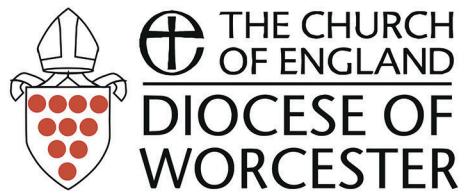




Diocese of Worcester Criminal Justice Affairs Group

Annual Report, 2018 – 2019



Foreword by the Bishop of Worcester

Justice is one of the four key values the Diocese of Worcester embraces in its vision for what a Jesus-shaped, God-governed church should be doing.

We call that vision “Kingdom People” deliberately echoing the way Jesus in the gospels repeatedly talks about the kingdom of God. His language invoked a very holistic view of God’s justice putting wrong right: making society, relationships and individuals alike just.

The work that the group has done this last year, for which I am very grateful, was built around an excellent conference on the situation of prisoners with indeterminate sentences for public protection. You can read about that elsewhere in this report. The work they are moving on to look at is about how church communities can help restore, support and rehabilitate prisoners who have been released. Their work embraces that justice which is at the heart of our diocesan vision.

We need our justice system to be good – in every sense of the word. Sentencing addresses retribution for the crime, and many victims need that to happen before they can feel restored. It may have a deterrent effect, although more are deterred by the likelihood of being caught. It should also aim for a pathway that transforms the criminal: rehabilitates them, and restores their ability to live well in the community.

Our diocesan Criminal Justice Advisory Group has shown an ability to pull some widely different sectors of the criminal justice system together to reflect on how we pursue good justice in our society. I am very grateful to them that they continue to do so, since I believe that only by working together will we bring about this holistic vision of justice, which reflects the justice of God.



Criminal Justice Affairs Group members

Doug Chaplin Diocesan Mission Development Officer **Diana Fulbrook** Former Probation Chief Executive and Parole Board member, and previous chair of Adult and Children's Safeguarding Boards
Toby Hooper Retired Circuit Judge **Juliet Horne** Lecturer in the School of Law, University of Warwick **Judy Hulland** Magistrate (until November 2018) **Mark Lister** Solicitor **Charmian Manship** (Chair) Volunteer in HMP Hewell Chaplaincy **Derek Markie** Worcestershire Voices **Lorraine Preece** CEO of YSS Charity **Keith Stokes Smith** Magistrate (since November 2018) **Stephanie Watson** HMP Hewell Chaplain **Paul West** Bishop's Advisor on CJ Affairs, former Chief Constable, West Mercia Police

Cover Photos showing various aspects of the IPP Conference at Hewell Grange October 2018.

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Introduction

This is the fourth report of the Criminal Justice Affairs Group (CJAG) outlining the activity and achievements over the past year. CJAG was formed in March 2015 for the purpose of offering a Christian perspective and advising the Diocese of Worcester on criminal justice matters.

From the outset the Group sought to be proactive in its approach to its two main aims:

- ~ internally within the Diocese to offer a Christian perspective and provide expert advice on criminal justice matters, and
- ~ externally to raise public awareness and be catalysts of criminal justice-related social action

It also wanted to ensure its membership reflected all aspects of the criminal justice system from key agencies, the voluntary sector, and those with expertise in CJ issues.

CJAG has done much to raise the profile of criminal justice over the past year and has focused on specific issues with more collaborative working with other existing organisations/groups. CJAG presents this annual review that covers not only the Group's activities in its fourth year of operation but also contains its reflections on the way ahead including particular areas of concern for our Diocese and society to consider.

Part 1: Key Events and Activities

Linkages with other bodies

CJAG has continued to develop links with other bodies and to that end is connected with the following, either through membership or shared activities:

Diocesan Commission for Social Responsibility
West Mercia Criminal Justice Board
HMP Hewell
HMP Long Lartin
University of Worcester
Willowdene Care Farm
Worcester Cathedral
Worcestershire Interfaith Forum
Holland House retreat and Conference Centre
YSS Charity
Police and Crime Commissioner

Events/Activities

CJAG decided to focus on one issue during the year - IPP prisoners (Imprisonment for Public Protection). This sentence was introduced in 2003, intended only for a very small group of highly dangerous prisoners, but in fact they were used far more widely for prisoners with a much shorter tariff. Although the misuse, and manifest injustice of this sentence led to its being abolished in 2012, a large number of prisoners are still in prison years after their tariff has expired.

