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# The Impact of Effective Mentoring on Community Safety and Reducing Re-offending

**Andy Laidlaw**

**2015**



**NOMS** National Offender  
Management Service  
Working together to reduce re-offending

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## **Abbreviations & Glossary**

HMP – Her Majesty’s Prison

NOMS – National Offender Management Service

OMU – Offender Management Unit

CJ – Criminal Justice

IEP – Incentives & Earned Privileges

ROTL – Release On Temporary Licence

NOLA – New Orleans Louisiana

NOPD – New Orleans Police Department

PRS – Prison Rating System. This defines performance via a number of measures and targets. It gives prisons an overall rating 1- 4 (1 being the worst) and effectively ranks prisons in order of performance as described by the targets and indicators being used at the time. A rating of 1 would normally trigger special measures of a remedial nature, up to and including the replacement of the Governing Governor.

### **Prisoner security categories.**

#### **Category A**

This will be given to male prisoners whose escape would be extremely dangerous to the general public and also the police and national security. They have the means to affect an escape. The aim of such a high level of security is to make the escape of that prisoner impossible.

#### **Category B**

This will be given to prisoners who do not require the highest level of security for a variety of reasons, but will still need a high level in order to make any chance of escape from prison extremely difficult.

#### **Category C**

This is for prisoners who cannot be trusted in open prison conditions, but will not necessarily have the intention, the will or the determination to make any real attempt of escape from the prison.

#### **Category D**

This is for those male prisoners who pose a low risk in relation to security, and protection of the public, and can be trusted in open prison conditions. In these cases, open prison conditions are the most appropriate.

Female prisoners are not categorised in the same way. They are held in either closed or open conditions.

## **About the author**

I am a Prison Governor currently working as Head of Reducing Re-offending at HMP Risley. Prior to my trip I was working at HMP Liverpool as Head of OMU. I have worked for Public Sector Prisons for 18 years, starting as a Prison Officer at HMP Wandsworth. I have spent time in most areas of corrections and since becoming a manager I have had a particular interest in why some offenders seem to come back to prison time after time when they obviously do not want to, and they do not seem to be benefiting financially (or in any other way) from their continued criminal activity. Indeed, some of them seem perplexed by their own inability to stay out of prison.

In the past few years, I have been lucky enough to have been given roles or responsibilities in areas of the Prison Service where I felt I could actually make a difference to the unnecessary revolving door of re-offending in which some prisoners find themselves. I have worked with community partners and voluntary, charity and faith based groups. I was instrumental in helping to set up a meaningful 'Through The Gate' (TTG) mentoring project at HMP Liverpool which saw mentoring staff actually 'walk out of the gate' with their newly released clients. This project (Merseyside Offender Mentoring Project) is the closest thing I have experienced to a complete TTG service and is still working in HMP Liverpool.

I have always worked in adult male prisons. As this is where my expertise lies, I chose to concentrate on male offenders in my Fellowship.

I travelled to the USA in October and November of 2015 primarily to research the impact of effective mentoring on community safety and reducing re-offending. I have been involved in many aspects of reducing re-offending for the last few years and mentoring is something that I advocate for, but the purpose of the trip was to immerse myself in the subject and capture any peripheral learning that may be encountered. I discovered a plethora of examples of good practice and also some quite pioneering work in the most unlikely of places.

The US is in a very similar position to the UK with regard to prison population issues, shrinking resources and a need to reduce re-offending and improve community safety. Their problems are on a larger scale to ours due to the availability of guns, the proliferation of gangs, and their, in my opinion, draconian sentencing policies. This has led to some of the most innovative practices being tested in small areas all around the country. I discovered that they have had some marked successes that we could mirror here at home.

## **Authors note on religious beliefs**

At this point I should clarify the position with regard to faith based organisations delivering mentoring schemes to incarcerated people and other young adult males. I am not a religious person, but I have encountered a general assumption in the UK that faith based organisations may have a 'hidden agenda' with regard to recruitment to their individual faith. I have only once seen any evidence of this in the UK and this was an individual who was simply very enthusiastic about their own spiritual awakening and wanted everyone else to share their epiphany. They were not trying to start a religious cult, but their misplaced enthusiasm did have a negative effect on their audience.

I do appreciate that there may be a natural suspicion that this may be a way to target vulnerable people. It is easy to be cynical. Indeed, when working with potentially vulnerable, impressionable young adults, a level of healthy cynicism is probably a useful safeguard for anyone commissioning the services of a faith based organisation.

In the US, the vast majority of mentoring support is provided by 'people of faith'. This is largely because they have the means, the resources, and the will to carry out this kind of support work, when the State or the Federal Government does not. There are some non-faith mentoring projects but given that most mentors are volunteers these secular projects are in the minority.

In order to satisfy my own reservations I posed the same question to every person I met during my Fellowship who was in any way a person of faith. Specifically, I asked them how their faith impacted on the mentee, how they introduced their faith to anyone they were mentoring, and asked direct questions about recruitment, conversion, and the general suspicion that they may be taking advantage of people who would be more susceptible to manipulation.

I also broached the possibility that mentees of a stronger disposition may be 'turned off' by religion and would disengage if it was introduced to the process of support in an inappropriate way. I was very direct with this line of questioning. My assumption being that if this line of inquiry was difficult to deal with, the person offering the service had either (a) not thought through the pitfalls of this kind of work and had not been trained properly, or (b) was already involved in an inappropriate clandestine practice and they would see my direct inquiry as a challenge. Either way this possibility needed to be raised without fear of either insulting their religion, or challenging their reason for being engaged in this kind of work, and asking them to justify their position.

Every person I spoke to took my point seriously. No-one became offended or defensive. The general response I received was one of rueful understanding. It was accepted that when a relationship was formed with the mentee and conversations became less superficial there was every possibility that the mentee might ask the mentor about their own belief structure, their faith, and/or from where they derived their personal strength. This is appropriate as it is led by the mentee. Everybody was in common agreement that it would be wrong for the mentor to initiate any conversations about personal faith with a mentee.

The best way I heard it described was by Marcus McAllister. He is the National Community Co-ordinator for Cure Violence in Chicago, an organisation that has had considerable success globally in reducing gang crime. They work with gang members all over the world to reduce shootings specifically, and violence generally. Marcus describes himself as a 'formerly incarcerated professional'. He has been a gang member, has served prison sentences for violent crime, and he works with many people from a similar background. He does not present as a religious person but when questioned he was quite honest about his strong religious views.

Marcus told me that personal beliefs are just that, personal. Nothing is pushed towards the client. The approach is all about the client 'opening up'. The outreach workers (former gang members themselves) or 'Interrupters' have to "stay in their lane". It is all about building a relationship. Preaching to, converting or manipulating clients is not an option and would have a negative effect on the client and ultimately the organisation.

I am satisfied that the people of faith I met during my trip were not abusing their position of trust with service users to further their own personal religious beliefs, and I will make no further reference to religion in this report. If it helps the reader, you can assume that every person I met had some level of faith, as this was the case with the vast majority of my interviewees.

## Executive summary

My Fellowship research trip was centred on mentoring but it took me in many different directions and to some places I did not expect. The main question was whether or not my belief in mentoring was well founded given my relatively limited experience in the UK. Had I been lucky in my experiences here or was this really a universal model for good?

There was a noticeable common thread throughout my trip which clearly illustrated that effective mentoring is a crucial part of rehabilitation, reducing reoffending and making communities safer. The mentors I encountered went by many names; case worker/manager, buddy, Son of a Saint, Interrupter, tutor at Angola/STRIVE/Safer Foundation/Redeploy, moral guide, outreach worker, Police Officer, Judge, Probation Officer, Sheriff, advocate, court clerk, formerly incarcerated professionals, Volunteers of America, and social mentor. I met many people who held these titles and they were all fulfilling a mentoring role.

The level of mentoring varied from those who were full time to those who had a mentoring element to their work but it was just one of the tools in their toolkit. The important point was that they all had the interests of the mentee as their foremost priority, and they carried out an enabling role. They were all people who 'cared' but they did not become 'carers'.

Prior to my trip I was hoping and expecting to see organisations with armies of mentors, all well trained, experienced and able to complete the mentoring process with the mentee for whatever period of time was necessary; the complete package for me to replicate in the UK.

What I encountered was something far more enlightening. The lines between statutory bodies in the US (those largely paid by the state to work in or around the Criminal Justice (CJ) system) and the voluntary, charity, community and faith based sectors, were blurred. The best practice I encountered saw people in varying positions of power, influence and ability all working together to enable formerly incarcerated men to avoid prison through positive, pro-active engagement and the relevant support/challenge when it was needed. The best systems did not 'stand on ceremony' or waste time recognising who the most important professional in the room might be. The most important person in the room was the mentee. This was demonstrated to me most strikingly by Judge Laurie White's big white armchair which was reserved for the re-entry candidate and was the best chair in the room. This was incredibly significant (and it was, I'm sure, also quite deliberate) as it sent the right kind of 'signal' from the outset, and although ultimately the judge was 'in charge' everybody spoke freely and felt able to contribute. This collective force for positive change was extremely powerful and enabling for the mentee.

I have spoken frequently about mentoring being the 'glue' that enables a mentee to access everything they need to succeed. This is still very much the case, but my perception of what best practice looks like has been altered. I have seen how a number of stakeholders can fulfil a mentoring role for the same mentee. Even if the mentee has an official 'go to' mentor who is their primary contact and support, all the other agencies involved need to be re-enforcing the positive messages and support that is being accessed. There is a collective responsibility.

