Report from the Discovering Desistance workshops held in Belfast (14 May and 25 June 2012)

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For further details about the project see http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/
Introduction

This report is an output from the Desistance Knowledge Exchange (DesKE) project led by Fergus McNeill (University of Glasgow) and funded by the ESRC. The project team also includes Stephen Farrall (University of Sheffield), Claire Lightowler (IRISS) and Shadd Maruna (Queens University Belfast). For further information about the project see: http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/.

The report is based on the contributions of those who attended two workshops about “Discovering Desistance” in Belfast, on 14 May and 25 June 2012. Attendees were a mixture of policy-makers, probation officers, current and previous service users, people who have offended, and researchers. The workshops followed an appreciative inquiry methodology, focusing on the positive and what works well. There were four key stages involved in the process - Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny - details of each stage are provided in the relevant section of the report. The Belfast workshops were facilitated by Claire Lightowler (IRISS), Fergus McNeill (University of Glasgow) and Shadd Maruna (Queens University Belfast).

The report presents the outputs and notes from the two days without offering analysis or comment. For this project workshops have also taken place in Glasgow, London and Sheffield between April and June 2012. The project team will be analysing the data emerging across the workshops and producing a more analytical and thematic report, to be made available here: http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/. Via this link you will also find copies of the slides used at the workshops.

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Belfast workshop 1 (14 May 2012)

**Workshop Structure**

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>10.10-10.30</td>
<td>Welcome, introduction to project and workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.30-11.00</td>
<td><strong>Film Viewing</strong></td>
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<td>11.00-11.30</td>
<td>Group discussion: Reflections on the film</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.30 - 12.00</td>
<td><strong>The desistance evidence base</strong> – based on Insight paper - ‘How and why people stop offending: discovering desistance’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.00 - 12.45</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>12.45 - 2.00</td>
<td><strong>Discovery phase</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.00 - 2.15</td>
<td>Tea/coffee</td>
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<td>2.15 - 3.45</td>
<td><strong>Dream Phase</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.45-4.00</td>
<td>Sum-up and close</td>
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**Reflections on the film**

Following a screening of the film The Road from Crime – see [http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/documentary/](http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/discoveringdesistance/documentary/) - attendees were invited to offer any comments or reflections.

- Desistance is a buzz word, what comes across there, people who have a chance through education, pastor even. The structural change required is still so far behind, there’s still a long journey to go in terms of the structures.

- The film marks for me a shift from risk management to a more humane way of focusing on individuals and society.

- Educational and impactful - touched quite a few heartstrings as well. The issue of desistance to where came through very strongly. The forward focus.

- Raises really difficult questions about risk, the community needs to recognise they are part of the solution but at the same time how you communicate this is problematic. Media and politicians anti-risk. If anything happens the question is why did you let this happen.

- The criminal record - its interesting that 3-5 years is irrelevant. The right balance in terms of wiping the record

- Some of themes are obvious, powerful conveys how trapped people are by themselves, families, and society too

- Message of hope quite powerful too

- Because its an individual journey the question for the criminal justice system is what’s our role in this- sometimes its about holding the hope for someone
• Interesting film, interested in assessment process that don’t focus on risk at all - Norway.

• Lack of women - gender bias.

• Randomness of how people came to where they came - family, employment, rewriting your script. It didn’t seem as difficult as the public think it is. The bit missing is about engaging with communities (employers, politicians). Didn’t see much of the community, beyond family or peers.

• Newspapers in Northern Ireland are corrupt. 75% of people coming out of prison cant read and write. Need more detail about Northern-Ireland system.

• Lack of back up when they get out.

• The big problem is over management of risk, that’s what is stopping us engaging with the communities as well, the fear. We need to sort this out before we engage with the community.

• Effective use of reformed offenders, getting them back in to support people in prisons. There are issues about them not being security cleared.

• I’m not comfortable with the idea that risk and hope are mutually exclusive. I don’t want to negate the idea that sometimes following processes are not important. You cant move from risk. We still have to respond to risk.

• I thought it was an excellent film. Stability came through, family, friends etc. Use this productively, to use that time. Then when they come out having some support, structure. everybody wants dignity and respect - even the most hardened criminals. The thing came through for me is when is the slate going to be wiped - reformed offenders. When does society say I forgive you for what you’ve done.

• The reformed prisoners should be part of the solution, they need to be part of the board.

• I thought it was very powerful and resonated with lots of things in practice, the issue came through for me is around the sentence starting when people get out of prison. So it’s an issue for community not a criminal justice issue. How can the film be used to broaden the focus?

• One of the comments is about economics - the money is focused on continuing the cycle. Need to draw on the cost.

• Interesting how similar the issues are with offenders here and in the states. The internal processes and the wider structural factors. It struck me seeing it from a difficult angle- the numbers of families coming to visit loved ones. Showed how much of a normal part of life
this is. Most of the money for justice reinvestment is used for the correctional rather than the community side.

