments were settled by the threat of force, or if needs be, by actual force. Initial enmity could be a prelude to acceptance and actual friendship. they insisted they never harmed women or children, but only other gangsters. They were old-fashioned villains. Their heroes were General Gordon and Laurence of Arabia (both, as it happens gay) and they respected the Royal Family, as the Queen Mother and King George had visited the East End during the Blitz.



The zenith of the twins' career was 1960-1963, with control of pubs and clubs and moving into the West End scene. Their friends included Barbara Windsor, latterly of "Eastenders" fame; I first saw her about that time in "Crooks in Cloisters" and "Sparrows Can't Sing". An impending scandal the year after the Profumo affair mysteriously faded away: it involved Lord Boothby, lover of Dorothy McMillan, the Prime Minister's wife, but also the rent boys with whom Lord B and Ronnie Kray were involved. Then came the murder of George Cornell and Jack "The Hat" McVitie, signs that the twins' desire for control had seriously overreached itself. They avoided trouble as long as they did by threatening witnesses, leaning on juries and bribing policemen. The reason why the sentences imposed by Melford Stevenson were so long (thirty years minimum) was that the twins had aimed to control a whole community, rivalling legitimate authority. Their dedication to violence and the need to

control others, went well beyond ordinary male assertiveness into an extreme response to the pressures they grew up with. Crime is often the product of ability and energy (both of which the twins possessed) turning in on itself in surroundings where there is no more socially acceptable outlet. The twins grew up in a psychological and environmental cage.

The twins were arrested on 9th May 1968 at Braithwaite House, a block of flats within shouting distance of Burnhill Fields Meeting House. It was also near the cake shop in Whitecross Street where Violet Kray once worked. She took such a liking to my friend John Tyce, at that time a toddler in a buggy, that when she saw him in passing she came out to present him with a cream cake in appreciation. The way to a boy's heart is through his belly, and Violet brought her twins a hot dinner every day of their trial, before wearing herself out on trips to Durham and the Isle of Wight to visit them.

Ron was declared schizophrenic and was transferred to Broadmoor and kept on heavy medication. He was given a well furnished room with an en-suite bathroom and double bed. Both twins continued to run their empire from inside prison. T-shirts were sold as if they were pop stars. They were good at public relations and operated with panache. The well publicised trial and memorable sentences gave them the fame they most wanted, and launched the legend that still flourishes now. The author says that going to prison probably saved the twins from being killed - as did the abolition of capital punishment for murder, only a couple of years before their trial. Melford Stevenson was not a sympathetic judge: his country house was named "Truncheons"



Reg expressed no remorse over what he had done: " He got what he deserved" (Friends who have read "The Water Babies" will recall Mrs. Be-Done-By-As-You-Did.) Reg outlived the thirty years to be released only when he was dying. Ron's funeral was the grandest seen in London since Churchill's, 30 years before: there were horses with black plumes, and 25 limos carrying the mourners. the family grave can be visited at Chingford Mount Cemetery. The book doesn't include the whole story of Reggie's death five years later, in the Maid's Head Hotel in Norwich, with his wife Roberta and his male lover by his bedside. I'm sorry the book includes no illustrations, except for Ronnie and Reggie on the front cover as young men (not bad-looking lads). A more serious criticism is the lack of an index. I will say the book is entertainingly written, and forms a useful addition to the literature prolonging the legend of the Krays

ADRIAN SMITH

POLICE AND THE BLACK COMMUNITY

I am Trevor Hercules, author of two books: ‘Labelled a black villain’ and ‘Rage within’. I am also an ex-offender who has spent 10 years of my life in prison, two of which were in solitary confinement. I was involved in the Gartree prison riots resulting in the loss of a year's remission and a year in solitary confinement. Most of my young life was spent in children's homes until the age of fifteen.



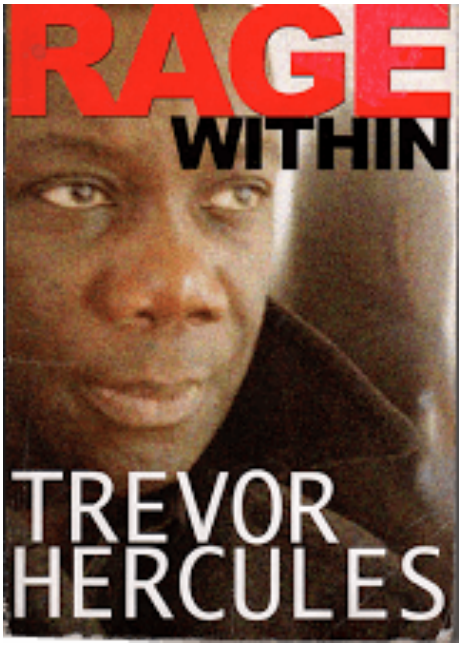
I have turned my life around – having been trouble free for the past seventeen years. I have founded a charity supporting black youths involved in crime. My work is supported by MPs and I have had occasion to air my thoughts at the houses of parliament with regard to black youth and crime. I have written a peer reviewed academic piece entitled 'Understanding the social deprivation mindset'.

