



Quaker Peace  
& Social Witness

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE : FROM FAITH INTO ACTION**

**Paper written for Meeting for Sufferings held 5 April 2008**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Through this 'snap-shot' we attempt to show something of the diversity of activity within the Yearly Meeting expressing the complex and long-standing concern for criminal justice.

The belief that God is in every individual prompts Quakers to see offenders as human beings with dignity and rights and to care for their welfare no matter what their crimes. Friends do not believe that anyone is outside God's love. Crime is an area where both forgiveness and justice are needed, and restorative justice approaches reflect that Quaker belief.

This is not an exhaustive list of what Friends are doing locally, regionally, nationally, internationally, individually, collectively, corporately, alone and with non-Quaker partners; nor of all the ways in which they are providing direct practical services to individuals and changing systems through informed advocacy (often doing both together): it is a limited collection of current examples of the value of working across the whole range of the concern and of working together.

Friends themselves are involved in the criminal justice system as witnesses, expert witnesses, victims, offenders, prisoners, ex-prisoners, families and friends of offenders and victims of crime; they work for the police, prison and probation services; they are magistrates, judges, solicitors, barristers, criminologists; Quaker Prison Ministers, prison visitors, advocates, mentors, befrienders, pen-pals for prisoners; members of Youth Offender Panels, Youth Justice Boards, Scottish Children's Panels, Independent Monitoring Boards, Boards of Visitors, parole boards; counsellors, therapists, mediators, victim support workers; educationalists, psychiatrists and psychologists working in the field; and notable authors on the subjects of criminal justice, community justice and restorative justice.

Some Meetings feel able to welcome offenders, prisoners and ex-prisoners into their Meetings for Worship; others find this difficult or impossible. There are Meetings who support a Meeting for Worship in the local prison. In some Meetings Friends have formed their own criminal justice or community justice groups, whose activities include raising awareness about the issues, supporting the Quaker Prison Ministers in their area, working in partnership with the community police and engaging with policy makers.

Friends also work for, volunteer with, serve on the managing committees/boards of, and are members of a wide variety of other organisations, Quaker and non-Quaker, both campaigning for improvements in the prison and criminal justice systems, and working directly with victims, offenders, prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families.

## **2. ACTION**

Here are some examples of work which show something of the diversity: it does not pretend to be a comprehensive illustration.

### **Escaping Victimhood**

Escaping Victimhood runs a unique residential programme combining many different activities to enable those traumatised by crime to move from being a victim to being a survivor and to reclaim their lives. It is the vision of an individual Friend, supported by Old Jordans and local Meetings, nurtured by the non-Quaker Thames Valley Partnership, and now an independent body. [New, non-Quaker charity.]

### **Circles of Support and Accountability**

This Canadian initiative was picked up by Quaker Peace & Social Witness (a centrally managed work committee) which established a pilot project in Thames Valley funded by the Home Office. QPSW also facilitated the national 'stakeholders' group and undertook the work, again with government funding, to create the new national umbrella for Circles of Support and Accountability within the UK. [Circles UK and Hampshire & Thames Valley Circles are both now independent non-Quaker charities.]

### **Women in Prison Project**

An international joint venture by four Quaker bodies: the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) Geneva, the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) in Brussels together with Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) in Britain, and the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) representation to the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the United Nations Crime Congress. The project addresses governments around the world, directly and at international level, expressing a concern initially voiced by individual Friends about the particular needs of women in prison and the children of imprisoned mothers. [Joint project between four Quaker bodies.]

### **Quakers in Criminal Justice (QICJ)**

An informal network of Quakers based in the UK who are involved in the criminal justice system offering mutual support for Quakers working in various branches of the system and helping to inform them (and thereby their Meetings) about current penal issues. It publishes a Newsletter three times a year and runs an annual conference for members. Their 2007 conference issued a minute and statement received by Meeting for Sufferings in March last year. [Listed Informal Group.]

### **Friends Therapeutic Community Trust (also known as Glebe House)**

Established directly out of the tested concern by an individual Friend to provide a "therapeutic community for the treatment of children and young people who are unstable and maladjusted and in need of assistance", Glebe House does internationally renowned specialist work with teenage males with sexual issues, often victims and/or offenders. Its trustees are drawn from Local/Area Meetings in East Anglia. [Independent Quaker charity.]

### **Crime, Community and Justice Group (CCJG)**

CCJG links Britain Yearly Meeting to other bodies such as the Restorative Justice Consortium and the ecumenical Churches' Criminal Justice Forum; supports Friends' own local activity groups; represents Quaker views to government and other policy makers; promotes restorative justice amongst Friends and others; and works in partnership with other Quaker groups such as Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs and Quakers in Criminal Justice. The name of the Group, changed in 2007, reflects the recognition that their work is concerned with both the state criminal justice system and how to build community, and to support Friends' witness in relation to both. [Centrally managed work in QPSW.]