- Hope and trapped key words for reformed offenders, I wonder how much that also applies to those working in the system. How do we free people to practice?

- The issue for those coming out of custody, the issue of justice reinvestment - you need to focus on risk but underneath all of that there is a need to resource the type of support people deserve to have to make the changes they need to make. People are often so well motivated coming out, but the support hasn’t been sufficiently resourced.

- The film was very moving. One thing I noticed was Allan’s journey in prison- a crime factory. Is prison the right answer, lends itself to the higher debate about punishment and appropriate use of imprisonment


- Questioning CBT and addressing relationships. The urban versus the rural. The disconnection between family and prisoners. We’re in the process of thinking about where to relocate a prison.
Discovery phase: What supports desistance?

This session focuses on exploring and appreciating ‘the best of what is’. Attendees were asked to identify good examples from their experience of desistance/supporting desistance. They were then asked to think about what were the factors that supported desistance. Attendees were asked to record on post-it’s these good examples and there ideas about what supports desistance. They also explored this as a group, identifying further suggestions. Below is a list of all the factors identified, and immediately below is a word cloud which helps to visualise the key issues emerging. The size of the words in the diagram below relates to how many times the word was recorded at the workshop.

What supports desistance: Frequency of words mentioned

List of all notes about what supports desistance (from post-it and group work exercises)