I firmly believe that gun and knife violence (especially within the black community) could be reduced if young people had the confidence to go to the police. Simple as that sounds it would not be an easy task given the engrained negative relationship between black people and the police. I suggest that the police should tap in to the rich resource of reformed black offenders (such as myself) to outreach and demonstrate to young people that it's not grassing to report to the police when threatened and intimidated. Many young people would love to go to the police or open up to come forward as witnesses, but such is the stigma surrounding grassing and

snitching especially to the police, that this is not easily done. As far back as I can remember, the situation between the black community and the police has always been volatile. The police are considered as the enemy and this is still the case amongst our youngsters especially those involved in crime.

Historically, within the black community, many grievances are settled without the involvement of the police. For example, a young man of good character who on his way to college, somehow gets into an argument or confrontation with other young men who are outside the law and live by dubious means. An argument breaks and the dubious gang may well have knives or guns. In many cases, the college student wouldn't go to the police but would seek his own revenge with gun or knife or have to leave college and hide maybe, and if someone was killed people would not speak out as that would be snitching. It is hard to believe but this situation is more common than thought possible in Britain today. There are many within the black community who have taken advantage of the fact that people will not go to the police and therefore have been operating a reign of violence and intimidation within the community. Due to this wall of silence (no snitching) many have gotten away with serious crime. These people are hardcore criminals and need to be brought to account.

We need to protect our young - we can no can longer sit idly by when they cannot go from one part of the city to another because it is not their post code. We can no longer allow them to be traumatised by bullies and not saying anything. Many of our young people are being damaged bottling things up inside afraid to talk out in this culture of fear. And amongst the socially deprived, young people feel the need to arm themselves out of fear that they themselves will be attacked.



I am committed to working with black and white youths to show them that it is not 'grassing' or 'snitching' to come forward to authorities to ask for help. It is unbearable that they are being terrorised intimidated and abused but still feel powerless to seek help. There is untapped potential in reformed criminals that is currently grossly under utilised to the detriment of the whole society.

Over 90% of young people killed on our streets through gun and knife crime are black. Yet, a climate of fear prevails. How do we get young people to come forward, when they believe white society is 'against us' and especially the police. Why would black people go to those they believe are oppressing them. Where is the evidence that the police care about protecting black people when they do come forward?

I would like the Black Police Association involved along with teacher's and the Community Leaders . So that perhaps these black youth may feel more confident in coming forward.

We must offer our young people a platform to speak out so that they can feel safe. But we must protect them when they come forward so that they can learn to trust.

TREVOR HERCULES

MAKING QUAKER CONNECTIONS

Quaker Connections is a project aiming to provide isolated prisoners with an opportunity to have contact with someone who is not a professional involved with Prison or Probation services. It is hoped that continued contact will help them deal better with their situation and make them more prepared for release into the community.

The project focuses on isolated prisoners, who receive very few, or no visitors at all on a regular basis. When considering the need for the project, research was carried out finding that of the prison population in HMP Maghaberry (Northern Ireland) at that time, 170 men were identified as not having received a single visit within the previous three months.

This is where the 'Quaker Connections' Volunteer Befrienders step in to offer friendship and support to these very isolated prisoners. We asked some of our volunteers why they got involved and what they felt about the impact of the project on their service users. This is what they told us.

From Megan Thompson

Tell us about the work you do with Quaker Connections.
I volunteer as a befriender, currently meet with a woman in Hydebank Wood. I also attend safety and support meetings in Maghaberry and from those I then go meet with men who have been identified as vulnerable and see if they would like a befriender. In Hydebank Wood, Women's I am currently setting up a programme to educate the women on how to help themselves when they are in a bad situation. There will be Mindfulness, Yoga and Motivational speakers coming to see the women. Who will pass on tools to help you get back up when life has kicked you down.

How and why did you get involved?
I got involved via volunteer now website. I chose to volunteer with the Quakers as I have a keen interest on the prison system and I am inspired by the work that the Quakers do and have done for many years. It also caters well to my disability and gives me a sense of purpose.

How does the work you do help Quaker Connections clients?
It helps because I am bringing a positive, unconditional human connection to those who are struggling with life and its challenges.

What do you get out of being a Quaker Connections volunteer?
I get a lot from being a volunteer. As said before I feel a sense of purpose, as it is putting my skills to use. I also enjoy meeting the variety of people that I do, it is very interesting and helps restore my faith in humanity. I also enjoy the central heating in the prison (not the Quaker mobile), the endless cups of tea and biscuits!

From Paula O'Hare

Tell us about the work you do with Quaker Connections.
I befriend a young man in Hydebank College in Belfast offering companionship and Mentorship.



