

Leeds pilot faiths consultation exercise on restorative justice and the rehabilitation of young male ex-offenders

FINAL REPORT

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1. Objectives and team

This consultation exercise and research study on faith communities, criminal justice and the rehabilitation of ex-offenders was commissioned by the Home Office and managed by Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum through the office of Leeds Church Institute. It ran part-time in two phases from 20 October 2003 to 21 November (when an interim report was presented) and then to 31 January 2004.

The research was carried out by Professor Kim Knott and Mr Matthew Francis of the Community Religions Project at the University of Leeds in association with members of the Community Chaplaincy Project of HM Prison Leeds and council members of Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum.¹

The two objectives of the project were as follows:

- (a) to conduct a time-limited local faiths consultation exercise in Leeds to examine the effectiveness of local faith, interfaith and other relevant bodies, networks and mechanisms for the gathering of views on an aspect of Government policy and practice;
- (b) to gather, analyse and present data on (i) the attitudes of faith communities to the rehabilitation of young male offenders (and to a lesser extent to the sentencing of offenders), and (ii) the role of faith communities in their support.

In the remainder of this report we shall describe the research process and methods we used (see also appendices) before presenting and evaluating the project findings with reference to these twin objectives.

¹ Leeds was selected for this study following suggestions by the Chaplain General, the Venerable William Noblett; the Home Office Faith Communities Unit; and John Battle, MP.

2. Research process and methods

In our initial research proposal we identified a number of potential consultative channels to be used in the gathering of views on the role of faith communities in criminal justice and rehabilitation.

- (a) A questionnaire to local faith representative bodies;
- (b) A telephone-based survey;
- (c) An e-mail survey;
- (d) Focus groups (some organised independently, others arranged to fit in with pre-existing meeting schedules and agendas);
- (e) A request to existing networks, both inter-faith and faith-based, 'to consult internally and provide responses in an agreed format and within an agreed timescale';
- (f) Telephone or e-mail interviews with relevant professionals and representatives of comparable inter-faith bodies nationally and in other localities (as a means of evaluating structures and mechanisms internal to the locality);
- (g) If time allowed, a local conference or seminar on the subject of rehabilitation and the role of faith communities;
- (h) If permission could be obtained and the appropriate confidentiality assured within the time-frame, interviews with prisoners or ex-offenders.

Most of these methods of consultation were employed, with the emphasis being on (a), (d), (f) and (h).

The research process began with initial briefing meetings between members of the research team with the Community Chaplaincy Project (CCP) Steering Group and the Council of Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum (LFCLF).² The first draft of a self-completion questionnaire for circulation to faith representative bodies was also discussed. Following amendments, a postal mailing of the revised questionnaire (with SAE and deadline for response) took place.³ Fifty bodies were contacted (including all the places of worship in Leeds for Muslims, Sikhs, Jews and Hindus, the Christian churches in two Leeds districts, and contact addresses for all Buddhist groups and for Baha'is). The same questionnaire was included in electronic and postal mailings to LFCLF council members and subsidiary contacts. In the weeks that followed it was also distributed to those with an interest in interfaith or multi-faith issues (via focus groups and meetings) and at a Muslim discussion group.

Over the same period, a second questionnaire was designed for completion by male offenders (mostly under 30 years of age) at HMP Leeds. A pilot exercise was run (with 12 completions) before amendments were made.⁴ A

² See Appendix 1 for list of meetings, mailings and focus groups. Steering Group members include Rev. David Randolph-Horn (Secretary, Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum; Acting Director, Leeds Church Institute), Rev. Peter Tarleton (HM Prison, Co-ordinator Chaplain), Maureen Browell (Diocese of Ripon and Leeds, Social Responsibility Officer), Khalil Ahmed Kazi (HM Prison Community Chaplaincy Project Officer), Hardip Singh Ahluwallia (HM Prison, Sikh Chaplain; Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum), Dr. Shahid Anwar (Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum).

³ Appendix 2.

⁴ Appendix 3. The amended questionnaire was administered on 21-22 December.

third questionnaire, for circulation to a dozen members of the Working Group of the Community Chaplaincy Project, including chaplains themselves, was also devised and circulated.⁵

Four focus groups were held as follows: with members of an interfaith group (12 November),⁶ with the Chaplaincy legal justice group, a mixed group of fifteen prison workers and those working in a voluntary capacity with offenders (18 November), with Council members of LFCLF (15 December) and with prisoners and Chaplaincy staff (15 December).⁷ Different issues relating to the research provided the focus for these group meetings (see Chapter 4 below).

