

# Newsletter

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## CENTRE TO SUPPORT RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WORK IN RUSSIA

**Offenders in Russia will experience some different, more community-based responses to their crimes, under three new pilot schemes to be introduced in the cities of Moscow, Dzerhinsk and Tyumen.**

Restorative justice approaches are being used more widely in the UK at present, as a way of dealing with certain types of offenders. Victims and local communities are more directly involved in schemes focusing on mediation and reparation rather than imprisonment. Evaluation has shown that many of these projects achieve better results in terms of the impact on the offender and greater satisfaction on the part of victims of crime, than more conventional approaches.

The Centre for Social Action and the Community and Criminal Justice Studies Unit (CCJSU) at De Montfort University, have been awarded a three year, £750,000 contract by the Department for International Development (DFID). This is to help develop restorative justice programmes in Russia, as a non-

custodial approach to dealing with young offenders. It is recognised that there is an urgent need to divert more offenders away from the criminal justice system and this scheme is an initiative on the part of the Centre for Judicial and Legal Reform (JLR), a civil society organisation based in Moscow, who will share the funding.

The CCJSU, based at De Montfort University, has considerable expertise and experience in the field of restorative justice in Britain, through research, evaluation of projects and publications. CSA has considerable experience in the process of supporting politicians, managers and practitioners in Russia and Ukraine to introduce change in existing social welfare and childcare practices, including legislative reform and strategic planning.

The De Montfort based team will advise and assist their Russian partners with the following tasks:

- Setting up systems and structures for the implementation of restorative justice programmes which are agreed

and implemented by the state and civil society stakeholders in the pilot sites;

- The development and adoption of a range of restorative justice methodologies;
- The achievement of greater understanding and ownership of restorative justice approaches among stakeholders;
- Identifying and attracting sources of sustainable funding for restorative justice;
- Demonstrable implementation of restorative justice at federal and regional levels.

There will be an initial visit to Russia to meet with stakeholders, familiarise Western staff with the existing legal arrangements for dealing with young offenders and identify members of the proposed Co-ordinating Committee and Regional Steering Groups.

During the first six months, a study visit to the UK will be organised for the principal Russian stakeholders, which will enable them to gain first hand knowledge of existing restorative



## Redressing the balance

Young people, particularly in deprived neighbourhoods, often find themselves at odds with their local communities. Sometimes this can be because of lack of facilities catering for young people's needs, making them very visible hanging around the streets, or sometimes they can get drawn into situations, not always of their making, resulting in regular bouts of trouble involving the police. In these situations young people can end up feeling powerless, shut out and picked on by adults in authority. Over the past year the Centre has been working on a number of projects supporting workers dealing face-to-face with young people in these situations. Through support and training, they have been promoting social action methods as a way of helping professionals to work with young people in a more participative manner and enabling young people to get positively involved in activities of their choice in their local communities.

### SUPPORTING YOUTH WORKERS AND POLICE OFFICERS WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK IN NORTHANTS

During 2001, Centre staff worked with youth workers and police officers providing consultancy support for their work with young people in local communities, under the auspices of Northants Lifelong Learning Department.

Representatives from the youth service and the police service in each area attended an initial two-day residential social action course facilitated by workers from the Centre. One of the key aims of the initiative was to provide opportunities for these professions, who have not always had good relations in the past, to reach a closer understanding of each other's skills, expertise and values. Representatives from the police and youth service devised action plans for work that they could do jointly in a number of areas, responding to the needs of young people.

In the south Northants and Daventry area, youth work staff have been involved in social action work with young people and local communities, in association with local beat officers, in six different estates and villages. Young people have been encouraged to complete questionnaires about their perceptions of good and bad experiences of living in their area and offer suggestions about new resources and facilities which would meet their needs. A total of 407 questionnaires were completed from this area recording common experiences for young people of nothing to do, lack of facilities, hostility from local adults, difficulties with the police and street problems of drug dealing, drinking, vandalism and aggression from other groups. Youth workers have been following up these suggestions with police officers and local Parish councils and in some cases applications for funding are being made to respond to the young people's concerns.

Youth workers and police officers on the Briar Hill estate in Northampton, have been actively engaged in a social action project since the first training course. One of the main pieces of work carried out by the group was the involvement of young people in the creation of a community mosaic over the summer holidays. This began as a result of joint work between youth workers, young people and the police and as a direct response to issues of community safety highlighted by recent surveys carried out by both agencies. It is estimated that around 200 young people played some part in the completion of this community project, which was officially unveiled in November 2001.

The development of a youth club on the estate evolved out of the earlier project and now has 62 young people on its books aged 11 to 19. Since September 2001, youth workers have run a youth club alongside a police officer every Tuesday night with support from five parents. This followed a joint detached project, which allowed young people on the estate the opportunity to see youth workers and police working together. Both professions noted that they were treated differently by young people when working alone, but are confident that a new view will grow with time. The youth club constitution shows a clear commitment to increasing the involvement of young people in decision-making and in the general running of the club.