How and why did you get involved?
I was at mass when the priest read out a talk from pope Francis asking people to think about people in prison and pray for them and think of ways that we can all help them. It was during the year of mercy in the Catholic Church and I really felt Pope Francis' words spoke to me. I had hoped that maybe I could help in some way. At first I prayed about it because I was a bit nervous of it all but a few months later my prayer group (Legion of Mary) decided to get in touch with Fr. McBreaty (Prison Chaplain) who then put us in touch with the Quaker community. I thought if I got involved I could in some small way help.

How does the work you do help Quaker Connections clients?
I feel I offer a listening ear and support to someone in prison – it can be very lonely and isolating. I believe God is in all of us and that each human being is of unique worth. I believe strongly that all life matters and I feel it's important that everyone feels valued and I have seen through my own experiences that it makes a difference.

What do you get out of being a Quaker Connections volunteer?
I want to help people and to make a positive impact on the community. I want to connect to my community and make it a better place. Even helping out with the smallest tasks can make a real difference to the lives of people. And volunteering is a two-way street: It has benefitted me immensely I have met new people and learnt more about how and why people end up in prison – it has been a huge eye opener. I have also help break down prejudices with my friends when they hear I volunteer in a prison. They have changed their conceptions of how anyone from any background can find themselves in prison.

From Fintan Coffey

Tell us about the work you do with Quaker Connections.
I am a befriender in HMP Magilligan. This has involved meeting once a week to start with, expanding up to three week intervals with a vulnerable inmate. I then alternated visits with another befriender.

How and why did you get involved?
I always had an idea this was something i would like to, and I responded to the call when an email was sent around to Meetings.

How does the work you do help Quaker Connections clients?
It is a chance for them to talk, express themselves or their concerns in a way where they know we are fully committed to them, and where we have no second agendas, and no connection with the prison system. They know we act in charity, and my impression is that the prisoners recognise this and feel a bit more humanised as a result.



What do you get out of being a Quaker Connections volunteer?
It just feels right. I have never regretted a visit, even if I have sometimes felt despondent travelling there. I always came out feeling much better, and a feeling of having done something that meant a lot to another person.

I have also learnt from them. They may be prisoners, but they are people, with life experiences, practical advice on shared hobbies, and I have also got a laugh in the conversations. I still remember the humour, wise words, unique perspectives that my befriendee had.

From Stewart Penn

Tell us about the work you do with Quaker Connections.
I have been involved with Quaker Connections on two levels, prisoner visits and also a project hosting drama workshops for a group of 12 prisoners within the Donard Centre

How and why did you get involved?
I first became aware of the Quaker Connections initiative through the Volunteer NI website. This is something that I had wanted to get involved with for sometime, as a few years ago the theatre group I run had utilised the skills of prisoners at Maghaberry to make scenery. At that time I was given a tour of the prison by the then Governor, Austin Tracey. It struck me then that many of the prisoners had themselves been victims of circumstance, or family issues or peer pressure. At that time I researched theatre workshops within prisons and had seen that it was proven to be highly beneficial to the prisoners.

This was one aspect I was keen to progress, but through the Quaker Connections and Sinead Bailie, I had the training for prisoner visits.

How does the work you do help Quaker Connections clients?
The prisoner visits enables a prisoners to establish a rapport with someone who isn't there on an official basis. They can talk as freely as they wish without any repercussions about their feelings, experience in prison and concerns they may have about being released.

The drama workshops have been a great medium for individuals to open up in a relaxed and non-judgmental environment. In one exercise, several of the guys were able to state how much they regretted their crimes and/or the route they took that resulted in the crime. This was an inspirational approach and was also noted by the mental health team.



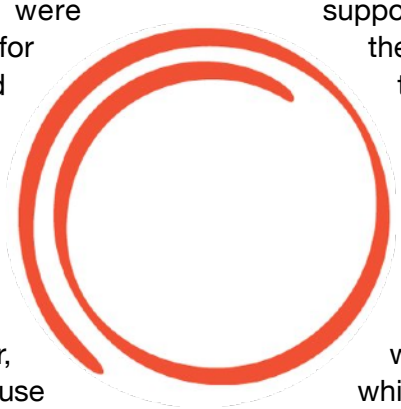
In December the "Don-Con" (Donard Cons) theatre group put on a nativity play performed in rhyming couplets. Despite anxiety, concerns and requests to "not bother doing this any more" we persevered and the guys performed to an audience of approximately 50 people, including officers, mental health team and other prisoners. Afterwards they were 'buzzing' from the experience and wanted to do it again. One guy even asked if he could join our theatre group when he was released so he could become an actor. Others didn't think they'd have been able to stand up in front of people and act.

What do you get out of being a Quaker Connections volunteer?
I love it!