### **Quaker Prison Ministers Group (QPMG)**

All prisoners are legally entitled to access to a minister of their chosen faith: Quaker Prison Ministers (QPMs) fulfil this obligation for the Religious Society of Friends by offering what pastoral care they are able to prisoners and prison staff alike. Many QPMs occupy a precarious position within their prison chaplaincy team: this vulnerability, combined with the fact that QPMs are prison service office holders, means that they do not campaign on prison issues. The QPM Group provides training, networking and support for QPMs, as well as actively supporting and engaging in the work of QPSW in promoting Quaker prison ministry within Britain. [Centrally managed work in QPSW.]

### **Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)**

A Quaker body at European level with strong links to Britain Yearly Meeting, through e.g. membership of QCEA's governing body, funding and networking. QCEA works with both the Council of Europe and the European Union structures – the UK being a Member State of both – thus linking European level international work with work in those Member States where there are significant Quaker populations: and it does matter to policy makers what European-level politicians say about issues. QCEA is now working on alternatives to prison as a direct result of findings from their research into Women in Prison. [Independent Quaker body.]

### **Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)**

Together with the FWCC representation at the UN Criminal Justice bodies, QUNO has engaged the United Nations on issues of women in prison (a joint UN/QUNO Handbook will be launched in April), children of prisoners (the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child now raises this with States when they report under that Convention, and UNICEF is becoming involved) and restorative justice both in the regular criminal justice system and in post-conflict situations (through the UN Peacebuilding Commission). [The QUNO Geneva Committee is jointly appointed by, and reports to, QPSW and FWCC.]

### **Meetings and (Ex)-Offenders Working Group**

This is a cross-departmental short-term group of Quaker Peace & Social Witness and Quaker Life to work with staff to produce written advice and guidelines for Quaker Meetings in Britain Yearly Meeting on how best to prepare for and manage the potential integration of an (ex)-offender into the meeting. [Centrally managed work in QPSW and QL.]

### **Restorative Justice in Bristol Prison Project**

Bristol Mediation, an independent local organisation offering community mediation in the Bristol area, is managing this project in Bristol prison for which local Quakers have contributed half the funding. Three Friends sit on the steering committee. Bristol Mediation itself is supported financially by local Quakers, one of whom is a Trustee. [Independent non-Quaker charity.]

### **Individual actions**

Here is a very small selection of the many other individual actions which Friends are pursuing:

- using professional expertise to make submissions to government on policies, such as the need to acknowledge and properly respond to mental health problems and learning difficulties amongst offenders;
- greater involvement with Community Chaplaincy projects;
- wider promotion of *The Forgiveness Project*, especially through displaying its travelling exhibition in Friends Meeting Houses and elsewhere;
- participants in the 2007 Quaker Prison Ministers Conference, dismayed by the 'revenge' attitude to prisoners and wanting to emphasise a restorative justice approach, felt moved to themselves open a new national debate on the purpose of imprisonment in the 21st century;
- two Friends from Scotland are revising the Scottish version of the Churches' Criminal Justice Forum publication "*What Can I Do? Volunteering in the criminal justice system in Scotland*" on behalf of an interfaith group, and are being funded directly by the Scottish Justice Minister for this work.

## **3. MOVING FORWARD**

Much of this work generates not only the cumulative reputation which Quakers have for being actively involved with criminal justice affairs, but also a 'ripple' effect – often with entirely unforeseen results. For example:

- other organisations are considering developing the model of "circles", not as full Circles of Support and Accountability, but as a way in which small groups of people can provide practical and emotional support to other newly-released prisoners;
- the Briefing for Friends on Women in Prison and the Children of Imprisoned Mothers, already available in Spanish (via QUNO) and soon to be in French (via QCEA), is now widely read by non-Friends; and as a direct result of reading it, Friends in Cambridge have formed a group to see what action they can take;
- as a result of providing victim-offender mediation and AVP workshops in Uganda in 1999, funded by QPSW, one of our Friends is now engaged in helping to coordinate restorative justice efforts throughout Africa;

- the additional research which QUNO Geneva is doing on the impact of parental imprisonment on children includes a number of case studies from different countries commissioned by QUNO: one of these was undertaken by an Indian Quaker in Bhopal, another by a former QUNO Programme Assistant now living in Kyrgyzstan;
- Scottish Friends wrote in February 2008 to the Justice Minister asking for a commitment to no longer hold children in prisons and two weeks later a press release from the Ministry of Justice made a commitment not to hold children in the prison estate but to ensure that alternative secure accommodation was found where necessary: Quakers were not alone but their voice may have contributed to this outcome.