A legacy of the new partnerships which have been forged, has been the establishment of new offices on the estate, shared by five Lifelong Learning staff and seven police officers. This augurs not just a greater understanding and partnership between the two professions, but also the real beginnings of improvement in provision and involvement for the young people of Briar Hill.

▶ practice in the criminal justice system and meet researchers and practitioners.

A team of experienced staff and associates, drawn from both Centres, will work closely with the Russian stakeholders to implement the project.

The CCJSU will contribute five consultants to the project who have extensive experience in managing, evaluating and training staff taking part in restorative justice projects in Greater Manchester, London and elsewhere in Britain, as well as working to develop alternative to custody sentences in Ukraine.

The Centre for Social Action's contribution to the project will be led by Eamonn Keenan, a founder member of the Centre, who has been appointed Project Manager. Eamonn has pioneered the development of restorative justice approaches in Northern Ireland through his work for the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO) and as a member of the Restorative Justice and Family Group Conferencing Association of Northern Ireland.

Eamonn's work has been directed towards conflict resolution amongst former paramilitary communities in Northern Ireland. This has included work with former combatants in order to establish ways of reintegrating those involved in paramilitary activities into "normal" social activities.

This promises to be an exciting and innovative piece of work that will deploy the skills of Centre staff in a new subject area. ■

## RESIDENTS SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE IN ACOCKS GREEN

West Midlands Police fund the Safe Haven Project as part of a crime prevention initiative. It aims to provide opportunities for young people in the Fox Hollies area of Birmingham and started with an intensive 3-month youth research programme to find out what they felt about living in the area.

The Centre for Social Action was commissioned to carry out an initial social action training course for six adults in the Fox Hollies area. The participants were all local residents and came from a wide range of backgrounds, some had worked with children and young people before, but they were all recruited for their enthusiasm and commitment to doing something positive in the area.

Ian Boulton and Louise Wilcox ran training courses for the youth research team on social action research methods. The team then worked for three months talking to children and young people to find out what they liked and disliked in the area and what they wanted changed. The researchers went out to the young people, so the interviews were carried out on the streets, in youth clubs, outside shops, at bus stops, on playing fields etc. Some young people attended public meetings and training sessions to give their views and acted as advisors to the research project. Ian and Louise met with the research team to record feedback and offer ongoing support. Young people felt particularly disadvantaged living in Acocks Green and had some strong feelings about the way in which they were treated by the police and other adults.

## NEW WAYS OF WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF SCHOOL EXCLUSION

The Centre for Social Action was commissioned by the Government Office for the West Midlands to run a social action training course for Birmingham South YOT staff and other professionals from the statutory and voluntary sector working with local young people at risk or in trouble. Centre staff also provided on-going consultancy to practitioners to help them apply the new approach to their practice. A wide variety of spin-off projects have been created as a result.

One of the police officers ran a racism awareness session using groupwork techniques in a school that had been experiencing problems with bullying and racism. A mixed group of workers facilitated a morning session with a whole year group around citizenship, with the aim of getting an after school group together to look at local issues. Another worker used the social action process to facilitate a weekly session in school with a group of pupils in danger of exclusion, to help them examine their own behaviour and build self-esteem. Two workers also used a social action approach in a voluntary sector youth club on a neighbouring estate.

Practitioners liked the style and flexibility of the social action process and the way it involved the young people in asking questions and developing their own ideas. Young people enjoyed being treated as equals by the workers and having their views treated seriously and felt they learnt more in the groups as a result.

## CRIME CONCERN YOUTH PARTICIPATION PROGRAMME



Ian Boulton has been providing consultancy support on behalf of the Centre, to eight London based projects managed and financed by Crime Concern, which are encouraging youth participation by young people, some of whom are at risk of offending. These are at various stages of development. The Centre has delivered training for the programme staff in social action methods and has been instrumental in establishing a culture of shared learning and networking across the London boroughs and between agencies.

### Workforce – Hackney

In this project, an original group of five young people with learning difficulties, at risk of offending, have been meeting fortnightly. They have been concentrating on the theme of young people as victims of crime in Hackney, with the objective of doing something about it. They have called their group Dangerous Minds and now have a membership of a dozen. They are exploring ways of getting their

message across, using ideas such as writing to newspapers, making a film and holding a Young People's Festival. The meetings are well recorded and facilitated entirely by the young people themselves, with support where necessary from project workers. The Centre has been supporting this process.

### Training for Life – Lambeth

This project is using a Citizenship Module as part of its regular training programme to identify young people who are interested in working in their local community. They will be working with local primary schools introducing ideas around health and fitness to younger people. Centre staff have attended meetings with local agencies to lend support to the organisation and helped to plan the module.