CIRCLES MEAN LIFE

I was kindly invited to be involved in the Perrie Lectures recently. It is an Annual event dedicated to prison and rehabilitation issues, and each year the Committee decide on a topic for discussion and debate. Inviting speakers to enhance and drive the forum. It was a wonderfully interesting day for me, and among the many highlights, was being present to hear Gerry Marshall give such an enthusiastic presentation about Circles UK. I was also blessed to spend some time with him over lunch, discussing the benefits to ex-offenders, but also the funding issues of late. Gerry is working tirelessly to address these issues, and as an ex-offender myself, I understand how critical their work is. I was never able to be a Core Member of a Circle, due to the funding issues, and Circles having to prioritise the Higher Risk ex-offenders for support. In hindsight, I took this as a positive in a way, and have my own circle anyway since release. That being our Religious Society of Friends.

This experience, by coincidence, connected to a subject that came up at our Meeting for Business last Sunday. We were supporting Circles, by way of letting them use the Meeting House for their critical work. With of course all safeguarding issues attended to. It transpires that because of the funding problems, this will not be the case in the future, which I think is very sad. On a more positive note, our Meeting has been in touch with Area Meeting, to maybe relay these concerns to Yearly Meeting, and hopefully inspire some sort of lobbying to be done.



This prompted me to wonder, whether there was anything I could do to promote this cause. A cause which because of its nature, isn't the most popular in society. I suggested we choose Circles to be the beneficiaries of our weekly collection for a period, sometime in the future. I would humbly ask other Meetings whether they would consider this also. It would be very sad, given the connections Quakers have had historically with Circles of Support & Accountability, if this critical tool was lost completely.

To end, many times I have written these following words within pieces I have composed. I feel it sums up the importance of the contribution towards reducing reoffending, that Circles and other Groups provide. "The more we isolate, stigmatise, and ostracise ex-offenders, the less safe we all are. The more we integrate, support, and employ ex-offenders, within managed structures, the safer we all are."

Circles mean life. Not just for ex-offenders, but a life of safety for potential future victims. What price could be put on that?

STEVE

RISK, PROTECTION & PREVENTION

You won't know me, but I am writing after coming across a copy of Newsletter, No. 97 of the Quakers in/and Criminal Justice at Kendal Quaker Meeting House this morning.

Briefly, my professional work has been as a psychologist at De Montfort University, in Leicester, where I taught health visitors, social workers and youth workers for many years before retiring recently. I retain a connection with DMU as a Honorary Senior Research Worker and continue to be involved in research.

I am currently researching the impact of '5 Praises a Day' upon preschool children and have found that children experiencing praise in this way display reduced conduct difficulties, lower levels of hyperactivity and improved relations with other children, as measured pre- and post- using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. Children in the comparison group did not display these improvements.

Over the years I have become extremely interested in the multiple routes into offending and organised two major meetings with the support of Professor David Farrington at the Royal Society. One of the outcomes of these meetings was a number of publications, such as Support from the Start (2004).

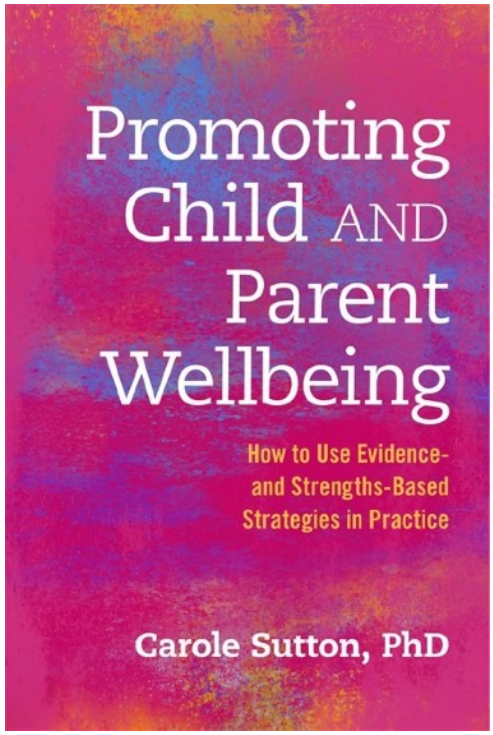
The frontispiece of that publication was updated for my book Promoting Child and Parent Wellbeing. How to Use Evidence- and Strengths-Based Strategies in Practice. (2016) JKP.

