Discovering Desistance

Workshop 1

Glasgow, 10th April 2012
Programme

- 10.00 Welcome and Introductions
- 10.10 ‘The Road from Crime’
- 11.00 Questions and discussion
- 11.30 How and why people stop offending: the evidence base
- 12.00 Lunch
- 12.45 ‘Discovery phase’
- 2.00 Tea and coffee
- 2.15 ‘Dream phase’
- 3.45 Sum up
- 4.00 Close
Why study desistance?

- Studying desistance forces us away from static models of people as ‘offenders’, ‘criminals’ or ‘prisoners’ and encourages an understanding of change(s) in personal identities.

- It also brings to our attention the fact that today’s ‘young offender’ is more likely to become tomorrow’s ‘new father’ than tomorrow’s ‘habitual criminal’.

- As such, it implies valuing people for who they are and for what they *could become*, rather than judging, rejecting or containing them for what they *have done*.

- It can and should inform the redesign of our CJS and practices, where they aim to reduce reoffending.
An overview of the evidence

- **Age and maturation** are important factors, but there is more to aging the physical or psychological maturation.

- **Choices and decisions** to desist matter, but there is more to desistance than just willing it.

- **Social ties or bonds** (between the individual and society) matter – like work, partnerships, parenthood – but these ties aren’t always enough to bind.

- Developing a coherent ‘pro-social’ **identity** seems to be an important part of the process – making good on a troubled past, finding redemption, seems to help.
A model of the process
(Giordano et al., 2002)

Openness to change

Change in attitudes

Hooks for change

Appealing conventional self
Supporting desistance

- Realism
- Individualization
- Relationships
- Hope
- Strengths
- Agency
- Social capital
- Recognition
Institutions and systems

- **Sentencing**

- **Prisons**
  - The Owers Review of the Northern Ireland Prison Service (2010)

- **Probation/supervision**
  - Discovering desistance

- **Civil society**
  - The media, faith communities, business, etc.

- **The State**
The person changing

Support services

The reintegrating community

The exclusionary community

The intervention

The offender
‘Appreciative Inquiry’ (AI)

- AI differs from other approaches to supporting change and development (usually in organisations) in that it AI involves a focus on best experiences, strengths, accomplishments, best practices, and ‘peak moments’ in a person’s, a service’s or an organisation’s history. It does not start with a problem orientation and then try to ‘fix’ the problems that are found.

- These workshops focus on **what is working well to support desistance from crime and how we can make further progress in this area.** They draw on the experiences of all of the participants and on the research evidence.

- We hope that the insights from the workshops in each country can produce a kind of cross-fertilisation of ideas as we work through the process.
This session focuses on exploring and appreciating ‘the best of what is’. The task is to discuss the factors and forces that have supported the desistance process. You could consider:

- Best experiences in being supported or supporting others to change
- Desistance-related achievements you are particularly proud of
- Which particular talents/skills/attitudes people bring to the change process (in whatever role) that make a difference in supporting change.
Dream phase

- Drawing on the examples of innovation or good practice/experiences that have been discussed in the discovery phase, images of the ‘possible future’ should emerge. In this phase the aim is to develop ‘provocative propositions’ that realistically sum up ‘what could be’, if services, practices, policies were redesigned to support desistance.
Summing up

- Where have we got to so far?
- Workshops in Sheffield, Belfast and London
- Second Glasgow workshop
  - 16th May 2012