




THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
DIOCESE OF WORCESTER

**Worcester Diocesan
Criminal Justice Affairs Group**

**Annual Report
2016 ~ 2017**



Kingdom People
love • compassion • justice • freedom



Foreword from the Bishop of Dudley

Since arriving in the diocese I have generally spent Christmas and Easter in a prison. I have valued seeing the incredible work of our prison chaplains and chaplaincy volunteers, as well as listening to the stories of prisoners and prison staff.

Good Friday has a particular poignancy in prison. Walking the stations of the cross with those who are locked up, as Jesus was, brings tears and moving testimonies as people make connections. Minds flitter between the words of scripture and contemporary stories: victims of violence; witnesses standing by; family members caught up in it; arrest, trial, sentence. Senses are alert to the noise of the crowd, the smell of incarceration, the touch of aggression, the sight of harm.

Life in prison is far from safe. In April the Ministry of Justice reported, for England and Wales, a 38% rise in assaults on staff and a 24% rise in self-harm incidents over the previous year. In July, the Chief Inspector of Prisons stated that conditions have got worse since his report last year. He notes staff shortages, overcrowding, increased time locked in cells, and rising violence fuelled by legal highs, and says: "When a person is sent to prison, the state accepts responsibility for their well-being, including their physical and mental health, safety and education. There is clear evidence that for too many prisoners the state is failing in its duty".

These alarming record numbers demand searching questions of our government's policies and us as a society. The prison system can't cope with the numbers it is expected to hold, let alone try to re-educate, rehabilitate, and restore people to take a constructive part in the life of every community. Human misery will not lead to human flourishing.

At the end of our Good Friday stations there is a silent waiting, yet we know that from that emptiness, desolation and hopelessness comes new life. Jesus spoke of coming amongst us so that we might have life and have it abundantly.

I am grateful to the Criminal Justice Affairs Group for their reflection, prayer and action that seeks to bring this abundance of life. This report details some of their work and how Christians might contribute to safer and flourishing lives for all. I warmly commend it to you.

+ *Graham Usher, Bishop of Dudley*

Criminal Justice Affairs Group members

Doug Chaplin *Diocesan Mission Development Officer* **Kevin Downham** *HMP Long Lartin Managing Chaplain (until September 2016)* **Diana Fulbrook** *Former Probation Chief Executive and Parole Board member, and current Chair of Swindon Safeguarding Adults Board* **Sarah Lou Home** *Willowdene Care Farm (until September 2016)* **Toby Hooper** *Retired Circuit Judge* **Juliet Horne** *Lecturer in the School of Law, University of Warwick* **Judy Hulland** *Magistrate (from February 2017)* **Mark Lister** *Solicitor* **Charmian Manship** *(Chair) Volunteer in HMP Hewell Chaplaincy* **Derek Markie** *Worcestershire Voices* **Andrew Prickett** *Former Chief Crown Prosecutor (until May 2017)* **Stephanie Watson** *HMP Hewell Chaplain* **Paul West** *Bishop's Advisor on CJ Affairs, former Chief Constable, West Mercia Police*

Cover photographs show aspects of the Interfaith Seminar on Justice at Holland House

Introduction

This is the second 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, building on the outcomes of the conference it hosted in 2015. It was decided to focus on fewer issues in 2016/7 owing to restricted resources, and more collaborative working has taken place with other existing organisations and groups. CJAG presents this annual review that covers not only the Group's activities in its second 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 (formerly Youth Support Services)

Events/Activities

The CJAG's second year was busy and focused on the following events:

Follow up to the Transforming Rehabilitation in Worcestershire Conference

This conference was held in November 2015 and an action plan was drawn up from the issues raised. These included the following, and regular reports on progress were received during the year:

- ~ The production of a resources handbook outlining existing opportunities to volunteer to work with offenders

or victims, for widespread use by those interested from all faith communities. This was achieved and a web directory was launched in November 2016 (see the section on the Interfaith Seminar)