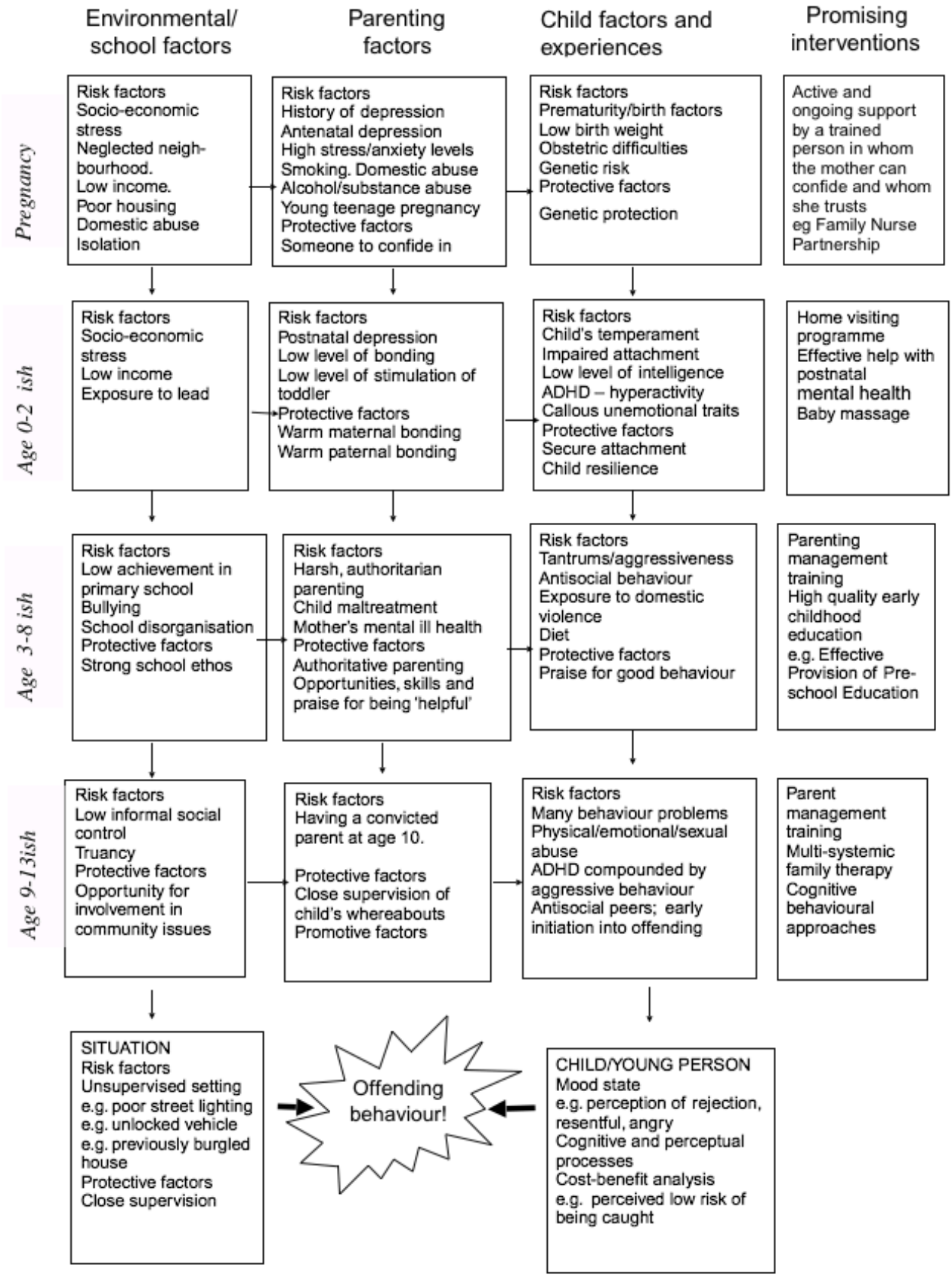
I am sending a copy of this matrix now, as it seems to me that your members may be able to use it to inform initiatives which will divert a few children and young people with whom they work from paths into offending.

Each entry on the matrix is based upon very firm empirical evidence.

I wonder if you might consider it suitable for publishing in your Newsletter?

Yours in Friendship,
Carole Sutton, PhD





© Figure 1 Risk, protection and prevention. Reproduced, with updates, from Sutton et al (2004). Reproduced under the terms of the Open Government Licence v2.0 *Stutton*

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN EUROPE

This is a brief account of the biennial conference of the European Forum for Restorative Justice – held this year in June in Tirana, Albania – and attended by over 300 people from 47 countries. Some countries were represented by many participants, such as the UK, Belgium, Norway, Netherlands and Albania, our host country. But there were some participants who were the only ones from smaller countries, such as Belarus and Slovenia.

The European conference is an amazing gathering of like-minded people, all exploring restorative justice, often forging new developments. It is a moderately priced conference (although travelling to the venue can be expensive) and welcomes input from practitioners and academics in the form of papers, workshops, posters and more – something that is totally missing in the UK, where the few restorative justice conferences that take place tend to have pre-determined programmes and speakers, and no invitation to others to contribute.

The title this year was 'Expanding the Restorative Imagination' and focused on three themes:

1. Restorative intersections with the criminal justice system
2. Restorative juvenile justice – realities and visions
3. Re-imagining restorative justice as a social movement

I presented a workshop and a paper, both in the 'social movement' category. The workshop was 'A restorative approach to road congestion', in which I replicated the restorative circle model used in Bristol to gather groups of people to share issues encountered on the clogged roads of Bristol. The paper was part of a session 'Towards restorative cities', in which I contributed the experience of working towards Restorative Bristol and other UK cities, and there were contributions from two cities in Italy and one in Belgium.