- Education – brought self-belief
- Consistency in guidance and support
- Family and friend support
- Being on the same level as others
- Sticking with someone-failing is part of the process
- Development of coping strategies
- Acceptance of mistakes – reflecting on the past
- Reflection on responsibilities now – being a parent
- Thinking about it – release with physical exercise
- Hope – light at the end of the tunnel, self-esteem
- Professional support
- Be a volunteer - allowing people to be who they are
- Positive role models
- Northern Ireland, devolution, size and geography etc can provide closer links between practice and policy to create/reflect “hope” at the policy level
- Helping a probationer through 3 orders and 2 jail terms and into desistance release of a long sentence offender and community reaction
- Being able to offer 2 individuals employment within our organisation/my team and witnessing their own personal and professional development
- Motivating a women on probation to attend a women’s group and seeing her blossom
- Respect
- Honesty
- Integrity
- First impressions – physical environment
- People
- Finding middle ground
- Expectations
- Be yourself
- Organisational culture/structure
- Relationship
- Acknowledging fear of change
- Presenting alternatives
- Test out
- Opportunity to try
- Sense of reality-risk
- The risk taking – opportunities
- Emotions involved
- Providing feedback
- Acknowledging progress
- Resisting labels – identity
- Not just criminal justice – wider whole government issue (public health)
- Recognition that we can do better
- Engender sense of hope
- Public perception more hopeful view
- Use of language
- Shift from punitiveness
- Up front intervention before offending
- Community based approaches
- Restorative justice
- Citizenship
- Social capital in communities
- Supporting restorative justice model
- Relationship
- Agency
- Respect
- Strong community network
- Scale of Northern Ireland means capacity to try new approaches
- Canvassing local politicians
- Respect orientated approach
- Promoting dignity
- Building resilience
- Justice reinvestment
- Longitudinal studies – what works in Northern Ireland terms
• Other research elsewhere
• Evidence base
• Using life experiences
• Belief
• Don't give up on people
• Positive role model
• Credibility
• Good relationship
• Being honest (boundaries, consistency)
• Trust
• Realistic expectations
• Patience
• Persistence
• Knowing / being clear why you are involved
• Supporting – value base
• Follow through on things agreed
• Deliver
• Having the time to focus on the individual
• Needs culture
• Team support
• Recognising people as individuals
• Allowing individuals to set the agenda
• Utilise range of support networks
• Like good parent hold boundary
• Highly skilled job
• Change in the system to support individual cases
• Outreach in the community where probation can’t do
• Utilising the community
• Partnership organisations
• Probation staff being able to use skills
• Narrative for change
• Individualising each case meeting
• Same skills to each person
• Service users taking responsibility for themselves
• Do list of what they want to do
• Need support and space and time
• Success stories can help bring about change
• Encouraging people they can success
• Seeing someone else who has done a course can help in a group
• 12 step meetings
• Word of mouth
• Positive engagement
• User voice feed back forum
• Share success stories and where
• Article in Southwark news
• Criminal record doesn’t stop you getting a job
• Coaching programme
• Persistence
• Offender got his straight head on
• Honesty and trust in relationship
• Believing in individual
• Trust
• Relationship – importance of
• Partnership and community
• Informing and education community
• Being broker
• Including schools
• Persistence
• Qualities
• Selfwork
• Accessing education
• Having access to services to meet needs
• Having someone to enable offender to see problems
• Building confidence
• Sense of self worth
• Being enabled to see things differently
• Constant support
• Non-judgmental
  Enthusiastic
• Supportive
• Peer support
• Someone with skills, qualities to encourage change
• Used convictions / background as a positive rather than just seeing the negatives
  – focus on the positives
• Someone to links
• Help to navigate the systems
• Belief
• Work from a strengths perspective
• Respect
• Involved from inception with projects
• Multi-party collaboration
• Strong organisational ethos
• Value base
• Inculcated through management
• Probation / prison links
• Dealing with whole prison
• Putting person at centre
• Talking a risk on person regardless of offender type
• Making use of ex-prisoners as under utilized resource
• Community service works directly in own communities
• Direct contact between offender and beneficiaries
• Recognise contributions
• Link them in to community organisations
• Stay with projects after they complete service
• Job track and other projects
• Can build social capital
• Assess need
• No mixed messages – don’t need another failure
• Philosophy of ‘there but for the grace of god go I’
• Never treat as “offenders”
• Taking a risk with a person
• Not over-obsessing about negative publicity
• Good advice based on previous experience
• Being trustworthy non-judgmental
• Having opinion and views listened to
• Clear about goal / purpose of change
• Achievement
• Recognition
• Diversion
• Rehabilitation
• It is possible to access a lot of knowledge and expertise through talking to people (academics, practitioners etc), reading and visiting places
• Recognition that we must address the cause of the offending behaviour – not just manage the symptoms
• Time to spend with people and listen
• The commitment of those (staff) involved in the criminal justice system
• The support and commitment of the community and voluntary sectors
• Buy in from stakeholders and management
• Willingness of other jurisdictions to contribute and share knowledge
• Recommendation made actually being acted upon
• Charitable trust involvement
• Relationship
• Realism
• Honesty
• Persistence
• Refusal to reject
• Opportunity to look good
• Good connections to, and support of research and knowledge / learning exchange (e.g. IPJ)
• Assistance from family
• Good experience of co-working with other agencies on behalf of the client
• Education gives freedom
• Providing practical support
• Staff interest and engagement
• Attractiveness / a comfortable environment
• Taking a risk
• Networking
• Respecting the individuals as people
• Having belief in them
• Good relationships developed between us
• On-going support
• Positive indicators of desistance. E.g. Employability, stability
• Receiving professional education related to work
• Sticking to the helping task and holding to account
• Being invited back to prison to share the experience
• Organisation focus on value of relationships in change
• Encountering non-judgmental teachers within prison
• Positive community service placements
• Employment, getting a job
• Being able to offer access to resources, employability schemes
• Meeting someone (years later) who has “come good”
• Educational courses, community education
• Supportive spouse
• Having conversations with prisoners on time served travels, asking them to reflect on their crimes
• Working with ex-offender mentoring with NIACRO, where I listened to problems and gave advice
• Meeting ex-prisoners on the street and finding out they have moved on with their lives
• Being able to talk through different aspects – what change means – in work; emotions / feelings
• Resettlement becoming more seriously treated
• Support/Guidance
• Education
• CBT
• Opportunity – work
• The opportunity to make amends
• Positive reinforcement
• Help when things don’t work out – not blame
• Firm commitment made for NIPS to work closer with partners within and beyond criminal justice systems – a multi-agency forum will coordinate services for offenders within the prison system
• Prison agreeing to resettlement pilot
• Got volunteer (ex-prisoner) involved in capacity work with Women’s sector – went on to become trainer
• Leading in a major review of policy and practice
• Helped ex-prisoners complete PhD degrees
• Strategic alliances on improving outcomes
• Using structure to scaffold presenting multitude of issues
• Canadian trip to share good practice with other similar organisations worldwide
• Training provision (skills)
• Workshops – ‘trade’ based
• Employability
• Life/social
• Provision of education
• Help others to turn their lives around
• Assisting an offender relocating to another country to chance his life on release from custody
• Inspire project
• Link from policy – operations – community
• Joined up approach at both strategic / policy level and at operational level
• Developing multi-disciplinary plan (including offender) to structure release with specific goals and support
• Community service placement leading to employment
• Learning from committed and inspirational practitioners
• Reducing offending is a strategic priority
• Not experiencing change alone – part of a group
• Multi-agency partnerships
• Encouraging an individual / helping to see it is possible to change
• Women’s offending strategy
• Organisational belief
• Organisational / criminal justice support
• Education, education, education