My belief in the power of effective mentoring to bring about positive change has been strengthened by this experience. At the same time, the way I see mentoring being delivered has become less blinkered and more inclusive. If all stakeholders involved in effective resettlement of formerly incarcerated people have the same goal (specifically the successful rehabilitation and resettlement of the candidate) they should become part of a support team for the candidate's mentor. More of a platoon than an army; being focused on the mentee offers every opportunity for success.

The headline learning points have been:

Locking people up for the sake of getting them off the streets does not work. We must offer meaningful and challenging alternatives to custody for all but the most serious offences.

- Resettlement prisons should (as far as is possible) not look like traditional prisons.
  - Ideally they should not look like prisons at all.
- The Incentives & Earned Privileges (IEP) system should be reformed to offer those who engage positively a material difference in all aspects of their prison journey compared to those who do not.
- ROTL or “work outs” cannot be (largely) the preserve of the open estate.
  - A hybrid category C/D model demonstrates a real and attainable progression route for offenders.
- There are many large employers who will take on formerly incarcerated people.
  - These opportunities need to be expanded and exploited (linked to the ‘work outs’ mentioned above).
- Prisoners need to experience more community engagement prior to release.
  - Either through ROTL or bringing the community into the prison for the benefit of those who may not pass a risk assessment for ROTL.
- ROTL needs to be re-assessed and the penalties for prisons who have ROTL failures relaxed.
  - Risks need to be taken based on ‘intelligent trust’.
- Prisons need to be able to accommodate the community in large numbers for meaningful events and not just small, classroom sized groups.
- Staff should be recruited for resettlement prisons (or resettlement units within larger prisons) with the specific skills and empathy to encourage a whole unit rehabilitative culture.
  - Some of our staff are unlikely to ever engage meaningfully with this aim.
  - Some undoubtedly will and new recruits can be ‘shaped’.
- There is a need to retain some of our traditional accommodation with an emphasis on security and control for those people who are not ready to engage with what is available.
  - Where you are accommodated will also form part of the IEP policy.
- This will lead to a gradual decline in the need for ‘traditional’ prison accommodation in time.
  - The phasing in of new prisons and the closing of the old should follow a similar timeline of demand for the ‘new model of incarceration’ that the new prisons could offer.
  - It will be attractive to those who are ready to engage. In my experience, this is a large proportion of our prison population.

There is a need for discipline as a core value as opposed to a way of life or a punishment. There is a need for discretion so that discipline is not absolute.

An example of this would be the knee jerk reaction we have seen in recent years to some Category D failures (prisoners accommodated in ‘open’ conditions who abscond).

The hypothetical situation is this; a prisoner on a life sentence who has been through the prison system for decades earns cat D status and goes out on ROTL and does not return on time. The press report this matter in the most sensational way detailing violent crimes that occurred over 20 years ago and adding nick names like 'The Skull Cracker' into the conversation. In reality, the offender who earned this tag many years ago, is now in his mid-fifties and cuts a pretty sad figure on his return to custody and cannot quite comprehend the circus that he has created by absconding.

Consequently rules about granting category D status are changed. All current cat D's are reviewed (leading to a natural reluctance on the part of prison Governors to grant future cat D's). While minor transgressions or errors of judgement result in an immediate return to closed conditions with the caveat that the prisoner will never again get cat D on his current sentence. All this occurs against the backdrop of prisons not wanting to be in the spotlight for another high profile cat D failure.

The result is numbers of cat D prisoners plummet and ROTL becomes a matter for the open estate to manage. Closed establishments start to see ROTL as something that they simply 'don't do' when it is actually an effective tool for resettlement and we should actually be *expanding* ROTL in cat C prisons.

*"Discipline without discretion is both wrong and ineffective, and can lead to tyranny".*

Cullen Hightower

This may seem a little dramatic but it illustrates the point that in the security driven and media conscious world of Criminal Justice, there is a danger that we will resort to 'route 1' practices whenever anything goes wrong. We should be exploring why it went wrong and offering second chances (if appropriate) instead of pulling up the draw bridge on every candidate who follows.

This will be an uncomfortable notion to those in the CJ system who are most risk averse. And having worked in Security departments I am very aware that 'risk aversion' is all but printed in certain job descriptions. What we need is a healthy dose of 'intelligent trust' in any risk assessment. Unfortunately, this will largely depend on the judgement and logic of the person signing that risk assessment. At present, their main driver is bound to be, "How will this affect me if it goes wrong?"

**While the penalties, stigma and career damaging fallout from using discretion in the CJ system are potentially so negative, we will struggle to achieve a culture that is truly rehabilitative and gives the most meaningful transition and resettlement back into our communities.**

**There is a need for a complete overhaul of policy, practice, penalty and environment.**

## Introduction

The actual title of my Fellowship focuses specifically on mentoring but having been involved in the rehabilitation and reducing reoffending arena for several years I am always looking beyond my specific remit.

This Fellowship was no different. I have found that effective mentoring is often the glue that binds many other support mechanisms or interventions together. It is often not the actual 'fix' but a crucial part of the whole, and without it formerly incarcerated people run the risk of struggling and ultimately failing. When this happens the 'ripple effect' means that it is not only the offender who is affected. It impacts on his family, the Criminal Justice System, the community and the tax payer.

My specific remit was to explore the impact of effective mentoring but it was always going to encompass far more than mentoring alone, and often the people I met did not call themselves 'mentors', but that was exactly what they were.

The US has been undergoing very similar challenges to our own with regard to operating an effective Criminal Justice System. However, their pressures have been compounded and increased by a fragmented system (Federal, State and local jurisdictions), shrinking resources, poverty, a huge prison population (partly exacerbated by a national policy of giving out very long sentences), gangs, guns (the availability of which is a contributory factor in itself), corruption, inert political systems, and in some cases 'acts of God' (e.g. New Orleans – Hurricane Katrina).

### **Statistic: Over 65 million American citizens have a criminal conviction.**

It was the very fact that the US were dealing with some of the worst problems in the world (with regard to Criminal Justice) that led me to believe they would naturally have some of the best and most innovative solutions to those problems. My research confirmed this, as I soon identified many pockets of what appeared to be very good and effective practice; some of it groundbreaking.

In going to the US to carry out this research I had already identified a number of specific interventions and practices that I wanted to see, but I was very aware that in a country so large there was every likelihood that I would also discover positive practice when I least expected it. This did indeed turn out to be the case and the 'pockets' often turned out to be large, well managed organisations that had been delivering for sustained periods (in some cases for years) and had a proven track record of success.

The aim of my project was to use the alternative and intensive practices from the US to further expand and develop what we have to offer in the North West regional prisons. The ultimate aim was to disseminate any learning to other areas of the UK. Effective mentoring has proven to be successful but in its current form it is quite limited; we need to widen the scope of what can be offered. Engagement with mentoring is voluntary; the most challenging mentees are the socially isolated and in times of economic austerity this group are particularly vulnerable and harder to engage. In the USA there are many areas (predominantly inner city and similar to our own larger cities) which are suffering from phenomenal crime levels and there were several projects I was already aware of which appeared to have a unique approach to their own problems aimed at young male adults. Some of these projects appeared to be reaching the most disaffected young men and were transforming lives by effective post custody resettlement or avoiding custody altogether through prevention.

It is often the case that problems encountered in the US filter across the Atlantic to the UK. The fact that we have fewer fire arms in the UK dilutes the level of replication and impact, but patterns and trends in criminal activity and behaviour are mirrored to a degree in the UK, especially in our inner cities.

With this in mind, I planned to visit the areas with the largest issues with criminality and offending (e.g. New Orleans, Detroit, Chicago, New York) having already ascertained that they had either had success in making their communities safer, or are finding new ways of tackling problems they are currently having to address. My intention was to speak to the organisations providing the support and interventions (i.e. the police, voluntary/charity/community groups) and analyse their statistical data on outcomes and reoffending rates. It was also important that I spoke with the service users to explore the value of what was being offered and see if they would recommend any improvements.

In some cases the service/intervention providers were themselves former service users who had come full circle. These were the people I was particularly keen to meet as they would have the most complete insight and experience.

### ***The mentee becomes the peer mentor***

When this is done properly, there is nothing quite so powerful in helping other people change their own lives.

This report captures all the learning around effective mentoring, even when it is not labelled as such by the practitioners. It also captures a huge amount of learning that would not in isolation be considered to be part of a mentoring project, but which benefits from or exists purely because of the 'glue' that effective mentoring becomes.

It does not capture every experience I had in the US as some were not related closely to my specific remit.

However, I have not wasted any learning from my trip. The entire experience is captured in a less formal manner in my blog (<http://andylaidlawwcmr.wix.com/ustrip>) and includes many photos. There were many good ideas and examples of good practice that I have brought back to the UK and 'stored' for future use and/or implementation.

Nothing has been lost.

## Findings

### Mentoring

The first place I visited after landing in New Orleans was Louisiana State Penitentiary (LSP). Locally known as Angola it has been accommodating prisoners since 1880.