#### **4. FAITH**

Quakers have a long-standing concern about crime and prison issues, ever since they were themselves imprisoned in large numbers in the seventeenth century. This has led Friends to working directly to support people in prison, as well as their families, to working for change within the criminal justice system, to addressing the conditions which can lead to offending behaviour – and recognising that often the needs of the victim of crime tend to be ignored and the offender is punished without reference to the victim.

The uniting force around these diverse activities is the belief in reconciliation and healing, expressed through restorative justice approaches.

'Reconciliation' is perhaps best known as part of the Quaker peace testimony, in areas of war and other violent conflict, but in the context of work around the area of criminal justice it leads to a strong belief that restorative justice is the right approach to working with the trauma of crime – both for the good of the community and because of the respect for human needs and values that it reflects.

Restorative justice is the mending of that which is broken, the healing of hurt, and the removal of the causes of harm. It uses healing as an alternative to retribution and punishment. It makes possible reconciliation.

Here are two definitions from the Restorative Justice Consortium, a national charity promoting restorative justice:

*“Restorative justice seeks to balance the concerns of the victim and the community with the need to reintegrate the offender into society. It seeks to assist the recovery of the victim and enable all parties with a stake in the justice process to participate fruitfully in it.”*

*“Restorative Justice is a process whereby:*

- *All parties with a stake in a particular conflict or offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the conflict or offence and its implications for the future, and*
- *Offenders have the opportunity to acknowledge the impact of what they have done and to make reparation, and victims have the opportunity to have their harm acknowledged and amends made.”*

Quakers have been advocating restorative justice since the late 1970s as this quotation from a 1979 publication, *Six Quakers Look at Crime and Punishment* shows:

*We believe in overcoming evil with good. We must speak and act from our own inner light to the inner light in others as Jesus did. He showed and taught love, respect and concern for all, particularly those rejected by others, reaching out to the good in them.*

Among the strongest reasons for Quaker interest in restorative justice are the possibilities of healing for victims, offenders and the community; and of recognising apology, forgiveness and reconciliation as part of that healing.

*Research indicates that most victims want recognition of the harm done to them, restitution from the offender, and a commitment that further crime will not be perpetrated by the offender. Evidence is very strong that the proportion of victims wanting restorative justice processes when they are available is very high, and their satisfaction with its outcomes is considerable. Restorative justice processes give victims the opportunity to have their harm acknowledged and amends made.*

Crime, Community and Justice Group response to consultation from Sentencing Guidelines Council on the Sexual Offences Act 2003, June 2006

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Although the purpose here has been to provide a 'snapshot' of Quaker work in one area of concern to illustrate how different areas might fit within the Long Term Framework, you might like, individually, to consider three questions which, like the title of the paper, are from the 2008 Quakers in Criminal Justice conference:

- What can I do in my life on my own?
- Are there things I can do with others?
- Are there things I can do in the wider world?

*Bring into God's light those emotions, attitudes and prejudices in yourself which lie at the root of destructive conflict, acknowledging your need for forgiveness and grace. In what ways are you involved in the work of reconciliation between individuals, groups and nations?*

Quaker Faith and Practice. 1994. Chapter 1 Advices & Queries No. 32

Paula Harvey, Quaker Peace & Social Witness  
March 2008

## **APPENDIX: LIST OF ORGANISATIONS**

This does not even try to be an exhaustive list: it gives contact details for groups, committees, projects and organisations referred to in this paper, and also for some of the many other bodies working in the field – simply to give a flavour of their variety.

### **Bodies working within Britain Yearly Meeting or with strong links to BYM**

**Churches' Criminal Justice Forum (CCJF)** a network of Churches Together in Britain & Ireland; publishes regular newsletters and holds twice-yearly forums for members.  
Contact: Susan McQuinn E-mail: Susan.McQuinn@cbcew.org.uk

### **Circles of Support and Accountability in Hampshire and Thames Valley**

Contact: Rebekah Saunders E-mail: becky.circles@btconnect.com

### **Circles UK**

Contact: Heather Curnow Tel: 0118 950 0068 E-mail: info@circles-uk.org.uk  
Website: www.circles-uk.org.uk

**Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)** brings together Quakers (Friends) from all traditions, around the world for fellowship and discernment.