• Broadened debate on reducing offending
• Voluntary and community sector colleagues co-located with prisons and probation staff in prisons – makes integrated offender management more effective and joined-up
• Service users feeling I/we genuinely care about them
• Supporting staff to implement best practice framework which highlights resonsivim (?)
• Supportive structures
• Being a desister allowed me to be invited on the board of the Irish penal reform trust
• Facilitating re-training an offender to improve employability and community reintegration
• Helping a person to realize they can have and deserve a better life
• Sense of excitement
• Education is a key driver for changing your life and its available to give you knowledge and skills
• The good news is it is never too late to change – the world is your oyster
• More good people in the world than bad
• Help and support is there if an individual want to change
• Life is an education – you can be your own captain
• Creating an atmosphere/climate of trust which facilitated a disclosure – able to move this forward and re-build an individual’s relationship
• Life experiences
• Meeting a colleague from another organisation and a bit of creative magic opened a desire for a specific offender
• Girlfriend having first baby
• Small jurisdiction – you can get everyone round a table
• Assisting a person to access an addiction programme
• Working to support person with mental health problems – isolated in the community
• Education – I went back to school and done my leaving certificate. Also have done courses in CBT, choice theory. Am in college at the moment and doing an IT and PC maintenance course
• Having a reason to change and the support to do this
• Working with a group of individuals who were all individually (and collectively) at a stage of readiness to change. Who all worked together and supported each other as they began to make changes and, seriously commit to making major changes within their lives
• PSR. Focusing on the person not the process
• Service users feeling respected
• Opportunity to allow someone to talk about their offending for the first time
• Helping people to realise opportunities
• Creating space to allow penny-dropping moments
• Helped prisoners get accepted on to a postgrad programme
• Believing that it is possible to change and someone who believes this can happen
• Shoplifters in Shankill
• Gateway club in probation centre
• Stop think and change programme
• Prison review
• Being in court and debating with counsel and judge about an outcome – community sentence
• Influencing Del – deeper relationship with justice
• 3 out of 4 work people work in Northern Ireland so the odds are you could be one of them
• Community liaison
• Motivated a women on probation to attend a women’s group and seeing her blossom
• Being able to offer 2 individuals employment within an organisation/ my team and witnessing their own personal and professional development
• Community ownership and engagement
• Working with other individual with experience and confidence and knowledge. Learning from their approach.
• Positive relationships
• Drug / alcohol treatment
• Employment
• Education
• Marriage
• Children
• Relapse of long sentence offender – terrified of release and community reaction
• Helping a probationer through 3 orders and 2 jail terms and into desistance
• The discovering desistance blog
• Collaborative working
• Client empowerment
• Partnership model
• Honest communication
• Accountability
• Keeping promises
• Being open
• Teaching other reformed offenders
• Outdoor activities and football in Shankill
• Youth conferences
• Getting out of prison!
• Practical support
• Going the extra mile
• Sensitivity
• Trust
• Supporting a probationer to avail of education training though NIACRO which then led to him having the confidence and skills to return to education. He is now completing a BTEC in IT at the local regional college
• Input re mental health
• New careers project
• TURAS programme on West Belfast
• Duke of Edinburgh Award in West Belfast
• Feedback from probationer
• Achievement
• Honesty
• Making the right connections (rapport)
• Hope
• Community-feeling part of something
• Being challenged (not be allowed to make excuses)
• Becoming a reformed offender allowed me to get a degree, become a qualified teacher, teach other reforming offenders and volunteer in the Irish prison service
• Probation officer (thoughtful or challenging community service)
• Restorative conferences
• Mentoring from someone who’s walked that way
• Northern Ireland as a jurisdiction is small and manageable – in the main. This works well but can also be a disadvantage
• Another perspective on life away from crime
• Encouragement. Belief in the person. Taking a risk. Regular reminders of what the person wants to do and why
• Strength of character – individual’s strength
• Supportive management
• Self-motivation / interest
• Career development and greater opportunities
• Relationship between worker and the person
• Opportunities – linking with resources in the community
• Help with everyday activities. Help with confidence to progress to further education
• Support
• NIPS
• Engagement with service providers
• Outward facing
• Partnerships
• Plenty of resources devoted to criminal justice system – staff, finance
• Working in partnership with NIARCO and PBNI to support women. Having dedicated staff to support women.
• Chance to shape change – rather than being told / change imposed
• I worked with a support centre called Bawnogue (?) youth and family support centre. Also a place called station one and am still in touch with my key worker.
• Respect and creative thinking
• Organisation culture
• Supportive management
• The fact the organisation was new and developing
• A wealth of research material available
• Trust
• Funding / financial support from creative initiatives
• Affirmation from community of valued work
• Opportunity to be involved in giving help directly
• Relationship with probation officer
• Attitudes of society
• Support from family, friends and community
• Support from professionals
• Motivation from the individual – trigger event that motivates the person
• Social work supports
• Support, guidance, advice and consistency
• Energy
• Commitment
• Engagement
• Variety (of inputs)
• Immediacy
• Working with other groups strengths
• Documenting the experiences of the women’s centres support and case studies of women from the criminal justice system
• Staff who have a belief in the individual and their capacity to change
• Shared understanding of challenges
• Working with well established community based women’s centres to support women
• Consensus within much of the criminal justice system about treating those within the system as people
• Understanding
• Joint training with those from other disciplines
• Staff who have the skills and ability to assist others and a desire to do so
• Buy in and belief from criminal justice partners that desistance works
• Providing links to others who build choice
• Professional judgment
• Non-judgmental staff working with people who offend
• Support from manager
• Pre-release planning
• Tell stories and find alternative stories
• Education and training
• Creative activities
• Sticking with person through set-backs and failures
• Volunteer ex-prisoner involved in capacity which put value on her experience
• Time- time to listen and tie to drill down with an individual
• Pro-social modelling
• Development of co-working relationship in OMUs
• Individual tailor-made content – true person - centred practice
• Relationships
• Open debate
• Supportive family relationships
• Working in a women only environment in Inspire and supporting women in the community
• Family support
• Promotion of social work as core training
• Community / voluntary supports made available
• Being there for people throughout the duration of the process (probation order) and ending well – allowing people to reconnect if necessary
• Common vision of success
• Showing them a wider variety of options
• Practical supports – not just talk
• Having a good value base – one where people are treated with humanity
• Following from John Laub’s definition after 9 years since contact with the justice system, I am officially a DESISTER!
• Strategic alliances to change practice
• Finances
• Persistence (stickability)
• Relationship
• Continuity
• Respect
• Trust
• Understanding people
• Having community support in prison before women are released
• Good education system – open and accessible to all
• Positive reinforcement
• Commitment from non-criminal justice agencies
• Team approach and extensive support and communication between prison service and community
• Encouragement
• Agreed multi-agency approach
• Honesty
• Openness
• Transparency
• Accountability
• Reliability
• Confidentiality
• Political support in justice department
• Importance of role model - someone to admire / emulate
• Bringing positivity into environment (prison)
• Partnership working
• Getting lots of information, repeated time after time
• Encouragement
• Positive reinforcement
• Belief in ability to change
• Supportive environment (family/friends)
• Helping by providing advice, going with person to appointments
• Encouragement to develop structure and new skills
• Training, employment, education
RESPECT, HONESTY, INTEGRITY