Tirana as the conference venue also provided some special insights. At the end of the conference we were invited to choose one of eight tours to experience different aspects of the city – its Communist past featured highly in these, including underground bunkers prepared in case of nuclear war, with 106 rooms on five levels; or a look at Communist art; or the surveillance centre. Older people can still remember the Communist era and its privations and dangers, though younger people have escaped this.

Another interesting aspect is the fact that traditional communities in Albania and other neighbouring countries have used violence in revenge attacks for perceived slights and harmful acts. The Albanian Foundation for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes was founded to mediate in these situations, and has played a big role in the community.

As for the next conference, the venue is not yet known. But I am starting to save up for it now, as it is an experience not to be missed!

MARIAN LIEBMAN



BEYOND THE GATE

Beyond The Gate is a project which strives to make the transition from prison to the community less painless for prisoners, particularly in relation to their housing and support needs. The scheme is managed by Housing Rights, a not for profit based in Northern Ireland. The principle aim of the service is to assist in the prevention of homelessness amongst those leaving prison and thereby to enhance their opportunities for resettlement, stabilisation and community reintegration. In particular the service focuses on preventing homelessness by:

Enabling prisoners to sustain their existing tenancies
Identifying relevant support services
Bridging, Bonding and Linking to appropriate support services
Monitoring and evaluating

We aim to identify those vulnerable prisoners with complex needs, who are most at risk of not sustaining their accommodation, then work to build support around them and help them to tackle any housing problems them may encounter.

JOHN HAS NOW STAYED OUT OF PRISON FOR 7 MONTHS AND PRIOR TO THIS THE LONGEST HE HAD MANAGED TO STAY OUT HAD BEEN 3 DAYS

BTG involves partnerships within both the statutory and voluntary sectors which is critical to us in achieving successful outcomes.

We meet with clients 6 weeks before they are due to be released from prison, and gather a lot of information at this point regarding their housing needs, history with substance misuse, mental and physical health, and any previous engagement with the Trust or charitable organisations to support them with any issues. We receive many of our referrals from Housing Rights Housing Advisers who are based in each prisons in Northern Ireland, but these referrals can also be identified by Probation and Sentence managers.

Beyond the gate only work with repeat offenders. We hope to look at the root issues and how we can address these factors to try and help clients to break their own cycle of recidivism. On the day of their release we meet clients at the prison gate, we make sure when needed, that temporary accommodation is in place for them and get them there. If they already have a home to go to, we get them to that and make sure they have electricity, gas, food etc to see them through the initial days of their release. Working in conjunction with another voluntary agency to secure many of them a “Starter Pack” (consisting of basic supplies to set up a home such as a kettle, iron, tea towels, microwave, bedding, etc).

Once someone has been placed in temporary or permanent accommodation we would look at wraparound support, which is typically floating support in their local area. Much of our day to day work involves addressing issues, dealing with crisis intervention and generally helping clients to sustain their tenancies. We arrange benefit interviews and bring clients to their appointments. Getting clients set up with GPs can help to prevent service users from being left for a long time without much needed medication or medical assistance.

Our experience with prisoners shows us that repeat offenders, manage much better when they have this level of support in place and our stats show that our work helps to sustain clients in their accommodation and in the community for much longer time frames, sometimes indefinitely. Housing plays a key role in the uncertainty prior to release so regardless of what type of accommodation, knowing where you will sleep the night after being released from prison is hugely important.

Let us tell you about one of our clients and his experience with the service. We'll call him John. We received a referral for John in September, he was due for release in October. During our initial meeting with John he was extremely anxious about his upcoming release as he had no accommodation and he told us that in the past, once released he usually starts street drinking so that he will get arrested again and be returned to custody where at least he would have a bed, he said that he was 'dreading' his release.



We explained to John what 'Beyond the gate' could help him with, focusing on his housing, he was very keen to engage and said that he had never been offered this help before, he was especially relieved that we could meet him at the gate on the day of his release. Over the coming weeks we met with John several times and it became apparent that there were issues around mental health, addictions and self-harming.

On the day of his Release John decided to go to his Mums, however this quickly broke down and he ended up sofa surfing for a few weeks as he felt that hostels would not be a good environment for him as he was struggling with his drug use and suffering from increased paranoia. Eventually John agreed to a referral to a 'dry' hostel which has low tolerance for drug or alcohol use and was secured a bed in November.

Over the weeks Johns mental health deteriorated to the point of crisis and following a successful crisis intervention John was allocated a psychiatrist, a CPN and a mental health social worker, he was given a diagnosis and put on the appropriate medication which went a long way to stabilising him. We also made a referral to the Daisy Project which works with people around their drug use, John engaged well with them also.

We also assisted John to apply for PIP which he was awarded.

The next few months John did sustain his bed in the hostel but it wasn't all smooth sailing. There was drug use, assaults and further charges, although John did not return to custody. We continued to work on John's housing and at the end of January he was offered a property that he viewed and accepted. Referrals were made to Home Care floating support service that picked John up pretty quickly. We made referrals to the Vicars Relief Fund and secured John a sum of money with he was able to buy a bed and a fridge freezer. Within a short time John had everything that he needed in the property and had even done some decorating.