Prisons Sunday

The theme of this year's Prison Sunday in the Cathedral in October was IPPs, and CJAG helped to shape the readings, hymns, sermon and prayers which were written by some IPP prisoners. The preacher was Clifford Grimason, Restorative Work Manager at HMP Hewell.

A video of four prisoners talking very movingly about their experience was made available for the congregation after the service which was overall a good lead-in to the conference the group ran during Prisons Week.

IPP Conference

The group organised a day conference in October 2018 in the open setting of the Great Hall at the Grange, HMP Hewell. The title of the conference was Searching for a way out - The dilemma of the sentence of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP).

The purpose was to reflect on the situation of prisoners serving IPP indeterminate sentences and the impact on their families. The 70 attendees were a mix of advocacy groups, including family members of IPP prisoners, professionals working in the criminal justice system, and representatives of church and community including the Bishop of Worcester, a Deputy Lord Lieutenant, and the High Sheriffs of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Some serving IPP prisoners also attended and the video was shown at the start of the day.

Speakers included an academic, and representatives from the Parole Board, the National Probation Service and the Prison Reform Trust. There were several workshops run on a variety of topics and there was a good level of engagement throughout the day. Robert Jones, the Archdeacon of Worcester, gave his reflections on the event.

He spoke of being impressed by the bringing together of practitioners and concerned people from such a wide range of experience and expertise, and the inclusion of IPP prisoners, both as delegates and in the moving and powerful video presentation at the start which put the people concerned at the forefront of the whole day.

He ended by saying: "So I quote from the letter to the Hebrews in the Christian Scriptures: 'remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured as though you yourselves were being tortured.' Also Matthew 25: 'I was in prison and you visited me.' In all this we treat people as persons, made in the image and likeness of God; in fact we treat them as if they were Christ. This gives a huge dignity to each human person, which is absolutely and utterly non-negotiable.

"Archbishop Desmond Tutu, on a visit many years ago to Birmingham prison, preached on this theme: 'don't be too harsh on me – God's not finished with me yet'. Maybe we are, all of us, not just human beings, but human becomings. What does that look like in terms of justice for IPP prisoners and the gap between who they are and who they are meant to be?"



IPP conference: High Sheriff of Worcester, Cassian Roberts, in conversation with Faith Geary from the Parole Board

Justice Committee Inquiry into the Prison Population 2022: planning for the future

One off-shoot from the conference was an invitation to send in a written submission to the inquiry, to reflect our views of IPP prisoners. This was duly submitted and is logged on their website.

The inquiry was set up to look at who is in prison and who is expected to be imprisoned over the next 5 years; the reasons prisoners are there, why they stay there and why they return; and whether the Ministry of Justice and prison services currently have a credible approach to accommodating the changes anticipated. CJAG's submission was based on a view that the prison population would significantly benefit from the government taking immediate action to use their executive power or legislate to make the necessary changes to release those over tariff.

The report was published in April and had a number of recommendations including "for IPP prisoners, the aim of the system should be that most are safely managed back into communities at the earliest opportunity. As part of its review of sentencing, the Ministry should consult on legislative solutions to both release and recall of indeterminate sentenced prisoners to bring about sentencing certainty".

Overall they concluded: "that ploughing funding into building prisons to accommodate prison projections is not a sustainable approach in the medium or long-term. There must be a focus on investing in services to reduce the £15 billion annual cost of reoffending and prevent offenders from continually returning to prison, thereby reducing the size of the prison population...Addressing the crisis in the sustainability of our prisons calls for a serious open public debate about the criminal justice system, the role that prison can and cannot play, and its affordability". The Government's response is awaited

Visit to HMP Whatton

Several CJAG members visited HMP Whatton in Nottinghamshire in January to learn about how they deal with the significant number of IPP prisoners held there. They work with 80 IPPs on a personality disorder service project aimed towards those who have failed to progress and are stuck in the system.

It was interesting to see how they deal with an increasing number of elderly prisoners and have a palliative care suite funded by the Kings Fund to manage the approximately 7 deaths pa from natural causes where prisoners want the choice to die in the prison

Part 2: The Way Ahead Reflections and Prospective Thinking

Reflections

During the year, CJAG has attempted to track key changes and developments in the criminal justice system including the follow-through from its cumulative points of action drawn from successive workshops/conferences.