FIRST IMPRESSIONS - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT
IMMEDIATE - PUBLIC

FINDING MIDDLE GROUNDS / EXPECTATIONS

BE YOURSELF

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE / STRUCTURE

RELATIONSHIP

ACKNOWLEDGING FEAR OF CHANGE (DISCOVERY)
Dream Phase: Provocative propositions

This phase draws on the examples of innovation or good practice/experiences that have been discussed in the discovery phase. Attendees were asked to develop ‘provocative propositions’, aspirational statements that realistically sum up ‘what could be’, if services, practices, policies were redesigned to support desistance.

Within groups attendees identified provocative propositions are were asked to record those they identified as being the most important. At the Belfast workshop 24 provocative propositions were identified.

Provocative propositions:

1. Create more permeable prison walls – located and actually integrated in/with communities. With reformed offenders involved in prison work as mentors and prisoners involved in real work with real wages, particularly community projects.
2. Reform the Rehabilitation of offenders Act – particularly through reducing the time before an individual is forgiven
3. Change sentencing away from custody – people not sent to prison for silly things
4. Close down young offender institutes and open colleges, using college students as informal mentors.
5. No child ‘left behind’ in education – all leave with literacy and numeracy skills
6. Communities actively engaged with reintegrating those who offended (i.e.
   opening of facilities, mentoring, sports etc)
7. All employers (including public sector) required to employ former offenders
8. Desistance teaching should be mandatory for teachers, social workers, health care professionals and others
9. Needs of offenders identified at an early stage and appropriate interventions set in place on a needs basis to prevent reoffending – courts only deal with more serious offenders
10. Services should stand up to the media and let public know the reality of services
11. Recognise the ‘person’ and remove the label ‘offender’ from common use (practice, policy)
12. Confirming/renewal of organisational culture (top-down and individual choices) to be about supporting relationships
13. Role of people who have experienced justice being part of policy and practice
14. Stop using the word “offender”
15. Develop approaches to (punishment) sentencing which are constructive and proportionate (paying forward, positive, citizenship, restorative approaches)
16. Greater involvement of victims in the criminal justice system
17. Everyone should have a supervision support team (addiction support, employment, housing/benefits, peer mentors, mental health supports), and this provides support through a range of mechanisms (face to face, helpline, drop in centre, support groups, beyond 9-5pm)
18. Resources should reflect priorities and delivery on agreed justice outcomes
19. Norway style re-integration guarantee – where the state obliged to deliver on re-integration
20. Employment opportunities: All public sector commodities to be supplied through prisons
21. Redistribution of resources and focus on early intervention and family/community
22. Introduction of presumption against custody, increased use of restorative practice
23. Change use of language to give hope (lift the label)
Belfast workshop 2 (25 June 2012)

Workshop Structure
10-10.10 Welcome and re-cap
10.10-10.20 Meet Raymond
10.20 -10.50 Reflections on film and workshops;
   - Have you done anything differently as a result of the first workshop?
   - Update from all stage 1 workshops
10.50- 11.10 Voting for Provocative propositions to be prioritised
11.10-12.30 Design Phase
12.30 – 1.15 Lunch
1.15 - 2.20 Destiny Phase
2.20-3.00 Sharing reflections from, and about, the process and sum-up

Reflections on the first workshop and the project process
Attendees were invited to reflect on the first workshop and think about whether they had started to do anything differently as a consequence of being involved in the project. At the end of the workshop there was also an opportunity to reflect on the project process overall. Notes from these discussions have been combined due to their similar subject matter.