While there have been ongoing issues John has continued to engage well with all his support services and is sustaining his tenancy. John has stayed out of prison for 7 months and prior to this the longest he had managed to stay out had been 3 days.

SIOBHAN & BRONAGH (From Beyond The Gate Project)

OPEN LETTER TO MEMBERS

Dear all

This is an urgent request for an offer from someone to replace our Newsletter Editor.

I am sending this email to as many of you as possible who might be able to help find someone to take over as our Newsletter Editor. Carmel Schmid, who has been our Editor for a number of years, having taken over from Adrian Smith, and who has been very proactive in the role and worked hard to keep it a valuable and lively publication, found that it was necessary for personal reasons to stand down immediately just recently. We are extremely grateful for all that she has done, but it now means that we need to find a replacement as soon as possible.

Jonathan Lamb, who has co-edited with her recently and produces the electronic version of the Newsletter, has said he will put together the August Newsletter from material which Carmel has passed to him, but he is not in a position to take over the editorship because of his many other commitments. So therefore we need urgently to find someone who can take over the role, especially as the November/December issue is an important one, as it contains details of our annual conference.

I am therefore emailing round a number of you to ask if any of you would either be able to offer to take on the role, or can suggest someone in QICJ who might be willing to. Carmel would be able to give you fuller details about what it involves.
(carmelschmid@gmail.com}

In hope and Friendship

Ann Jacob, co-Clerk and Membership Secretary

ANN JACOB



PEER HOUSING ADVICE IN PRISON

My name is Sean. I spent 3.5yrs in Maghaberry prison, and for the first 18 months my focus was on family orientated activities. I completed 6 Barnardo's courses to improve my ability of being a better parent when I got out. Afterwards I didn't have anything else to do to fill my time in prison.

I was approached by my sentence manager who suggested working in the Housing Rights Peer Adviser Scheme. I sort of put my nose up a bit as it sounded a bit monotonous, but I went and saw the Housing Rights lady called Brenda who had a good long chat with me about the type of work it involved. It sounded intriguing so I got involved, and with a couple of other peers we got trained up. I was very shocked at the level of training I received and the fact it was a level 3 OCN certified course. I was well impressed, a lot of time and effort was put into place by Brenda and the other trainers. At the start it was over whelming but by the end of the training I was amazed by how we had all changed as peers. No longer what felt like cardboard cut outs, but talking amongst ourselves and actually knowing what we were talking about. It felt like we were ready for advising other prisoners.

AS A PERSON I GREW MORE CONFIDENT EACH WEEK, LEARNING AS I WENT ALONG. TO BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING THAT WAS POSITIVE FOR OTHERS, WEEK IN AND WEEK OUT WAS SO REWARDING

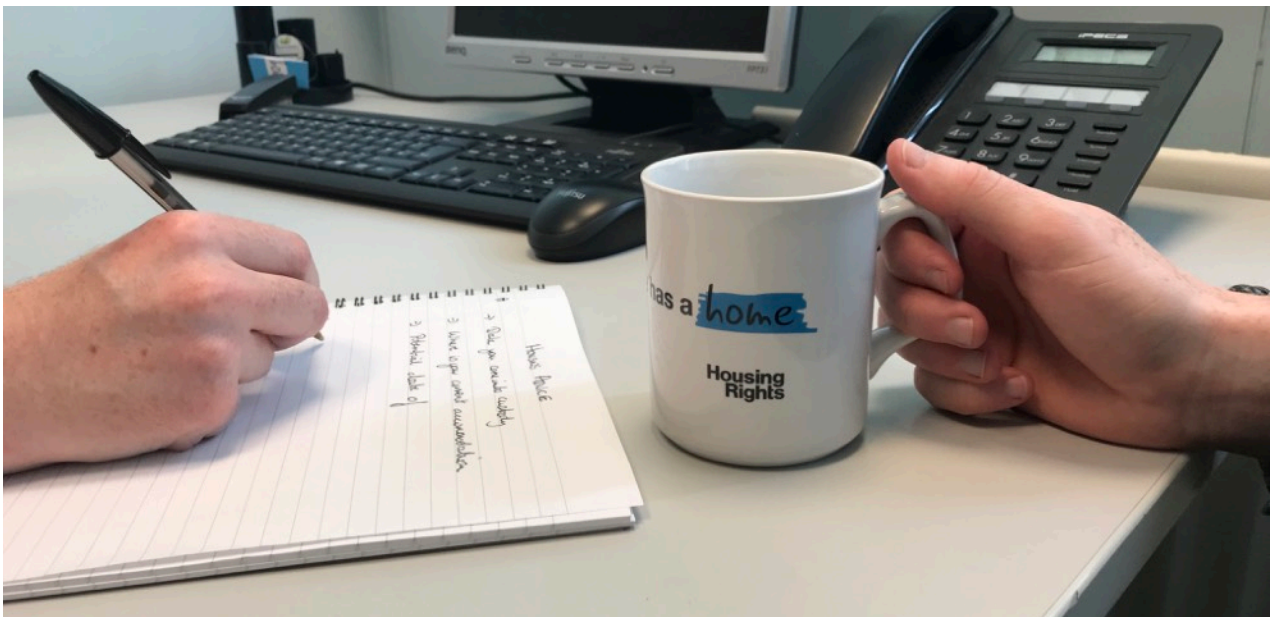
I had agreed to do the one to ones. Yes, I was nervous but I had great support from Brenda. The amount of prisoners I saw was unbelievable, ranging from ones who had their own homes and were afraid of losing them through to others having no home at all to go to. Each person coming in and out of the room had a different story. There was this one person who always stuck in my mind. He had just been remanded in custody, but his whole world was literally in a suitcase, everything he owned, but by chatting with him and filling in the necessary paperwork, we where able to do some work and then call him back to let him know his whole world in a case was safe and sound until he got out. I think it was that day it struck home that this is a vocation to be able to help others where they needed it most. I've met some very vulnerable people while I was in prison and the fact that I was was a prisoner myself, giving advice to other prisoners, meant that I could be trusted. With some of the things people disclosed to me it was a real privilege and honour to carry out the role.