- ~ Exploring the potential to extend the national Community Chaplaincy scheme to Worcester Diocese. It was decided that CJAG would join the Community Chaplaincy Association as a Faith Group Partner
- ~ Formalising links between the Diocesan CJAG and the Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). This is still being explored.
- ~ Encouraging new community-based volunteering/mentoring opportunities to be developed by organisations where appropriate. This is ongoing as CJAG looks for opportunities to encourage development
- ~ Encouraging prison involvement with the Welcome Directory. HMP Hewell and HMP Long Lartin are awaiting more details
- ~ Looking into the potential for CJAG to contribute to the work recently initiated by Holland House in respect of multi-faith links. Holland House invited CJAG to participate in their Inter-Faith Group family picnic in June 2016 and a joint seminar was held in November. An open invitation has been given to CJAG to attend other events and meetings
- ~ Supporting the use of Restorative Justice in prisons and the community as a means of healing for those affected by crime. Interested CJAG members have observed a Sori programme in HMP Hewell and the Imam there has expressed an interest in supporting those who complete the Sori programme including those subsequently dispersed to other establishments. HMP Long Lartin currently uses restorative justice sparingly

Workshop on Securing Criminal Justice in Times of Austerity

Concern had been raised about the impact of unprecedented resourcing challenges to the criminal justice system and its workers. The workshop centred on panel discussions of a case study leading from police investigation and interview through to conviction and sentence. A panel of experts drawn from different parts of the criminal justice system discussed the particular challenges they face at each stage of the prosecution process. The workshop was held in April 2016 and was well attended by representatives of a wide range of agencies such as lawyers, probation staff, police, sentencers and victim support. Attendees reported they had learnt a great deal about the way the criminal justice system worked and the part played by individual agencies. The workshop was much appreciated.

University of Worcester and the William Temple Foundation Conference

This was held in June with the title "Social justice: building a fairer, more equal society". Toby Hooper and Paul West ran a workshop at the conference on behalf of CJAG, reporting the key findings of the April workshop. It was well received by those attending and was a good opportunity to highlight the work of the group

Prisons Week

This took place in October during which CJAG worked in partnership with YSS in celebration of their 30th anniversary. YSS started in 1986 under the umbrella of the Diocesan Board of Social Responsibility, as a multi-agency project to provide intensive support to young offenders, and criminal justice remains a key focus of their work.

The Prisons Sunday Service took place on October 9th at the Cathedral. The focus of the service was young offenders and the address was given by Rev'd Susie Simpson, Managing Chaplain at HMP Isis. The service highlighted the impact on young offenders who are imprisoned and was a good way of challenging those attending to think more about this.

Cathedral Lecture by Professor Nick Hardwick

This public lecture was entitled "People who never make mistakes never make anything – managing risk in the criminal justice system." Professor Nick Hardwick, Chair of the Parole Board and former Chief Inspector of Prisons, began by referring to the number of children who run away from children's homes and are routinely returned there. In reality, he said, many of these vulnerable children were safer on the streets than in either the children's or their own homes, and that rather than being seen as run-aways, in many cases they were in fact 'throw-aways'.

He challenged society about an over-simplified attitude towards risk and its response when things go wrong which is generally to apportion blame. He used some examples to illustrate the complexity of situations when decisions had to be taken, often without sufficient information. He asked whose responsibility it was if someone re-offended, bearing in mind the lack of adequate social support, and advised society to take a risk with young people and not to be too cautious.

Inter Faith Seminar at Holland House

This took place on 16th November during the national Inter Faith Week, and was a partnership event between Worcestershire Interfaith Forum and CJAG. The Forum had responded very positively to focusing on criminal justice, and representatives of the Ba'hai, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Quaker traditions shared their respective faith's teachings on criminal justice issues. Each examined their implications for victims, offenders and the wider community, leading to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the different traditions' approaches to this. There was also a session on hate crime led by West Mercia Police, and an input on multi-faith Prison Chaplaincy.