Reflections on the workshop, film and project process
- Made a more conscious effort to look at our own literature and look at the use of the word ‘offender’ and talk instead about ‘people who offend’.

- Thinking through and writing up things – what labels are we applying and what are we looking at.

- What I took from last time was that the emphasis of probation was all going down the direction of risk assessment, and I took away from the last session to maybe look at that and reconsider.

- Film was very good and would be very useful to show to organisations that don’t have a direct focus in terms of criminal justice (e.g., mental health, housing)

- Film was very powerful, useful tool, should find ways of using it.

- Circulating the names and contact points. Not all of whom know each other. Enriches the debate, creating networks.

- Given the size of the group, the process was very good in terms of involving everybody. Even in terms of getting up and posting your views on the walls. I did reflect on it after the first day. I think it has been very good for me personally. The language issue has been good for me particularly. We talk about ‘offenders’, ‘clients.’ I think it has been particularly good having service users in the room with us, a rare thing.

- The value of having people like Michael and Raymond in the room who have been through the system and know the system has been hugely valuable. It is so rare. Is there a way to follow up with the participants later? Are your key issues being
represented? I wanted to focus on things that were really practical and could actually be delivered, but I worry that perhaps

• Children’s parliament to ask children what they wanted in the hospital. If that can be done with children, why couldn’t it be done with prisoners.

• I see in the room that there is a different perspective developing in the criminal justice system. To me, that’s positive. I don’t believe this will stop here at these workshops. When you leave here today, let’s hope some of this will be put into action.

• Trying to think of what I’ve brought to this event and what the event has given me, to some extent, even the title “Desistance Knowledge Exchange”. I thought I was going to get a framework from you at the top table and ‘off you go now’. Probably what has emerged for me is softer, for want of a better word. Probably about inspiring hope for change. Have the confidence to inspire hope for change. The process has gotten a bit longer and is a bit softer than I thought it would be, but that is not necessarily a bad thing.
Prioritising provocative propositions

Each attendee had five votes to cast for the provocative propositions they thought were most important. See the Dream Phase section above for a full list of provocative propositions. People could allocate their votes as they wished, i.e. they could allocate all five votes for one proposition or split their votes across several.

Percentage of votes cast for the provocative propositions created in Belfast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provocative Propositions</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>% of votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Create more permeable prison walls</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reform the Rehabilitation of offenders Act</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Change sentencing away from custody</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Close down young offender institutes and open colleges</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No child ‘left behind’ in education</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Communities actively engaged with reintegrating those who offended</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. All employers required to employ former offenders</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Desistance teaching should be mandatory</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Needs of offenders identified and appropriate interventions</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Services should stand up to the media</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Recognise the ‘person’ and remove the label ‘offender’</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Organisational culture about supporting relationships</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Role of people who have experienced justice part of policy/practice</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Stop using the word “offender”</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Develop constructive &amp; proportionate approaches to sentencing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Greater involvement of victims in the criminal justice system</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Everyone should have a supervision support team</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Resources reflect priorities &amp; delivery on agreed justice outcomes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Norway style re-integration guarantee</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. All public sector commodities to be supplied through prisons</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Focus on early intervention &amp; family/community</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Introduction of presumption against custody</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Change use of language to give hope (lift the label)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>174</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Design Phase

The third stage in the appreciative inquiry process focuses on designing a more ideal approach to supporting desistance, based on the examples that have emerged from the successes and achievements of the past. Attendees were required to think about what policies, practices and services might look like if they were designed in such a way as to better support desistance and to achieve the provocative propositions developed in the dream phase.

We selected nine provocative proposition to work on during this and the following phase (1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 17, 15, 21, 22). Three groups focused on the most voted for propositions (propositions 1, 6 and 17). Two groups focused on the next most voted for propositions (propositions 5 and 15 respectively). These propositions had a focus on education and sentencing, therefore, the two respective groups also considered other frequently voted propositions on related issues (propositions 9 and 21: which were related to early intervention and interventions; and propositions 3 and 22: which were also related to sentencing).

Proposition 1: Create more permeable prison walls – located and actually integrated in/with communities. With reformed offenders involved in prison work as mentors and prisoners involved in real work with real wages, particularly community projects.