<http://www.doc.la.gov/pages/correctional-facilities/louisiana-state-penitentiary/>

When I visited it was holding 6,300 prisoners. It is sited on a former plantation covering 18,000 acres of land and the local name is believed to be from the area of Africa from which most of the plantation slaves came. It is steeped in the worst kinds of history.

75% of the offenders are serving life and in the US that means they will never be released. The prisoners are aged between 17 and 93 with the average age being 42 and the average sentence length being 93 years. It has the highest percentage of prisoners serving life sentences without parole of any prison in the USA.

Given this information my expectations were not high when I arrived. My key assumption was that motivating people with no expectation of release would be extremely difficult, if not impossible.

However, largely due to the vision and direction of the Warden, Burl Cain, there were a number of interventions and projects which were either mentor based or had a mentoring element. He promotes what he calls 'moral rehabilitation' in his book.

*[Cain's Redemption, A story of hope and transformation in America's bloodiest prison by Dennis Shere](#)*

LSP uses life sentence prisoners as 'social mentors' to help offenders with a determinate sentence. The training is provided by the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and many mentors are educated to degree level. Other long term offenders at LSP are certified academic and vocational tutors delivering meaningful qualifications and skills in 17 distinct vocational areas. These men are primarily tutors, but they fulfil a mentoring role in the same way as many teachers in the wider community.

At New Orleans City Hall, the Mayor has a team of people led by Charles West who deliver on his priorities. Charles is the Director of the Innovations Delivery Team and they have a strategy which has multiple strands but there are three key aims which they see as critical.

1. Reduce the murder rate (through the NOLA FOR LIFE strategy).
2. Develop economic opportunity and get formerly incarcerated people into work.
3. Lower the incarceration rate and reduce the prison population.

A large proportion of the delivery of these aims involves mentoring. The Innovations Team work with a number of mentoring organisations that were already established. Traditionally there has been no shortage of volunteers to mentor younger children, grade 8 or 9. These are primary school children and as such are easy to mentor and popular with mentoring volunteers. Teenagers and young adults present as more difficult to work with so there has been a degree of negotiation to get mentoring organisations to take on this more challenging role. Through the NOLA FOR LIFE Mentoring initiative ([www.nolaforlife.org](http://www.nolaforlife.org) page 19) they are currently working with five existing community organisations to provide healthy mentoring relationships for young males in New Orleans at risk of exposure to, or involvement in, violence.

They are: Communities in Schools (CIS); MentorNOLA with Each One Save One; CASA New Orleans; 100 Black Men of Metro New Orleans; and Son of a Saint (linked to the New Orleans American football team who are locally known as 'The Saints').

The emphasis on mentoring teenagers and young adults stems from the issues encountered following hurricane Katrina 10 years ago. At the time of the floods, chaos reigned as 80% of the city suffered flooding. Traditional services ceased to operate and in the ensuing confusion some children did not go to school for 2 or 3 years. These children are now in their mid to late teens and are in desperate need of support, even if they don't realise it. Key to this support are the mentoring organisations above.

### CeaseFire New Orleans

CeaseFire New Orleans is a project based on Dr. Gary Slutkin's CURE Violence model, which boasts a 40% - 45% reduction in shootings and killings in program target areas. It is an initiative of NOLA FOR LIFE specifically aimed at reducing street violence in the Central City neighbourhood of New Orleans. In the fourth quarter of 2013, CeaseFire New Orleans expanded to include a new Hospital Crisis Intervention Team at the Interim LSU Hospital Trauma Unit. The CeaseFire model uses violence interrupters and outreach workers with street credibility to interrupt and resolve potentially violent situations before they escalate. The CeaseFire Violence Interrupters also seek to prevent retaliatory shootings by mediating ongoing conflicts between groups. In addition, CeaseFire New Orleans aims to change community norms about violence by mobilizing support services and the larger community to demand a change in behaviours that lead to shootings and killings (e.g. National Night Out Against Crime).

The team consists of men (although they do have female staff, gang violence does tend to be a male activity) who have a certain reputation or history and consequently have credibility in their own communities. This 'credibility' is crucial for them to be able to mediate effectively and mentor younger gang members or anyone seeking an exit from gang activity.

There is an inherent mistrust of the police force and people are reluctant to call them. CeaseFire is funded by NOLA for Life (City Hall) but funding aside, there are no formal connections with other public services. It would be easy to be sceptical about this organisation but the police commander in charge of the MAG unit spoke positively about what CeaseFire were able to accomplish, even though there could never be any formal link between CeaseFire and the NOPD.

The Multi-Agency Gang (MAG) Unit give young men on the cusp of criminality (or actually heavily involved in criminal behaviour) every opportunity to change that behaviour, and the support to do so. The first strand of their work is gaining better co-operation between themselves and the District Attorney. This coupled with the fact that ATF officers are also on the team means that evidence gathering is comprehensive. MAG have pursued many successful prosecutions, often group prosecutions (similar to 'joint enterprise' in the UK) and this has changed the game with regard to tackling gang crime from a police perspective. Their methods are so robust that since its inception 2 or 3 years ago the MAG unit has indicted 114 individuals from 12 gangs.

This was a new slant on partnership working. The fact these two organisations are totally separate and exist in parallel, but have the same objectives is unusual in itself. The juxtaposition of Ceasefire Interrupters and the NOPD MAG unit works, in spite of the fact that they cannot work together. There is mutual respect between the two organisations for the work that each one is doing. They know that they cannot collaborate, and understand that one could not do the others 'job'. However, both have something to offer the community. This was not so much partnership working, rather agreeing not to work together for the greater good.

I found evidence of peer mentoring in the police reforms in NOPD. In order to reduce the amount of people being incarcerated in local jails, specially selected officers were trained in dealing with people who have mental health issues. They provide a Crisis Intervention (CI) service to people who might otherwise be arrested and taken to prison. The first training class was held in August 2015 and the reform team admitted it was hard to fill. However, the second class was oversubscribed. The NOPD have a target to train 20% of officers in Crisis Intervention so they will have 24 hour cover on every shift in every district. Currently, CI trained officers are called to the scene of a possible arrest and deal with the matter in a more empathic way than 'arrest and lock up'. Their untrained colleagues are seeing this and are benefiting from seeing a different approach. This has led to a peer intervention policy which is actually seeing CI trained officers mentor their colleagues.

### Orleans Re-entry Court Workforce Development Program

Judges Laurie White and Arthur Hunter Jr. founded the Orleans Re-entry Court Workforce Development Program. It relies on men serving life sentences in Angola prison to teach new prisoners who have less severe sentences.

The link between Angola prison (Louisiana State Penitentiary) and the court is the key to this intervention. It is strong and seamless. Re-entry candidates attend the court with their community mentor but there are a number of other attendees from the candidates past and potential future. Social Mentors from Angola prison attend the court. They are there to assist and give information on their mentee. These men are lifers who have mentored men with a release date and have time invested in them. Other people in attendance include the mentees probation officer, a member of the US attorneys office who was an expert on employment opportunities, a public defender advocating for prisoners, and other community mentors mirroring the Angola model from 'Rising Foundations' who mentor men post release and are all formerly incarcerated people. There were also two men who had spent 28 and 15 years respectively in Angola having been wrongly convicted and had separately devoted their lives to helping prisoners being released following their own release.

The Re-entry court was a vehicle for them both to assist. Corrections staff from Angola were present, partly because they brought the Social Mentors that morning, but also because they worked with the mentoring program in the prison. There was a representative of the 'Propeller program' which provided temporary employment in the restaurant industry. Their program enabled men to learn while being paid and while looking for a permanent job. There was a trainee probation officer and another observer from Chicago seeing this model of best practice for themselves, a lawyer from an organisation who mentor junior lawyers to treat offenders decently (they try to get attorneys to do pro bono work for re-entry offenders) and an outreach worker who was there to give help obtaining a driving licence. Some mentees also brought family members or other support workers. Needless to say the room was very full.

All of these people were there to try and ensure that all newly released men from Angola had every opportunity to avoid recidivism. It was apparent that anyone who could help was welcome to attend. The layers of mentoring support were impressive and even the Judge acted as a mentor to the mentees. Given that most of the men had only ever experienced a judge sending them to prison, this was another contradiction. This judge was using her influence and power through the Re-entry Court to assemble a cast of contributors who could effectively give a newly released former prisoner no reason to re-offend. It really was easier to comply, given all the support in the room.

The judge did pro bono work for some offenders; she was then seeing them in her court as re-entry candidates. The positive relationship with a real role model was already forged. She was a high ranking district judge who knew the mentees and spoke to them as equals. She had their phone numbers (and

they hers, although she did point out that if she wasn't in her assistant may have to take a message) and it was clear that she wanted them to become productive citizens and not return to prison. Interestingly, the final matter on the agenda for every client was the payment of outstanding fines. Every mentee was expected to pay something off these fines each week and if they were earning money (she knew exactly where they worked and how much they earned) she directed how quickly they should pay their debt to the court. This was no soft option, but paradoxically every mentee got a hug from the judge at the end of proceedings.

In much the same way that volunteer mentors develop a 'hold' over mentees because they are mentoring them without financial reward (and so the mentee 'owes' the mentor and would be letting both themselves and their mentor down if they returned to offending) none of the men in the Re-entry Court wanted to let the judge down.