The day ended with the launch of "Volunteering for Justice" by Rt Rev'd Graham Usher, Bishop of Dudley. This is an online web directory of criminal justice related volunteering opportunities in Worcestershire and Dudley for people of all faiths and none, developed by CJAG in partnership with the University of Worcester. The link is:

<http://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/mission-and-ministry/social-responsibility/criminaljustice/volunteering/>

The whole day was an exceptional opportunity to meet those from a wide range of faiths. It became clear that we have far more in common than we have differences. A delicious vegan lunch was shared and attendees left with a much enhanced understanding of each other's perspectives.

Part 2 – The Way Ahead

Reflections

Last year, CJAG reported on its reflections from the year's activities and on the criminal justice issues it had identified from its work. These remain unchanged, above all being the recognition of the need to see the criminal justice system as a whole, to better understand its role in society and the way it operates, and its impact on individuals and communities. The issues and challenges for consideration include:

Societal/Systemic Concerns

- ~ Impact of resource cuts on all agencies and increasing regionalisation of services
- ~ The impact of the increasing politicisation of criminal justice matters leading to continuous change and lack of stability
- ~ Criminal justice agencies are not joined-up nationally either between government departments or strategically which makes it difficult to work together effectively on the ground
- ~ Potential further court closures and the move away from local justice
- ~ Prison numbers, increase in prison violence and use of drugs, insufficient staff and the limited availability of programmes/support for prisoners prior to release
- ~ Rehabilitation in the community, particularly since the splitting of the probation service and the privatisation of part of it
- ~ Lack of resources to support rehabilitation and protect victims e.g. victims of domestic abuse
- ~ Changes in Legal Aid arrangements – impact on equality of access to the courts, and closure of solicitors' firms
- ~ 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 the societal/systemic concerns on local communities, offenders, victims and agency staff
- ~ 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 in the Faith Community, harnessing congregational resources to contribute and influence at Parish, Deanery and Diocesan levels

Criminal Justice Affairs Group

- ~ Pace events and focus on a small number of issues
- ~ Use the contact database to keep as wide a range of people informed as possible, and use the Diocesan website to communicate
- ~ Provide some focused direction/activity
- ~ Identify funding/resource support when required

What Next?

Particular points of interest to CJAG continue to be:

- ~ Community Chaplaincy opportunities
- ~ Equality of access in the criminal justice system to those from black and minority ethnic communities
- ~ Community Rehabilitation Company activity
- ~ Sentencing Council/policy
- ~ Mental health provision both in the community and in the secure estate
- ~ Support for victims
- ~ Imprisonment for Public Protection prisoners (IPPs)
- ~ Foreign national prisoners (about 10% of the prison population)
- ~ Police and the community – engagement and consent
- ~ Historical sexual offences
- ~ Youth Justice

Future Plans

In order to best manage the group's work over the next year, CJAG will continue to focus on a small number of key issues whilst also keeping in mind the bigger picture.

In the coming year, these will be:

- ~ An event on Mental Health and the CJS in September
- ~ A Prisons Sunday service in the Cathedral (8th October 2017) with a focus on the children and families of those in prison
- ~ A group visit to HMP Hewell in Prisons Week to explore areas of mutual support
- ~ Support for victims

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

- ~ Linkages with the local Community Rehabilitation Company
- ~ Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) issues particularly the outcome of the Lammy Review
- ~ Community Chaplaincy developments
- ~ The impact of the West Midlands Combined Authority on the diocese
- ~ Inter Faith linkages through Holland House
- ~ Imprisonment for Public Protection prisoners (IPPs)

Conclusion

The CJAG has had another busy and productive year and the passion for justice for all remains a driving force of our activities. Working alongside partners has been a hallmark of the past year. We hope to build on this as a way of jointly promoting the importance of criminal justice in our communal life.

We aim 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, and 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.