Poor Brenda probably dreaded seeing me coming in with a sheet of paper loaded with questions which I didn't know how to answer. But for the first few weeks I kept asking Brenda those questions. As a person I grew more confident each week, learning as I went along. To be able to do something that was positive for others, week in and week out was so rewarding. I'd given up the hope of employment after prison, but doing the peer work has inspired me into a new lease of life. Working within the peer advice role, by helping others to secure their homes for when they get out, identifying those in arrears who needed mediation to sustain their homes and getting help for those that needed a hostel upon release, I couldn't have been in a better role than the one I was doing. Just being there for the other prisoners was all they needed, knowing

they could reach out from committal to the end of their time in prison was a huge safety net for them, a helping hand like no other. Sometimes seeing a human being, that had made a mistake, nearly having a melt down about losing their home was sad to see and harder to inform them due to the fact that they where doing so long inside. But to the rest being able to advise them correctly and see that light of hope and comfort in there eyes after being advised by myself really did give me a sense of achievement.

I went from giving up hope to be reborn with a new purpose in life. I'm out of prison now and carrying on this type of work. I had so much training within the housing sector, learning all about Universal Credit and much more that's accredited, and continuing to help those that need it most, is the most satisfying thing that I've done in my life. I'll always remember the Housing Rights logo "when everyone has a home" it's just that some of us take these things for granted. Others aren't so lucky but there is hope for those people with organisations like Housing Rights and their Prison Peer Advisers. So much help is being given and a roof over someones head is all that's asked.

SEAN



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

This is rather a depressing update to be writing!
The time since my last update in March has been very quiet in membership terms.
However we are very pleased to welcome two new members, **Ben Jarman** and **Catherine Willis**. Should you wish to contact either of them before a new Membership List is issued, please do so via myself.

However, it is very discouraging to report that our total numbers are gradually reducing and now stand at only 132, allowing for our two new members, several resignations and the number now deleted from the list, having not paid a subscription since 2016. **Of our current membership there are 34 members who have not (yet) paid a subscription for the current year**. Friends, please attend to this. If you need to check whether you are one of them, please contact me to find out.

In May this year, Carmel Schmid, our Newsletter Editor, found it necessary for personal reasons to resign forthwith from her role as Newsletter Editor. This has put us in something of a predicament. Following her resignation I sent a 'round robin' emailed letter to about 25 members who I hoped might find it possible to offer to replace her or suggest someone who could. I received no response to this, with one exception from a member who I know is already heavily involved in a great number of things, saying that this meant that regrettably they were not able to help by taking it on.

Jonathan Lamb, who has co-edited with Carmel recently and produced the electronic version of the Newsletter, has very kindly offered to put this issue of the Newsletter together, but is unable to take on the full editor's role because of his many other commitments. You will therefore find elsewhere in this issue a copy of the email I sent round, so that the information goes to the whole membership. **Please give consideration to this request, as otherwise we will have no further Newsletters, which are central to the functioning of QICJ** Our next Newsletter would be due out in November and would contain the information and application forms for our conference next February, so is the most important issue of the Newsletter.

I remain hopeful of a response.

ANN JACOB

Your Committee Members for 2018 are: Simon Ewart, Rodney Mahon (Treasurer), Ann Jacob (Co-Clerk & Membership Sec.), Alice Audsley, Marian Liebmann, Nick McGeorge, Jo Rado (Co-Clerk), Carmel Schmid. Jonathan Lamb is newsletter editor although he is not available to attend committee meetings outside of the conference. Jonathan produces the illustrated electronic newsletter.

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Opinions expressed are those of the writers and do not represent the views of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Quakers in Criminal Justice or the Newsletter Editor

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