### Southern Housing – Islington

This is a project about relationships between young people and adults on the Marquess estate. Centre staff have

wanted to ensure that young people own the project and make all the decisions and therefore have been demonstrating participative youth work methods to local youth workers. The young people have been conducting initial exploratory interviews around the estate.

### Springboard

In this project students attend Springboard for up to two years and during the first 12 months attend a Life Skills course in fixed groups of 12. The workers responsible for youth participation are experimenting with this model as a form of team-building and are using the Youth Participation programme to add shape and purpose to this work. Centre staff have planned and facilitated a "Know Your Community" workshop towards the end of each of the group's Life Skills courses and supported any action arising from these sessions. The workshops are based on the tenets of the citizenship programmes, exploring moral responsibility, political literacy etc.

# INTERNATIONAL DISABILITY EQUALITY AGENCY

Centre for Social Action De Montfort University

**IDEA** is an independent organisation based within the Centre for Social Action, closely associated with the International Committee of the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP), which aims to provide a focus for international work on disability issues.

**IDEA** believes in the ideals of freedom, equality and self-determination, which are at the heart of the international movement. It further believes that these ideals are routinely violated by the oppression and poverty under which most disabled people live and that this unacceptable situation must be challenged by disabled people themselves. This can only be done through self-organisation, summed up by the expression "Nothing about us without us".

**IDEA** will work with disabled people and their organisations, with government and non-government agencies that wish to develop a disability rights and empowerment dimension in their policies and practices and also in partnership with non-disabled led organisations and professions, on the understanding that professionals in their relationship with disabled people must facilitate, not control.

**IDEA** will offer disability equality training, capacity building training with organisations of disabled people, social model based training for agencies and organisations incorporating UN Conventions and/or relevant national legislation and targeted training for disabled people themselves.

**IDEA** will also offer consultancy to:

- Advise organisations on strategies and policies on disability rights, equality and empowerment;
- Assist organisations to develop a disability rights and equality perspective in their organisations ;
- Assist with training needs assessment;
- Assist with disability, equality and access audits.

**IDEA** is managed by disabled people and its consultants are Bill Albert, Mark Harrison, Jacqui Christy James and Michael Turner. They can be contacted via the Centre for Social Action.

## DFID SAMARA DISABILITY AND EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

**IDEA** has been awarded a £500,000 contract by the Department for International Development to work on disability issues in Samara, Russia and will also be running training programmes in Mozambique and Malta.

The Samara Disability and Empowerment Project is designed to assist Russian partners to promote a rights-based approach to disability and change the physical and attitudinal environment for disabled people. People with disabilities are likely to be amongst the poorest in Russia. They are not only excluded from most employment opportunities and therefore remain dependent on state benefits and other family members, but through public intolerance of difference they are also denied their rights and entitlements as Russian citizens.

The objective of the consultancy is to assist disabled people in project sites to develop essential skills, that will allow them to better influence socio-political structures at all levels to make choices and to shape their own lives. This will be achieved through:

- Delivering training and technical assistance to disabled people to develop essential skills;
- Assisting state bodies to constructively engage with disability NGOs in the areas of policy and practice;
- Supporting project management structures.

The project will be centred primarily in Samara Oblast - particularly the cities of Samara and Togliatti – but will also disseminate into Nizhny Novgorod. The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Development (MLSD) and the Moscow-based NGO Perspektiva will both be actively involved in the process and dissemination of the project.

## NEW RESEARCH NOTES

Two new Research Notes have been added to the Centre for Social Action website under Research and Reports. A printed version is also available. These comprise the following:

### Using social action to achieve social change – the impact of social action on individuals taking part

**Joan Arches**

This summarises the research carried out by visiting professor Joan Arches from the University of Massachusetts, Boston, who interviewed participants involved in social action projects conducted in Nottingham in 1979, Castle Vale, Birmingham in 1996 and Braunstone, Leicester 2001. This provides some evidence of the long-term impact, on personal and professional practice, of involvement in social action projects on those who take part.

### Listening to Consumers – developing more responsive health services

**Alison Skinner**

This summarises findings from CSA research projects investigating consumer views of hospital services and voluntary sector health initiatives. Projects reviewed include a community consultation on the reconfiguration of hospital services in Leicestershire, consumer views of HIV services and two initiatives undertaken as part of the Nottingham Social Action Research Project – a day event on mental health issues and a sexual health service for teenagers.

## STAFF CHANGES

Ian Boulton left the Centre to resume freelance work in September and Louise Wilcox starts a primary teacher training course at Cambridge at the beginning of October. We wish them both well in their new ventures. Eamonn Keenan now works full-time for the Centre as Director of the Restorative Justice project, along with Devinder Curry who is part-time Assistant Director. Jacqui Christy James and Michael Turner will be working for IDEA/the Centre as co-Directors of the DFID Samara Disability and Empowerment Project.

**BRAILLE, SPEECH AND LARGE PRINT VERSIONS OF THIS NEWSLETTER ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST**

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