**Judge Laurie White is a mentor to every man who attends her court and her Re-entry Program sees 70% of men who complete the program successfully re-integrate into society.**

### Goodwill Industries

Goodwill Industries is well established all over the USA. It was initially set up to help disabled people find meaningful paid work, mainly in retail, and based on what can best be described as the UK version of the charity shop model but on a much larger scale. Goodwill have also diversified into manufacturing, IT, Youth Empowerment Programmes, Veteran specific opportunities in Telecommunications, access to college enrolment, and general career development services. Their mission statement talks about offering "opportunities to people with disabilities **and other barriers** to improve their economic self-sufficiency through training, education, support services and employment". Being a formerly incarcerated person is one of those 'other barriers' so re-entry became another work strand for Goodwill.

75% of their clients are disabled, but formerly incarcerated people now form a significant minority of their client base. Dr. Kim Rugon is the Vice President of Workforce Development at Goodwill and is a re-entry champion. She sees mentoring as critical to their success, and they have been successful. In the last grant period they have helped 342 men. Normally the grant period would be 12 months but due to the demand for services and the successful outcomes for those service users, the original grant funding was exhausted and Goodwill had to raise further funding.

Their benchmark recidivism target was 22% or lower, against a national recidivism rate of around 50%.

**They have achieved a recidivism rate of just 5%.**

Retention rates for those who are helped to find employment are around 70% staying in work for at least 9 months. There is a 9 month minimum follow up for all re-entry clients so Goodwill can keep track of where they are up to for at least this period, if not longer, and 75% of clients receive some form of national certification.

**All clients receive mentoring.**

The demand for this kind of service and the success of the Goodwill model has led to the US Department of Labour providing more funding for re-entry. They are happy to do this because it works, and again mentoring is the glue that binds all the support services and interventions together.

## Center for Court Innovation (CCI)

The CCI in New York (<http://www.courtinnovation.org/>) seeks to help create a more effective and humane justice system by designing and implementing operating programs, performing original research, and providing reformers around the world with the tools they need to launch new strategies.

Founded as a public/private partnership between the New York State Unified Court System and the Fund for the City of New York, the Center creates operating programs to test new ideas and solve problems. The Center's projects include community-based violence prevention projects, alternatives to incarceration, re-entry initiatives; court-based programs that seek to promote positive individual and family change, and many others.

Having experienced the re-entry court in New Orleans I was keen to see a similar system in operation in New York. I visited the Harlem Community Justice Center Re-entry Court. The court has been running since 2001 and is in an area where 1 in 20 adult males have served a prison sentence. Judge Terry Saunders is the main drive behind the re-entry court and he has a team of judges who 'buy in' to his methods. It is run along very similar lines to Judge White's court in New Orleans with offenders meeting the judge in the re-entry court on or shortly after release with a view to keeping the formerly incarcerated person out of prison rather than sending them back.

The Re-entry Court has recently been evaluated and has shown some impressive results. The evaluation is on the CCI website and shows a 22% reduction in the reconviction rate and a 60% reduction in the felony reconviction rate over an 18-month follow-up period. The re-entry court also produced a 45% reduction in revocations. Interview findings indicate that re-entry court parolees were significantly more likely to be in school or employed and to have positive perceptions of their parole officer.

*(Coming Home to Harlem: A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Harlem Parole Re-entry Court, by Lama Hassoun Ayoub and Tia Pooler)*

The Re-entry program is in 3 parts:

- The first 3 months are quite intensive with the re-entry candidate seeing the judge every 2 weeks.
- At 3 to 6 months he sees the judge monthly; and
- The 6 to 9 month period is the time for discharge planning and ensuring the candidate has done everything required of him during the re-entry process.

At 9 months he is returned to normal parole conditions which means less support and supervision. It is imperative that the mentee can sustain a stable existence by this point. Having said that, there is ongoing support from the Harlem Community Justice Center in the form of an open afternoon every Tuesday when clients can return and use the courts resources and get advice or information.

The court was slightly more formal than in New Orleans with the judge on a raised platform and the stakeholders sitting round a table beneath the judge. The priority, however, was the same and this was illustrated by a client who had literally fallen and hurt himself. It transpired that he had fallen due to opiate abuse so a serious debate began about possible next steps. Sanctions considered in the discussion ranged from the consequences of substance misuse, possible re-imprisonment, drug support and the need for the client to take his official medication to keep him stable. His case worker (mentor) recommended medical supervision and a rehab as opposed to prison, on the grounds that the client had mental health issues and needed his medication to be controlled.

Curiously, Judge Saunders discharged him into the supervision of his case worker and “gave him time to think” about where he wanted to be. A hearing was arranged for the following week. It was very apparent that everyone around the table wanted the client to stay out of prison. It would have been the simplest option to send him straight back and this option was not taken. At the end of the hearing the judge came down from his bench and both shook the offenders hand and gave him a hug.

A comprehensive description of the court and its processes can be found at:

[http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/reentry\\_toolkit.pdf](http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/reentry_toolkit.pdf)

#### Rutgers University Mountainview Program

Rutgers University run a pioneering scheme that offers university places to formerly incarcerated people. Called The Mountainview Program, it provides NJ-STEP students with an opportunity to pursue a four year degree in a campus setting post-release. The program assists NJ-STEP students through the university admission process and equips admitted students with the academic, social, and professional resources necessary for success. The Mountainview Program began under the volunteer leadership of Dr. Donald Roden in 2005, and is now a recognized university program under the leadership of Christopher J. Agans. New students are admitted to Rutgers each autumn after completing extensive coursework at the community college level and fulfilling all university admission requirements. The Mountainview Program and its associated student organization promote campus awareness regarding incarceration, recidivism, criminal justice, and the benefits of higher education.

I was lucky enough to be allowed to sit in on the Friday morning class that Chris leads. I arrived a little early to find him briefing another student (who was a counsellor to the NJ STEP students) about a new prison leaver who would be coming on to the Mountainview course. The class I met were very energetic, articulate and as regular a group of male and female students as you could wish to meet. It was apparent that Chris was a mentor to everyone in the room and each student had their own student counsellor so again there was a layering of mentoring support. NJ STEP website can be accessed by following:

<http://njstep.newark.rutgers.edu/about/mountainview-program/>

## Violence Reduction

Historically, Louisiana State Penitentiary (Angola) was a very violent place. Almost all of its prisoners were serving life without the prospect of parole. It is hard to see how such a place could offer anything motivational or positive when it was filled with people who had little to look forward to and would die in prison. Warden Cain's book makes clear reference to the extreme levels of violence that were the norm.

The turning point came approximately 15 years ago and it came in two parts. Due to a local prison closure, Angola was asked to accept determinate sentenced prisoners. Accommodating men with a prospective release date was new territory for staff and prisoners at Angola. This was around the time when Warden Cain, with the assistance of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) started to train lifers to be social mentors. NOBTS had been offering educational opportunities to a population of predominantly lifer and very long term prisoners successfully since 1995 and this was the next step for their graduates. Initially, this mentoring project was not welcomed by the lifer population. Understandably, they found it difficult to be asked to work with men who had the prospect of release in the relatively near future when they did not.

However, in time relatives of those lifers started to be incarcerated at Angola and this was the impetus that was needed for the lifers to engage. Their own future was bleak and meant permanent confinement in Angola. Their sons, nephews, brothers and cousins came to Angola with a release date and the opportunity to turn their lives around when that date came. As with most restorative processes, the person making restoration gains personally from their actions and the resistance to mentoring dwindled as more men became involved in this work and saw the benefits to those they were mentoring. The positive culture I experienced is quite tangible. The reduction in violence is nothing short of incredible and appears to be maintained by a whole prison approach and 'buy in' from staff and prisoners.

*"The culture change occurring at Angola during the past 15 years has resulted in decreased violence that has inspired an environment conducive to moral rehabilitation. Peer to peer interaction and accountability is "what works" in changing a man from a selfish criminal into a purpose driven citizen who is eager to volunteer and serve others."*

*The Angola Story, compiled by LSP Museum Foundation*

One of the 3 main NOLA FOR LIFE work strands is the murder reduction strategy. It has five initiatives:

1. Creating safer neighbourhoods by engaging them and increasing the number of detectives in this area from 1 to 8.
  - This initiative has made over 950 cases against violent offenders.
2. Ceasefire New Orleans (previously mentioned) uses violence interrupters and outreach workers with street credibility to interrupt and resolve potentially violent situations before they escalate.
  - Evaluations of this project show a 40%-45% reduction in shootings and killings in the program target areas.
  - Greg Rattler told me that every intervention they had undertaken in New Orleans had resulted in "zero shootings" in those areas (correct as of 16 October 2015).
3. A Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) targeting geographical areas of high crime and groups that commit violent acts. It combines enforcement attention to all violent group members with a genuine offer of help.
  - It has achieved reductions in homicides of between 35% and 60%.

4. The MAG unit has already been mentioned, but apart from robust investigations and prosecutions they conduct 'call ins' for young male adults on the fringes of criminality and give them options before they get too involved in criminality.
5. The Violent Crime Impact Team (VCIT) is a national ATF program, but at the mayors request there is a more co-ordinated effort that has seen 27 additional ATF agents working with the city. In both the MAG units and the VCIT's, intelligence analysts play a large part.