It remains essential to see the criminal justice system as a whole and to understand the impact of any changes in one part across the entire system. There have undoubtedly been some significant developments linked to decreasing resources and changes of policy as crime continues to be a major political issue. CJAG has identified a number of issues and challenges for consideration including:

Societal/Systemic Concerns

- ~ The impact of resource cuts on all agencies and increasing regionalisation of services.
- ~ The increasing politicisation of criminal justice matters leading to continuous change and lack of stability.
- ~ Criminal justice agencies are not joined-up nationally between government departments or strategically. This makes it difficult to work together on the ground.
- ~ Potential further court closures and the move away from local justice.
- ~ Prison numbers, an increase in prison violence and use of drugs, insufficient prison staff and the lack of availability of programmes/support for prisoners prior to release.
- ~ Rehabilitation in the community particularly the impact of yet further changes to the probation service following poor outcome inspections and the failure of some CRCs.
- ~ Lack of resources to support rehabilitation and protect victims eg victims of domestic abuse, mental health support and lack of accommodation.
- ~ Changes in Legal Aid have impacted on equality of access to the courts, and the closure of solicitors' firms.
- ~ The very significant increase in historical offences reported for investigation particularly relating to sexual offences
- ~ Issues of staff morale in criminal justice agencies where resource reductions and staff shortages continue to affect the delivery of front line services.

Role of the Church/Diocese

- ~ Understanding the impact of these social and systemic concerns on communities, offenders, victims and staff working with them.
- ~ Recognising the strong link between offending and poverty / social problems
- ~ Encouraging distinctive Church thinking in parishes, and increasing public awareness of the issues
- ~ Working together as a faith community, harnessing congregational resources to contribute to the common good and influence thought and action at Parish, Deanery and Diocesan levels

Criminal Justice Affairs Group

- ~ Continue to focus on a small number of issues whilst keeping track of developments and the overall picture.

- ~ Use the contact database (updated for GDPR compliance) to keep as wide a range of people informed as possible, and use the Diocesan website to communicate.
- ~ Provide some focused direction/activity on key issues
- ~ Identify funding/resource support when required.
- ~ Bring interested parties together to discuss a specific issue and to identify potential improvement actions.

What Next?

Continuing points of interest to CJAG include:

- ~ Imprisonment for Public Protection prisoners (IPPs)
- ~ Community Chaplaincy / mentoring schemes
- ~ Equality of access in the criminal justice system to those from black and minority ethnic communities
- ~ The future of Transforming Rehabilitation (Probation) and its impact on offenders.
- ~ Sentencing Council/policy
- ~ Mental health provision in the criminal justice system
- ~ Support for victims
- ~ Foreign national prisoners (10% of the prison population)
- ~ Police and the community – engagement and consent
- ~ Historical sexual offences
- ~ Youth Justice

Key focus points for the coming year

In order to best manage the group's work over the next year, CJAG will continue to focus on just a few issues whilst also keeping in mind the bigger picture. In the coming year, the main area of interest will be on the rehabilitation of offenders in the community, particularly exploring the role of the Church in effectively supporting them. There are plans to run a workshop in October to generate ideas to be discussed in more depth at a conference early next year.

In addition, the group will keep a watching brief on:

- ~ Developments in the re-shaping of the Probation Service
- ~ Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) issues, particularly the implications of the Lammy Review
- ~ Community Chaplaincy/mentoring developments
- ~ Inter Faith linkages through Holland House

Activities and achievements for 2019/20 will be reported at the end of the year.

Conclusion

The CJAG has had another busy and productive year and the passion for justice for all remains a driving force. Working alongside partners has been a hallmark of the year which it is hoped will be built on as a way of jointly promoting the importance of criminal justice in our communal life.

We are beholden to support those working with offenders as well as with victims and with perpetrators, and we remain committed to finding ways to do this effectively. Not least, people of faith have a responsibility to encourage local communities to support those vulnerable to offending, those wanting to change their lives for the better, and to take responsibility for creating an inclusive approach to communal living.

CJAG welcomes ideas to promote this approach, and values engagement with those wanting to support these aims. We thank all those who have worked with us to pursue them.