- Culture and mind-set of prisons should be aligned with the wider criminal justice approach (e.g., rehabilitation as well as punishment). See people in prison as people who can be supported to re-enter communities.
- Needs and potential of each individual to contribute to communities when they come out again.
- Sentence planning less about ‘use of time’ but meeting need of person and outcome focus.
- One way permeable wall could help this, if employers, trainers coming in treated prisoners as human beings not numbers, and sustain communities rather than shut them off.
- Inspire people through education, employment and training. Normalise – bring local community resource in prison or inmates go out.
- Inform the public at large outside the walls of the potential of people in prisons. They could be embraced as useful members of society and not cast off.
- Ripple effect – local employers/education/former prisoners involved in throughcare continuing into the community on release.
Sentencing propositions (3, 15 and 22)

Proposition 3: Change sentencing away from custody – people not sent to prison for silly things

Proposition 15: Develop approaches to (punishment) sentencing which are constructive and proportionate (paying forward, positive, citizenship, restorative approaches)

Proposition 22: Introduction of presumption against custody, increased use of restorative practice

• Much easier to point the finger outward, yet much of this could be about practice rather than policy change.
• Thinking of prison in terms of a college or campus structure, gaining employment, skills. Increasing use of community orders, in particular community service.
• Look again at the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and its impact on idea of citizenship (rights and responsibilities). Helping them participate as ex-offenders and community members. Rights are not conditional but rather enshrined and universal.
• Employment of ex-offenders as mentors and as resources. Not just used as ‘trophies’ to be wheeled out on show.
• Risk agenda and taking on the mantel of public protection. Can we get to the point of saying that risk assessment is a means to an end, not an end in itself. How do you encourage desistance as opposed to just risk management? Open and honest and equal relationships when there are different power imbalances.
• Idea of voluntary or involuntary national service as an option. Can incorporate community service. A more universal option – prevention, rehabilitation, etc. – run by the military joint with probation. In Germany can choose between military and social service. Structure, discipline, training. Complaints that there’s nothing exciting to do.
Early intervention propositions

Proposition 5: No child ‘left behind’ in education – all leave with literacy and numeracy skills

Proposition 9: Needs of offenders identified at an early stage and appropriate interventions set in place on a needs basis to prevent reoffending – courts only deal with more serious offenders

Proposition 21: Families communities early intervention

• Have universal access to services as opposed to targeted interventions with a justice label. Not restricting ourselves to at risk, and should come from a universal source.

• When come to police attention, should be diverted to a service. Divert rapidly on a needs basis.

• Blamed the teachers. Redesign curriculum. Note that education does not tend to participate in these debates.

• Resourcing the community and volunteers in both utilising the skills that are there in working as a volunteer mentor, but utilising the capacities of the community to deal with issues themselves, so that the criminal justice system is not seen as the solution to everyone else’s problems.
Proposition 6: Communities actively engaged with reintegrating those who offended (i.e. opening of facilities, mentoring, sports etc)

- Removing barriers of access, communications. Politicians will say one thing in private and another in public.

- Offenders are citizens first. They should have exact same access of services as anyone else in the community.

- Address people’s fears - engage in conversations. Develop means of communication and engagement.

- Section 75 – recognised that offenders are often discriminated against, misunderstood, marginalised, externalised.

- Neighbourliness, localness.

- Important to give communities some sense of what works, if they have view that offenders are beyond redemption, can’t change. Give concrete examples of where people have turned their lives around and become contributing members of their communities.

- Listening to victims as well. Experience of youth justice sector of restorative conferencing.

- Helpful to identify community champions, perhaps former offenders perhaps former victims who have had good experiences. Challenge some of the negative images coming out of the sensationalist press.

- Self-belief supported through peer mentoring. Saw it as important in the community. Generate some respect.
Proposition 17: Everyone should have a supervision support team (addiction support, employment, housing/benefits, peer mentors, mental health supports), and this provides support through a range of mechanisms (face to face, helpline, drop in centre, support groups, beyond 9-5pm)

- Availability of resources and services – e.g., mental health and residential services not available everywhere, 9 to 5 culture, etc.
- Technology (mobiles, etc) creates possibilities here
- Proper funding and mechanisms – a ‘desistance pot’ focus of resources
- Better coordination, possibly co-location, better partnerships.
- Starting where the person is at, not dictating so much. Ensuring the person feels value. Encouraging a belief in confidence to change.
- Nurturing and mentoring
- Person-centred approach.
- Change takes time, need long-term support.
- Peer mentoring is often an add-on rather than an integral part of process.
- Highlighting progress,
- Importance of listening to service user views.
- Motivating to change, creating belief.
- Prison regimes need to support this process.
**Destiny Phase**

This session is about ‘making change happen’. Here we focused on what needs to be done to achieve the vision of the future established in the dream and design phases. Attendees focused on identifying what participants can do to move towards better practices, services and policies, and identified what others also need to do to make this happen.

**Proposition 1:** Create more permeable prison walls – located and actually integrated in/with communities. With reformed offenders involved in prison work as mentors and prisoners involved in real work with real wages, particularly community projects.