These 5 initiatives come under the banner of 'Stop the Shootings'. The strategy can be downloaded from the page on this link:

<http://www.nolaforlife.org/strategy/>

### Cure Violence

Ceasefire New Orleans are directly linked to Cure Violence in Chicago. They are part of the same group with Cure Violence (CV) being the parent organisation. Doctor Gary Slutkin founded Cure Violence in 2000. He made violence a health issue. It is obvious that the health of someone who suffers violence will be adversely affected to some degree, but the approach of CV is that violence is a disease and should be treated as such.

*"Violence is a contagion; it spreads like a germ and also clusters in areas like disease".*

According to Dr. Slutkin the best approach is to treat violence in the same way that you would treat any contagious outbreak or any epidemic. They use a health based strategy. If the outbreak was tuberculosis for instance, the protocol would be:

1. Interrupt transmission (from one person to another)
2. Change individuals behaviour (or change their norm); and ultimately
3. Change the community norm.

People are the antidote to the disease of violence. They can interrupt the transmission of violence, change the individual's behaviour (revenge etc,) and ultimately change the community's norm as they all get behind the non-violence message. To illustrate this I will use an analogy given to me by Marcus McAllister.

*"You may consider yourself to be quite level headed and open minded, but if someone you know and trust is negative about another person, your opinion of them will be naturally affected, even if you have the strength of character to give them the benefit of the doubt when you actually meet them. Take this to the next level and a young gang member tells his friends that he doesn't like someone because he has been disrespected by them, all his friends and associates automatically dislike this third party too. And so it goes on, infecting other people with negative feelings which may result in violence. The disease spreads".*

Interrupters or Outreach workers are effectively 'health workers' and Cure Violence is involved with medical staff at various hospitals around the city of Chicago. This developed because Outreach workers were attending hospitals following shootings to mediate with the victims. They invariably met friends and family of the injured person at the hospital who were angry and upset and talking the language of revenge or 'street justice'. The Outreach workers tried to calm the family down and defuse the situation. When the medical staff saw this they asked for parts of the Cure Violence model to be

initiated in hospitals. This has led to a 24 hour Cure Violence hotline being used by hospitals that gets Interrupters into hospitals to treat the spread of violence in the city as soon as there is an outbreak.

**Cure Violence has achieved reductions in violence of between 50% and 70%.** Their work has been evaluated and the data is available for everyone to interrogate on the Cure Violence website. (<http://cureviolence.org/>).

The significant part of this groundbreaking project is that it did not come from the Criminal Justice sector. It came from a doctor, an MD, an epidemiologist and physician who battled infectious diseases in Africa for 10 years. His approach is simple. Replicate the method for treating an infectious disease; go after the most infected, and stop the infection at its source. Apart from being used successfully in 25 states and 60 cities within the USA, Cure Violence is having great success in at least 10 other countries around the world in places as diverse as Puerto Rico and Iraq.

The link below will take you to a short documentary which illustrates the effect this work can have:

[https://m.box.com/shared\\_item/https%3A%2F%2Fparticipantmedia.box.com%2Fs%2F39bpz6awjb0gixagxiyqyw8g5g6urz7](https://m.box.com/shared_item/https%3A%2F%2Fparticipantmedia.box.com%2Fs%2F39bpz6awjb0gixagxiyqyw8g5g6urz7)

## Signals

Signals are hugely important and often ignored. Professor Shadd Maruna has done a lot of work in this area and he maintains that prisons are all about signalling.

*(The Butler Trust speech on: What would a desistance-oriented prison and release process look like?)*

His suggestion is that prisons are most important as signalling and labelling devices. The high walls or fences, the razor wire, the castle-like appearance of the old Victorian prisons, the strip (or full) searches and the hand cuffs all signal to the public, but more importantly the incarcerated person, that they are a bad and dangerous person. This perception is imprinted on the public's psyche, but also on the prisoners. Who but a dangerous individual would need to be locked up in a cage away from society?

### **This negative signalling and labelling can effectively set prisoners up to fail.**

Similarly, positive signalling can create the expectation of success. Shadd draws the comparison between prison and Cambridge University – the two polar opposites illustrating this theory.

This speech came back to me when I visited Angola prison. Being a former plantation and set in 18,000 acres of farmland, when I approached 'the gate' I was aware that I could have been driving up to the entrance of a theme park. In fact, given the relatively subtle security measures at this check point, if it were not for the sign telling me it was a State Penitentiary, I could have been entering Knowsley Safari Park. (<http://www.knowsleysafariexperience.co.uk/>)

I was directed to follow the road to my destination. I travelled at a sedate 20mph and enjoyed the drive. I was, after all, driving through a farm. There were no buildings that looked anything like a prison in sight. These were the first signals that newly convicted or transferred prisoners would encounter. Whether by design or not, Louisiana State Penitentiary starts its Incentives and Earned Privileges induction before the prisoners get off the bus. On the way to their cellular accommodation (and there is plenty of this kind of accommodation on the site) they will see prisoners on motorised lawn mowers, prisoners on quad bikes and prisoners driving pick ups. In short they will see their peers carrying out roles that maintain a normal community without excessive monitoring or scrutiny, without overt security and with the illusion of freedom within the boundary of the prison estate.

The signalling is very much telling them that there is a positive existence to be earned at Angola, and many prisoners do earn that position. Known as trustees, they live in low security dormitory accommodation and are able to enjoy relative freedom of movement and an independent existence provided they do not betray that trust. There is a saying amongst the staff at Angola, "We don't take anything away from prisoners here. They give it back to us". The signals are quite clear at Angola. If you apply yourself, engage in offending behaviour work, become a mentee and abide by the rules of the prison community, you will be able to spend your sentence productively and put yourself in the best possible position to resettle (or re-enter) successfully when you are released (presuming you have a release date).

The Police reforms in New Orleans were another example of positive signalling. The signs that have been erected in different languages signal to anyone who's first language is not English that the police want to be able to communicate with them.

Judge White's Re-entry Court had significant positive signalling. The first thing that struck me about her court was that it was not held in the main court room. I met Judge White in her chambers initially and then went back into the court to wait for the start of session. However, the court session was not held in the court room. It was held in her chambers, decorated in bright colours and rather like a large lounge. The furniture was soft and colourful with several sofas and cushions scattered about. It appeared to have been created by an interior designer (although it may just have been decorated to Judge White's taste; I didn't ask at the time) and although there were some regular chairs in the middle of the floor to accommodate the many attendees, the feel of the room was one of relaxation. It was in total contrast to the austere surroundings of the courtroom outside. The most impressive signal was the large white winged leather armchair. This was where the re-entry candidates sat. It was slightly behind her desk, right next to and within touching distance of the judge. Conversations were had on a very personal level between judge and candidate with other attendees contributing as required. There was literally no distance between the arbiter of justice and the subject.

The signals were incredibly strong. "You are so important in this process and it is so important that I hear everything you have to say that you need to sit right up here with me. I will protect you, help you, and challenge you if necessary, and all these people in the room are here because I have asked them to support you". It really was incredible to watch. New re-entry candidates did seem a little uncomfortable at first, and those who were obviously a number of appointments in were very much at home speaking with the judge on an equal footing. Every candidate concluded their session with a hug from the judge. I was starting to see the power of 'the hug' in a number of unexpected settings.

I have mentioned above that social mentors (George and Francis) attended Judge White's court from Angola. These men were serving life sentences but arrived in court with the Corrections Officers without handcuffs. This immediately made me bristle. They moved around the court room prior to the session starting with relative freedom and talked with formerly incarcerated mentees. They often left the line of sight of the staff and at one point the staff went out to get coffee for the mentors, leaving them completely unsupervised in the room. They were in their own clothes and could easily have just walked out. This made me feel uncomfortable even though I had met these men in Angola and had seen first hand the positive mentoring work in which they had been involved. I was debating putting myself between them and the door before I realised that these men had no intention of absconding. The level of trust they had earned, and the life they were able to lead meant more to them than a few weeks or months unlawfully at large, and a return to cellular conditions possibly for the rest of their lives when caught. This was IEP on a huge scale.

When the Re-entry Court was in session, the two social mentors from Angola had prominent seats and were asked for input on the mentees. They were treated with respect and dignity and their views were valued. There were signals on a number of levels in Judge White's chambers. Apart from the aesthetic ones, she was putting the re-entry candidates 'upfront and centre' and making it clear that everyone was there for them. They were made to feel important, and their needs, wishes and progress was important. The signals to the social mentors from Angola said, "We need and value your involvement. We can't do what we do here without you doing what you do in the prison". They were very much part of the team and hugs were given when they had to go back to Angola (a 3 hour drive in a prison van).

Judge White undertook a degree of pro bono work on behalf of a number of prisoners. Some of those at the re-entry court she had helped secure early release for and she was working for some of the social mentors to have their sentences reduced. Given that in the not too distant past people were being jailed for 20 or 30 year terms for what would be considered a relatively minor drug charge in the UK, her volunteer representation was much needed. Judge White used to be a prosecutor. This signalled to those she worked for that, "I am part of the machine that has incarcerated you, but I think you have

either been treated unfairly or have possibly been wrongly convicted. You have given your time for others; I will give my time for you”.

The last item of business before goodbyes and hugs was the matter of outstanding fines. Every re-entry candidate was instructed to pay something off their fines if they couldn't pay the entire amount. This signalled that they were not being given a free ride or a 'pass'. The courts decisions had to be respected.