Tel: 0207 663 1199 E-mail: world@fwcc.quaker.org  
Website: www.fwccworld.org

### **Crime, Community and Justice Group (CCJG)**

Contact: Paula Harvey, Quaker Peace & Social Witness  
Tel: 020 7663 1036 E-mail: paulah@quaker.org.uk

### **Friends Therapeutic Community Trust (Glebe House)**

Tel: 01799 584359 Email: info@glebehouse.org.uk

### **Meetings and (Ex)-Offenders Working Group**

Contact: Alison Prout, Quaker Peace & Social Witness  
Tel: 020 7663 1035 E-mail: alisonp@quaker.org.uk

**Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs (QAAD)** works in accordance with Quaker principles to address the widespread use and misuse of alcohol, prescribed and illegal drugs and gambling. Listed Informal Group. Contact: Helena Chambers

Tel: 01684 299247 E-mail: helenaqaad@hotmail.com

### **Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)**

Contact: Martina Weitsch Tel: 0032 2 230 4935 / 0032 2 234 3064  
Website: www.quaker.org/qcea

### **Quaker Prison Ministers Group (QPMG)**

Contact: Alison Prout, Quaker Peace & Social Witness  
Tel: 020 7663 1035 E-mail: alisonp@quaker.org.uk

### **Quakers in Criminal Justice (QICJ)**

Contact: Ann Jacob E-mail: annj83@googlemail.com

### **Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) Geneva.**

Contact: Rachel Brett Tel: 00 41 22 748 48 04 Website: www.quno.org

### **Women in Prison Project Group**

Contact: Paula Harvey, QPSW / Rachel Brett, QUNO / Martina Weitsch, QCEA / Kimmett Edgar, FWCC

## **Non-Quaker bodies**

**Alternatives to Violence Project** a network of volunteers running workshops for anyone who wants to find ways of resolving conflict without resorting to violence. We work in the community and in prisons. Contact: Prison Projects Coordinator, Rosie Aubrey Tel: 07809 719922 Website: www.avpbritain.org.uk

**CLINKS** a membership body that supports and develops the work that voluntary organisations (NGOs) undertake within the Criminal Justice system in England and Wales. We believe that a strong voluntary sector is crucial to reducing offending and building safer communities. Tel: 01904-673970 Website: www.clinks.org

**Community Chaplaincies** assist ex-offenders in all areas of resettlement from housing, employment, debt and substance dependency, to a more holistic view of integrating that individual back into his or her local community. Contact: Nathan Dick, c/o CLINKS

### **Escaping Victimhood**

Contact: Tim Newell Tel: 01844 212 168 E-mail: newell\_tim@hotmail.com

**The Forgiveness Project** works at a local, national and international level to promote conflict transformation and restorative practices as alternatives to the endless cycles of violent conflict and crime; it does not promote forgiveness but aims to explore the complexity of the subject through individual personal journeys.

Tel: 01753 574 780 Website: www.conflictresolutionnetwork.org.uk

**Howard League for Penal Reform** works for a safe society where fewer people are victims of crime and believes that community sentences make a person take responsibility and live a law-abiding life in the community. Tel: 020 7249 7373 Website: www.howardleague.org

**James Nayler Foundation** is a small Quaker inspired mental health charity dedicated to understanding and treating Personality Disorders.

Tel: 01983 401 700 Website: www.jnf.org.uk

**NACRO** the national crime reduction charity dedicated to making society safer

England: Tel: 020 7840 7202 Wales: Tel: 0151 260 4072

Website: www.nacro.org.uk

**Sacro** aims to promote community safety across Scotland through providing high quality services to reduce conflict and offending. Tel: 0131 624 7270  
Website: [www.sacro.org.uk](http://www.sacro.org.uk)

**Prison Advice & Care Trust (PACT)** an independent charity which supports people affected by imprisonment. We work with children and families of prisoners, and with prisoners inside and on release. Tel: 020 7490 3139 Website: [www.prisonadvice.org.uk](http://www.prisonadvice.org.uk)

**Prison Reform Trust (PRT)** aims at creating a just, humane and effective penal system. Tel: 020 7251 5070 Website: [www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk)

**Restorative Justice Consortium** promotes restorative justice for the public benefit as a means of resolving conflict and promoting reconciliation  
Tel: 0207 653 1992 Website: [www.restorativejustice.org.uk](http://www.restorativejustice.org.uk)

**Restorative Justice in Bristol Prison Project**  
Tel: 0117 935 0521 Website: [www.bristol-mediation.org](http://www.bristol-mediation.org)

**Stop it Now!** is a public information and awareness raising campaign regarding child sexual abuse. Website: [www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk) Helpline: 0808 1000 900

### **Short list of books by Quaker authors**

(all are available in the Quaker Book Shop)

#### **An Ordinary Murder**

Lesley Moreland. 2001. £14.99

#### **Forgiving Justice: A Quaker vision for criminal justice**

Tim Newell. Swarthmore Lecture 2000; revised 2007. £12.00

#### **Restorative Justice in Prisons: A guide to making it happen**

Kimmet Edgar and Tim Newell. 2006. £19.50

#### **Restorative Justice: How it works**

Marian Liebmann. 2007. £28.00

#### **Salvaging the Sacred: Lucy, my sister**

Marian Partington. 1996; reissued 2004. £4.00