- Scope to develop positive stories about successes and what is possible.
- Links to educators and employers, real avenues to follow.
- Build on small things and make them grow at local and community level rather than a global cosmic approach.
- Identify the links between what happens inside prison and what happens outside. We need to understand that better.
- Devise flexible commissioning services in response to results. Have the capacity and confidence to change practices.
- Real direct link between work in prisons and potential work on the outside. Link real pay for work in prisons to credit unions so that prisoner families can draw on it or it can be used upon release.
- Ensure that we have through-care in employment terms
- Include families in the planning process from the beginning, not just towards release.
- Needs analysis of the entire prison population in Northern Ireland.
- Remove barriers to education and justice, break down silo mentality. Continuity of care. Same access to services as everyone else.
- Identify and find ways to address needs of people in prison who have no hope or no incentive to change.
Sentencing propositions (3, 15 and 22)

Proposition 3: Change sentencing away from custody – people not sent to prison for silly things

Proposition 15: Develop approaches to (punishment) sentencing which are constructive and proportionate (paying forward, positive, citizenship, restorative approaches)

Proposition 22: Introduction of presumption against custody, increased use of restorative practice

- Use of prisons as college or learning centres = community lobbying, increasing community awareness, engaging victims groups.
- Probation Board to make better use of information we’ve been getting in regards to community service, give different messages about justice.
- Use of language – ‘offender’ etc.
- Training provision in probation. How to balance training in risk assessment tools with a value orientation in the organisation (e.g., promoting citizenship, professional discretion from staff).
- Value of having times like this when you aren’t driven by having to get a piece of work done. Meaningful dialogues rather than simple consultations. Good to have opportunity to hear others views.

Early intervention propositions

Proposition 5: No child ‘left behind’ in education – all leave with literacy and numeracy skills

Proposition 9: Needs of offenders identified at an early stage and appropriate interventions set in place on a needs basis to prevent reoffending – courts only deal with more serious offenders

Proposition 21: Families communities early intervention

- Policy Level: Whether access to universal services would be most productively pursued through child
- In the area of diversion, the use of volunteers as mentors, not least to point service users to these services.
- Developing information sharing without breaching confidentiality.
- Education – Look for a window of opportunity like curriculum review. Generational work, impact of imprisonment on the family.
- Resourcing the community: What the potential might be for police community partnerships.
- Encouraging some responsibility back to the community.
Proposition 6: Communities actively engaged with reintegrating those who offended (i.e. opening of facilities, mentoring, sports etc.)


- Review learning from section 75 groups – as discrimination and separation of those who have offended have some of the characteristics of a Section 75 Group. Are there any lessons to be applied to the offender population? Equality Commission may be a useful source.

- Citizenship – incorporate citizenship into work with offenders. A justice sector agency and NGO’s. Other side of our citizenship is to incorporate view of offenders as citizens – in organisations and communities.

- Define ‘community champions’ (for desistance) – Pilot that model in a select area. Probation and DoJ to take forward.

- Communication aligned across justice. Whether agencies are antagonistic. Metacomunication strategy. Rolling thunder approach. Different agencies bringing out positive messages at different times. Better chance of being picked up by the media. NGO’s, Govt and the media.

- Engaging victims organisations to embrace desistance agenda. We are not convinced they are an obstacle. Many offenders are victims themselves. Justice organisations should be engaging with the victims sector.

- Promoting widespread use of restorative practice that gives a voice to victims and produces better outcomes for victims and offenders. Having a restorative borough approach. Try to sign up schools and other organisations within that area as a pilot. Department of Justice.

- Share experiences and best practices more with the Republic of Ireland to help produce a stronger model.
Proposition 17: Everyone should have a supervision support team (addiction support, employment, housing/benefits, peer mentors, mental health supports), and this provides support through a range of mechanisms (face to face, helpline, drop in centre, support groups, beyond 9-5pm)

- Cross-departmental policy and practice needs to improve. Proper funding and mechanisms (a ‘desistance pot’). Needs to be commitment among department heads. A number of departments at a high level contribute a small amount of money. Need a change in legislation to demand departments to work together. A number of drivers around: Reducing Offending Strategy, PCPs, etc.

- Better coordination, co-location, partnerships: Reducing Offending Partnerships – largely involving the criminal justice system partners. A need to bring in DSD, housing agencies, DEL.

- Prison regimes: Need to deliver on Prison Review, See Programme, etc. Focus has been staff focused, rather than prisoner focused. Culture, training. Shadowing opportunities for officers to learn from probation service, NGO’s like Niacro and creative work they are undertaking. Owers Report, Employment strategy, etc are real opportunities and can’t afford to miss.

- Support in terms of use of peers, mentors and volunteers. Develop our own peer mentors. Identify mentors and volunteers. Invest in mentors and volunteers, but the return we can get can be much greater. Benefits in the long-term can be great. Should be seen as additional and complementing rather than providing services instead of.

- Gaps in services: Cohort of prisoners in custody who will not be the responsibility of agencies post-release (e.g., individuals who have been recalled for non-compliance, those serving short sentences, etc). Trying to be creative in terms of some of the agencies that can provide support. Inspire Women’s Centre is a good model. Role of Reducing Offending Partnerships as well.

- Offering services and supports beyond 9 to 5. Better use of technology. Build in some safeguards so staff are not on call 24x7.