A re-entry candidate called his probation officer while the court was in session to say he couldn't make his appointment. The probation officer passed the phone to the judge and following a calm discussion about his reasons for non-attendance it was decided that he should come along anyway even if he was going to be late. He didn't get there until lunchtime so Judge White held his session at the buffet lunch. Indeed, he was invited to join everyone for lunch. His re-entry court de-brief was held at the buffet with stakeholders standing around chatting, about and with him. It was actually quite surreal but the positive signals were huge for this man.

“We are here for you. We are flexible and do not want to see you go back to prison for no good reason. If you keep communicating with us and ask for help if you need it, we will help you find a solution. Avoidance is not acceptable. Trust us.” The man seemed initially overwhelmed and a bit sheepish, but after joining in the buffet he relaxed and engaged with the (now standing) support network around him.

I encountered many other positive signals during my visit. James Logan from the New Orleans Innovations Team was pursuing (amongst other things) a 'ban the box' campaign. This was gaining momentum nationally and it was something President Obama mentioned when I was at Rutgers University for his visit. The legislation seeks to stop potential employers asking if a candidate has a criminal record at the point of application – signalling to applicants that, “It is worth applying. You have an opportunity to sell yourself before you have to declare your convictions”.

The signals from Ceasefire and Cure Violence say, “You can get out of gang activity. It doesn't have to be your life”.

Sheriff Dart from Cook County Jail, Chicago, personally goes around to see the prisoners who have mental health issues in their units. He sponsors mental health interventions in what is the largest population of incarcerated people in any one prison (2,600 from a population of 10,000). The signal he is sending to the prisoners is, “Your welfare matters to me”, and the signal he is sending to his staff is “These men matter to me, so they should matter to you”. He is in a hugely influential position to improve care and this concentration on appropriate care for those with mental health issues has achieved a **3% recidivism rate** amongst that specific cohort.

One of the most striking signals I experienced really took me by surprise. I visited North Lawndale Transition Center in Chicago with Tony Lowery from Safer Foundation. It is in the city but in a rather poor neighbourhood. When we pulled into the car park I thought we had come to an office or possibly a school such was the appearance from outside. When we entered the reception foyer it was still not entirely apparent what kind of building this was. However when we went through the first electronic door I realised that this was a secure site. This was a prison. It didn't look like a prison and didn't feel like a prison. It had the atmosphere of a student campus building with dormitories and living areas. The signal being sent was “This is not a bad place for bad people”.

The Harlem Community Justice Centre used to be a regular court, but now it is a re-entry court the internal layout has been changed. All around the 3 walls of the court opposite the judge's bench are partitioned offices or pods with case managers, probation officers and support staff working while the

court is in session. They are all on hand to provide input should the court require it. A gain the signal was “You are surrounded by people who want to help you”, and the judge ended each session with a handshake and a hug for the re-entry candidates.

The Mountainview Project at Rutgers University sends a clear signal that says, “You are as good as any other student on this campus who hasn’t been to prison, and you can achieve just as much if not more”.

The most inspiring and enlightening organisation I visited on my entire trip was The Fortune Society. They offer the most complete service and support to people leaving prison in New York. I could have written an entire report based solely on their history, the people who they have assisted, the people who work for them and their comprehensive support for formerly incarcerated people from the day they leave prison, through training, education, employment, accommodation and beyond.

The organisation was started by David Rothenburg in the mid 1960’s and as a former press agent and Broadway producer he makes the most unlikely champion of social justice, civil rights and prison reform, but that is exactly what he is. His book can explain the Fortune Society in far better terms than I have room for in my report. It is called “Fortune in My Eyes”, and is printed by Applause Theatre and Cinema Books.

The Fortune Society is awash with positive signals, from the “Welcome home” and obligatory hug for people who arrive at their offices in Long Island having been released from prison that day; to the weekly residents meetings at ‘The Castle’ which David Rothenburg still attends and chairs even though he is now in his 80’s.

If there was a complete model for successful resettlement of offenders that includes comprehensive meaningful support, multiple layers of mentoring and the ability to equip formerly incarcerated people with the tools and skills they need to become productive citizens, The Fortune Society is it.

## Opportunity

Successful resettlement relies to a degree on opportunity; opportunities being available and the ability of the formerly incarcerated person to take advantage of those opportunities.

Angola prison trains its prisoners to such a high standard in a plethora of skills that are required in the current market place that Angola leavers are in demand in the state. It is widely accepted that anyone leaving Angola who has been through the social mentoring and training process is going to be 'job ready', and an asset to any company.

Ban the box will provide further opportunities for candidates to get past those all important first hurdles and possibly secure an interview where they can sell themselves. With 52% of black men unemployed in New Orleans it is a welcome change of policy.

Midnight basketball in New Orleans is a diversion to keep people occupied during those crucial evening hours, but also provides opportunities to learn (through guest speakers), network, and find a more positive peer group.

Goodwill Industries provide opportunities for successful re-entry candidates and have removed many blockages to accessing those opportunities, such as the free phone number available to prisoners so they can make contact and take advantage of what they can offer before release.

Adult Redploy Illinois (ARI) in Chicago provide an opportunity to avoid prison in the first place. It is not so much re-entry as 'no entry'. Mandatory minimum sentences are crushing the system. The policy of 'Truth in Sentencing' means that someone sentenced to 20 years for murder will serve 100% of that sentence, while those sentenced for lesser crimes may have to serve 85%. This means there is no discretion for judges.

Adult Redeploy aims to avoid incarceration by expanding probation supervision, engaging community services, mental health support services, substance abuse services and other community organisations. Their target is to reduce the prison population by 20% in 10 years. This target was set last year and early indications are good.

Results expected by Adult Redeploy Illinois include reduced prison overcrowding, lowered costs to taxpayers, and an end to the vicious cycle of crime and incarceration. Their model is based on a 'spend to save' ethos. Research has shown that \$1 spent on CBT gets \$34 of value. Prevention is better (and cheaper) than cure. Funding for Redploy started as Federal 'seed' money to show that it worked. They are now funded at State level so it saves money for the State. This would not happen if it was not effective.

The cost of keeping someone in prison for a year in the US is estimated to be \$22,000 per person (considerably less than in the UK). The cost of the average ARI intervention is \$4,400 per person. **The numbers speak for themselves.**

Between January 2011 and June 2015, 2,342 people were successfully diverted from prison by Adult Redploy. This saved the taxpayer \$57.85 million. In the 3 months between April and June 2015 alone, 1,379 clients were served, 1,359 were diverted and this meant a saving to the State of Illinois of \$6 million.

The Adult Redploy Illinois website can be accessed by following <http://www.icjia.state.il.us/redeploy/>

Safer Foundation offer the opportunity of meaningful employment to their clients but this is only possible because they have developed a reputation for training people well. Employers know that a 'Safer' candidate has been trained properly, is going to be a well rounded candidate, and most importantly, will be 'job ready'. This means that Safer candidates are in demand with employers.

Similarly, the North Lawndale Transition Centre has developed a reputation with employers. It is part of Safer Foundation (i.e. it is a prison, part of the Department of Corrections, and it has been run successfully for over 10 years by a charity) and has a database of over 450 employers who employ adults with criminal records. This is a measure of the opportunity that can be created when an organisation (any organisation) is given enough time to earn a reputation. The employers on Safer books *want* to employ formerly incarcerated people.

The Re-entry Courts in New Orleans and Harlem both gave people the opportunity to stay out of prison if they were willing to take advantage of the support offered.

Rutgers University offered an educational opportunity to those formerly incarcerated. It was not a soft option and there were no short cuts. Learners had to meet minimum standards and qualify as any other student would, but the opportunity was there for those who wished to take it.

## Incentive

There were huge incentives to engage positively at Angola prison. Anyone without a prospective release date could still live a relatively productive existence working and helping others in relative freedom. Those who were to be released could ensure they were employable on release by training and learning while inside.

Goodwill Industries base a lot of their practices around incentives as they find it to be extremely motivational. To keep people focused on staying in work they give them bonuses for reaching certain milestones: \$25 for 3 months; \$50 for 6; \$75 for 9; and \$100 for 12 months. They also give out gift cards as incentives for performance and productivity. These gift cards are for supermarkets, fuel or food. Things people actually need. They give vouchers for their own shops, they pay rent, childcare, cab fares or give bus tokens. Depending on the individuals needs, they can make things happen for those individuals by making the incentive specific to them, and these incentives are funded through various schemes like their 'keep the change' scheme whereby shoppers are asked if they want to round their purchase up to the next dollar. This is a big money spinner.

Goodwill also offers employers a 'Fidelity Bonding Program'. Employers view ex-offenders and other 'at risk' job seekers as potentially untrustworthy workers and may use this view to deny them employment. Fidelity Bonding effectively insures the new employer against employer dishonesty. It is a unique tool for marketing applicants to employers. It assumes the risk and removes the excuse that the employer may use citing a risk of potential loss.

Safer Foundation has negotiated tax breaks for employers. So apart from getting a job ready new recruit, employers of formerly incarcerated people get a tax break of \$25k in year 1, \$20k in year 2, and \$15k in year 3. This incentivises everyone to keep the Safer client in work.

Incentives work on different levels with different stakeholders.

## Conclusions

Developing any form of rehabilitative culture, by definition, relies on the people involved in creating that culture.

They may not be aware of their potential involvement, but there are many people with the power to effect change. This power may be political; if they are not politicians it may come direct from a position of authority they hold, or their power may simply be derived from wealth. Often the most effective stakeholders derive their power from all three areas. Usually the people holding the power do not need to devote much time or effort in exercising their power for good. It could be a matter of changing policy, releasing funds, signing a piece of paper, supporting 'in principle' a project or initiative, or simply saying "Yes".

Then there are the do-ers. The people with the tenacity and drive to make things happen; to support those who are on the cusp of criminality, are currently being held in custody, or who form part of the group of recently released people in need of advice, guidance and direction from a 'critical friend' or positive role model.

Finally, there are the people who actually need the support; the formerly incarcerated. To quote a stakeholder in Judge Laurie White's court, these are the people who "don't want a hand out, they need a hand up". With so many obstacles and blockages that are put in the way of any person leaving prison, the fact that they want to engage with services and are open to support regardless of who is delivering it means we all have a duty to harness that willingness to engage.

It is accepted that the first step to rehabilitation is the positive engagement of the individual. Those who do not yet wish to engage are the hardest to reach. This is why it is incumbent on everyone in the Criminal Justice System (and many who are not) to ensure that positive engagement is rewarded with support. Not 'hand holding' or 'Nannying', but enabling them to help themselves and giving them the tools to become productive citizens.

If a formerly incarcerated person returns to offending it cannot be because we have let them down. They need to be able to reflect on why they have returned to custody in order to make better decisions next time they are released. In short, any failure needs to be their fault and theirs alone; it cannot be a failure of 'the system'.

***The people with the power need to take an interest, so the people with the energy and ability can make a difference to those who need it.***

## **Recommendations**

### **General UK Prison recommendations**

It should be noted that the majority of prisoners are not convicted of the most serious or violent offences. The majority are in custody for what would be considered low or medium harm offences and acquisitive crimes. These are the type of offenders that most of my recommendations are aimed at; the ones who keep coming back to prison for relatively minor offences, and **cannot** seem to work out why they do.

### **Resettlement prisons should not look like traditional prisons.**

The signalling given by the prison system starts as soon as the newly convicted prisoner arrives at the prison gate. This is the start of 'expectation setting' for every prospective resettlement client. We can affect the psyche of every prisoner before they enter the establishment just from the look of the place.

We are about to embark on a new prison building programme in the UK. The New North Wales Prison in Wrexham is the first of nine new prisons; large prisons. We have an opportunity to design these prisons in a completely different way (with the exception of Wrexham as it is already under construction) and avoid past mistakes.

*If we build newer versions of the old prisons, all we will create are new versions of the old flawed system.*

This is a 'once in a generation' opportunity to design new large prisons from scratch. We need to (literally) go back to the drawing board. Commission architects who do not normally design secure buildings. Liverpool University Architecture courses have a module called "Architecture for Health" and I am sure other courses have a similar module. We should be inviting these aspiring architects to design prisons for us, unencumbered by prejudice or life experience.

The ethos of 'Architecture as an instrument of hope' should be employed before the building of another prison is commissioned.

### **The IEP system should be reformed to offer the right incentives to offenders at every step of their prison journey.**

The current national IEP scheme in UK prisons is largely constructed around spending money, visits, possessions and personal property or clothing. It is incredibly narrow in its application. Incentives need to be employed at every possible stage of the custodial journey. From the moment a prisoner is received and inducted he needs to know that positive, productive and pleasant living conditions can be attained with the right attitude, thinking and behaviour. There need to be substantial rewards available and the opportunity to earn those rewards through sustained engagement.

For example, we could have a staged living programme on the large sites that are being proposed so that a prisoner has the opportunity to progress from cellular accommodation, to medium secure dormitory accommodation, and on to low secure 'house sharing' situations with supervised ROTL options, and ultimately independent living with the option of ROTL for 'work outs' or any other kind of resettlement function.

Prisoners should be allowed to make and create things in their own time and then sell them to the public/visitors with commission for the prison, victim support charities, and the remainder going into a discharge account so the prisoner has a lump sum to pay for the essentials on release (say a 20%-30%-

50% split with tax being paid by the prison and prisoner if earnings thresholds were reached). This privilege would be available to those who had progressed to low secure or independent living status as they would have the time and opportunity, and would have earned the trust necessary to be allowed tools and creative materials.

Community events should be the norm. The establishment should have a building that forms part of the perimeter that looks inviting and attractive to the public so that events could be held on a regular basis with the opportunity for family to attend and the general public to act as consumers of prison made goods. This privilege would be available to those prisoners who had *earned* it.

The possibilities are endless. Those who are not ready to engage positively and pro-socially would not be able to access these opportunities and would effectively stay at the beginning of the process in cellular accommodation and doing more menial/functional tasks until they were ready to take advantage of what is on offer. Those who transgress could lose their privileges and return to the start of the process but would always have the opportunity to re-engage after a period of reflection and earn their way back.

The current 'Entry' IEP level should be abolished as it is an unworkable nonsense and every prisoner who comes into custody should be placed on a new form of basic regime (or lower regime) that is not immediately punitive but is deliberately set at a much more basic level to those at the opposite end of the IEP spectrum. A return to the original 'standard regime on reception' system would probably make most sense, with the privileges attainable at enhanced level staged and accommodation dependant. Basic regime should remain the lowest privilege level allowable by law and decency considerations.

**ROTL or "work outs" cannot be (largely) the preserve of the open estate.**

To enable and enhance resettlement opportunities we cannot continue to see ROTL as a tool for category D prisoners and no-one else. If we expect offenders to be able to resettle successfully we need to stop holding them in closed conditions (where they have little opportunity to exercise their own thinking and make their own decisions) and then send them out through the gate on the day of release and hope that they adhere to the release plan that has been put in place.

This is 'too big an ask' for most prisoners. Even those who have a stable home life, supportive friends and family, and the means to earn a living on release, find it incredibly difficult to make the transition from custody to community. The staging of resettlement in the community by the use of ROTL for category C prisoners (in a meaningful and risk assessed way) will help with the necessary transition.

**There are many large employers who will take on formerly incarcerated people.**

This group of employers is small but significant, with many large or medium size companies actively recruiting formerly incarcerated people. This group needs to be expanded. Former offenders can make the most loyal employees simply because it is so difficult for them to secure employment once they have a criminal record.

'Ban the box' is being campaigned for already in the UK and will definitely help formerly incarcerated people get past initial hurdles and may secure them an interview, but we actually need to change employers mindsets completely to see well trained and educated former offenders as an attractive prospect.

It is my intention to address employer forums, chambers of commerce, rotary clubs and any organisation that represents employers to try and persuade them to this way of thinking.

I will also be exploring FIPE insurance (Formerly Incarcerated Person Employer insurance). If this product does not exist in the UK I will be asking insurance companies to consider it. This will take the risk out of employing a former offender and will also take away the excuse that they cannot be trusted.

### **Prisoners need to experience more community engagement prior to release.**

Whether this is through ROTL or bringing the community into the prison for the benefit of those who may not pass a risk assessment for ROTL, it needs to be expanded. The prison as a community centre needs to be the direction of travel. It will take away a lot of the stigma that formerly incarcerated people suffer from and will, to a degree, 'normalise' the return to the local community of people being released.

A proportion of habitual offenders have never been part of a positive community group. The opportunity to mix in community events at the prison will improve their ability to interact with people, their communication skills, confidence, self-esteem, negotiation skills (selling items); the list goes on. This would also be a good testing ground prior to supervised ROTL as they could progress to a customer service, meet and greet, 'front of house' type role with the obvious access to external doors.

### **ROTL needs to be re-assessed and the penalties for prisons who have ROTL failures relaxed.**

One of the reasons for the sparse use of ROTL currently is the fact that any ROTL failure hits a prison on the PRS. It can also lead to negative publicity and in the worst cases, the kind of sensational tabloid media headlines that destroy careers.

Any Governor signing off a ROTL must be able to do so in the knowledge that if the prisoner doesn't return, he/she will not be vilified, ridiculed and hauled over the coals. It is accepted that potential candidates for ROTL should be risk assessed appropriately and there does need to be some form of check and balance in place. The kind of establishment I have described above will be able to risk assess more effectively due to the gradual monitoring of increased freedoms within the confines of the secure site, before graduating to supervised ROTL and beyond. Governors currently 'take a measured gamble' based on behaviours that do not really test a prisoner's ability to function in open conditions. They should be able to grant ROTL without prejudicial concerns about failure before the prisoner has had an *opportunity to fail*.

The definition of failure should also be reassessed and the reasons for failure explored before any reaction to that failure is taken. ROTL means taking risks. Those risks are impossible to control; they can only be influenced and managed. They cannot be completely predicted. That should not stop us expanding ROTL exponentially to assist with successful resettlement.

*'Risks need to be taken based on 'intelligent trust'*

Alison Liebling, Institute of Criminology, Cambridge University

### **Prisons need to be able to accommodate the community.**

This factor is linked to all of the above recommendations. Most prisons do not have the secure (or semi-secure) access and egress points to accommodate mass community involvement. Most only have one pedestrian entrance and one vehicle entrance. There are initiatives like Clinks Restaurant which are built as part of the prison perimeter and can offer a more attractive entrance to the public but they are the exception and are not very large.

The building of new prisons gives us an opportunity to purpose build large community centres as part of the perimeter of the prison with separate entrances. These should be built to accommodate 100s of people. They will in time become a community resource. They will be available for hire and prisoners who have earned a position of trust could work on 'real' commercial community events as volunteers or even for a real paid wage. If these facilities were made available at a competitive price they could be very popular and help to change perceptions and myths about crime and criminals.

The community centre would also be used as a 'departure lounge' for people being released. It could be a meeting place for families, probation staff carrying out discharge assessments, medical and substance misuse support staff, community mentors and employers.

In addition, it would be an ideal place to develop relationships and connections with those people who the prisoners would be meeting and interacting with post release. This would make the transition from custody to community that much smoother as there would be every opportunity for an offender to meet all the people they would be seeing once they reached their release date. The mystery, anxiety and fear of the unknown on release day would be all but eradicated and the process of transfer to the community should be seamless.

### **Staff should be recruited for resettlement prisons (or Resettlement Units within larger prisons).**

It is well known that there is a distinction between the difficulties faced by staff working in say, a category B local prison and those working in the category D open estate. In short, there is no comparison, and the staff in both kinds of prison get paid the same wage for what are two very different jobs.

The ambition of NOMS to create a rehabilitative culture in prisons can be accommodated by a large proportion of current NOMS staff. However, it is a huge task to change the inherent culture of a prison (if that prison has a 'traditional' austere working environment) let alone change the culture of the entire service. We need to acknowledge that there will always be a need for prisons with a closed, secure, well controlled and limited regime for the most dangerous, non-compliant and non-engaging offenders.

Similarly, there is no question that to create a truly rehabilitative culture for prisoners who wish to engage needs 'buy in' from every member of staff working with such prisoners. We need to accept that although most prisoners will (eventually) progress and grow from needing the former kind of supervision to being able to take advantage of the latter, some staff will struggle to provide the kind of supervision, empathy and care that is required in both environments. This switching between enforcer and enabler is a Utopian ideal and is a skill that our best staff do possess. However, we need to accept that what we are expecting our staff to do is possibly too difficult for some.

The two kinds of establishment need to be separated, and recruitment for these different kinds of prison needs to be pursued separately. If we are to build new large prisons with a possible progression for prisoners from traditional secure accommodation to low/medium secure living conditions with more personal responsibility on the same site, we should employ the right staff to carry out those functions. The staff working meaningfully in the rehabilitative areas that are actually saving the public purse by creating productive citizens should be paid a premium. This 'spend to save' initiative will attract the kind of people who are able to provide the kind of security-conscious supervision, coupled with empathy, care and intelligent trust that is needed.

There is a need to retain some of our traditional accommodation with an emphasis on security and control for those people who are not ready to engage with what is available. New large prisons will still need traditional cellular accommodation, and working on those units will be attractive to some staff.

However, I anticipate a gradual decline in the need for 'traditional' prison accommodation in time. The phasing in of new prisons and the closing of the old should follow a similar timeline of demand for the 'new model of incarceration' that the new prisons could offer. It will be attractive to those prisoners who are ready to engage and the more attractive living conditions, freedoms and environment will be something to aspire to. In my experience, a large proportion of our prison population are ready for this kind of rehabilitative environment but it will depend on every member of staff taking responsibility for their part in that culture.

**This kind of prison environment will lead to fewer offenders, fewer victims, and safer communities.**

## **Ancillary and other best practice recommendations**

### **Tax breaks**

Government should give tax breaks to employers taking on formerly incarcerated people.

### **Glass prisons**

HMP Grampian has been built using a design that utilises a lot of glass. Thick glass obviously, but it has been built on a smaller site (and was consequently less expensive) as the abundance of natural light means that the accommodation does not 'seem' small. It still relies on a traditional design of residential units that are spurs off a centre (K shaped). The actual cellular accommodation is not much different from other prisons built in the last few years but it looks more like a college, school or library from the outside and it has replaced Peterhead which had a terrible reputation. It is certainly a step in the right direction.

### **Kitchen table model in receptions and low secure living units**

There is a model of rehabilitation which centres on the 'kitchen table'. Utilised by Maggie's in the UK ([www.maggiescentres.org](http://www.maggiescentres.org)) it has a large table at its centre with chairs around it. The tables tend to be more square rather than rectangular, so that people don't feel far away from each other, and the ethos is to have everyone sitting around it as a comfortable and relaxing leveller which encourages communication but also allows those seated to be a part of the interaction by just being there and listening if that is all they are ready to do.

It is usually very close to tea, coffee and generic drink making facilities and the idea is that people make a drink for each other and after you have had one made for you, you are expected to make a drink for someone else. You are immediately made to feel part of the group and given group responsibility for doing something for someone else. This model is used in a rehabilitative health setting but there is no reason why this could not be used in an independent living unit or in prison receptions. Obviously this would be difficult in a busy local prison that is serving the courts daily, but it would be very workable in the reception area of a resettlement prison.

The entrances to Maggie's Centres are deliberately designed to make you feel as if you are leaving anxiety and negativity behind (they all have a pathway/walkway leading up to their doors) and entering a place of calm, comfort and relaxation. Most notably you are not met by a large officious reception desk as soon as you enter the building. What you do focus on as you enter is the large kitchen table.

The views from the windows are all pleasant (signalling) and if they are not pleasant (for instance overlooking a car park) they are masked. This can be done by fencing of some sort complimented by plants and flowers. If there are no pleasant views on the site, the centres have been built in a slight recess so that outside windows look out on to inclined grass verges and the centre is built in a circular fashion with a garden in the centre, similar to what used to be called a quadrangle. Most of the larger windows look *in* rather than *out*. This design has been adopted at Maggie's Glasgow.

There is little formal corporate identification at a Maggie's Centre. Everybody knows where they are (similar to a prison) and they don't need to be told. There are no uniforms, no clocks, no signs, no reception desk and waiting room with rows of stiff brown chairs, no long cold corridors channelling people, and no official badges. Even the fire extinguishers are silver instead of red to make them more innocuous. There are no obvious heaters (they are hidden in the design) but the centres are always warm.

We could learn a lot from this model and could incorporate it into our new prison designs.

### **Prison telephones and prison shop**

Indian River County Sheriff's Office, Florida, has responsibility for their local county jail and has renegotiated the prisoner telephone system over a period of time. They now take 81% commission on all telephone charges to prisoners for making calls. The cost of the call to the prisoner has not gone up; the deal struck by the prison with the telecommunications company has improved in favour of the prison.

Similarly, they take a commission from sales of commissary (or canteen) from their shop contract. They do not pay a company to service the contract; the contractor pays a commission for the privilege of having a captive market and a monopoly.

### **Eradication of trafficking on reception**

The same facility has almost eradicated trafficking of contraband and illicit substances through their reception. They use a whole body scanner called "RADPRO SECURPASS". It is very similar to the security scanners in airports and gives the operator a complete view of what is 'inside' any prisoner without the need for a cumbersome and slightly undignified full (or strip) search.

Anyone found to have any item secreted is asked to give it up. If they refuse and it is secreted internally they are escorted to the local hospital on medical grounds and they are either kept until the item has passed or they are given a medical intervention (laxatives or possibly a medical procedure) to retrieve the item. This has been so successful that prisoners arriving at the prison do not attempt to traffic as it is futile. This has left the Sheriff's Department to concentrate their efforts more efficiently on stopping other methods of trafficking.

The introduction of this technology in the UK could be another 'spend to save' measure and would reduce the amount of illicit substances in prisons dramatically. It would reduce all the difficulties and harms associated with the drug culture in our prisons.

### **More family communication, fewer visits**

The IR County jail also conducts visits via a form of video link similar to Skype or Facetime. Family and friends can go to a central video link building which is easy for most people to access and can communicate with their relatives and loved ones via a link straight into the prison unit. In the dormitories where the prisoners actually live there are a bank of screens and telephone handsets (for privacy) so the prisoners can have 'a visit' without leaving their unit. This reduces so much of the resource and time issues associated with traditional visits and gives greater flexibility and frequency of communication to both prisoner and 'visitor'. It is easier to arrange and can be timed to suit everyone. Prisoners don't need to miss work/training/learning time and visitors can effectively visit anytime during the core day.

I understand that this may be seen as a step backwards with our emphasis on family ties, but this will actually enable greater communication at a fraction of the cost. My daughter is away at university and she 'Facetimes' us almost daily. It is a very effective way of communicating and staying in touch. Most importantly, prisoners and their families like it and it has reduced the demand for face-to-face visits considerably. This facility should be included in the design of any new prison.

## **Final thoughts**

I am currently in communication with various NOMS staff involved in the new prison reforms that we are trying to introduce. Coincidentally, the new Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Michael Gove, was in the US around the same time I was there. He has already started to dismantle some of the more draconian measures his predecessor introduced, largely because they were either ineffective or actually had a negative effect. This is to be applauded.

He is also promoting many ideas that (if introduced properly) have a good prospect of achieving a meaningful and sustained decrease in re-offending and incarceration rates.

At the very least I will pursue this agenda and many of the ideas and recommendations above at HMP Risley. I would hope to expand this work to the rest of the North West Region resettlement prisons in due course.

The real goal would be to include this thinking into the design of the 8 new prisons that are planned to be built in the next 4-5 years. This would be the most effective way to create the cultures that will lead to best resettlement practice.

**It is much easier to create a rehabilitative culture from scratch than it is to change an embedded culture that is not rehabilitative.**