Ten interviews were conducted in January following the return of questionnaires. These were with members of faith communities under-represented in responses to the questionnaire, with people working with ex-offenders, and with offenders at HM Prison, Leeds. Contact was made by telephone or face to face with appropriate experts outside Leeds on substantive and academic issues related to the project.⁸

Taking all these channels of communication into account, the following faith communities were contacted: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist, Baha'i, Pagan, Christian Scientist. Various denominations and groupings within each of these broader communities were contacted. For example, the following Christian denominations were approached: Church of England, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, United Reformed, Leeds Ecumenical Partnership, Religious Society of Friends (Quaker) and Leeds Black majority churches. In the case of most of these communities, broad networks as well as individual places of worship received invitations to respond.

On 20 January a consultative seminar was held in Leeds Civic Hall at which the findings of the research were presented and a discussion on the issues of faith communities, criminal justice and rehabilitation took place. About forty people from various communities attended.⁹

⁵ Appendix 4.

⁶ Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship.

⁷ The Home Office Communities Minister, Fiona McTaggart, attended the focus groups held on 15 December. Ms McTaggart is Chair of the Steering Group established to review the way in which Government departments consult with faith communities over the planning of events. The Prime Minister's 'Faith Envoy' and MP for Leeds West, John Battle, participated in the LFCLF focus group.

⁸ Dr Sophie Gilliat-Ray (University of Cardiff, researcher on a previous project involving prison chaplaincy in a multi-faith context at the University of Warwick), Dr Harriet Crabtree (Inter Faith Network for the UK), Stuart Dew (Churches Criminal Justice Forum).

⁹ Warwick Hawkins and Claire Dunning were present on behalf of the Home Office Faith Communities Unit. John Hartshorne, Head of Resettlement HM Prison Leeds, was also in attendance.

3. The consultation exercise: an evaluation

One of the two objectives of the research was to consult with faith communities in Leeds (on matters relating to criminal justice and the rehabilitation of offenders) and to evaluate that consultation process.

Leeds is a city of three quarters of a million people (and is at the centre of a large metropolitan district). Its population is multi-ethnic and multi-religious. The Census data from 2001 showed that, in terms of the relative size of its religious groups, Leeds closely resembled the national picture.

Christian	492,656
Buddhist	1,587
Hindu	4,183
Jewish	8,267
Muslim	21,394
Sikh	7,586
Other	1,530
No religion	120,139
Religion not stated	58,060

Table 1 Leeds population by religion, Census 2001¹⁰

The faith communities in Leeds are internally organised, some only at local level by place of worship (e.g. Hindus), but most at a higher level by representative bodies or forums (e.g. Leeds Jewish Representative Council, Leeds Muslim Forum and Leeds Buddhist Forum). The Christian denominations are both self-sufficient in terms of organisation, but also contribute ecumenically to neighbourhood Churches Together bodies. Leeds is also home to the Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber and Leeds Church Institute. In terms of multi-faith representation and activity, it is Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum that links the city's communities and represents their interests to Leeds City Council and other local agencies. The LFCLF was first developed in the late 1990s and its council was formally launched by the Lord Mayor in 2001. Leeds has also had an interfaith dialogue group since 1976, the Concord Interfaith Fellowship. Whilst Concord is a membership group that individuals join, the LFCLF is a collection of organisations, and membership is only open to groups.

¹⁰ From www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/ See also Yorkshire and Humber Assembly, *Religious Literacy: A Guide to the Region's Faith Communities*, (Yorkshire and Humber Assembly, second edition, 2003).

The issues of consultation and representation in relation to faith communities, whether locally, regionally or nationally, are complex.¹¹ Particular factors that need to be taken into account are (a) those relating to the structure of local faith communities and the means by which they communicate internally and externally, and (b) practical matters relating to the nature and extent of the roles and responsibilities of those consulted, language, timing, approach and consultation overload. In a recent survey by the Inter Faith Network for the UK on local interfaith activity the authors suggest that those wishing to consult faith communities sometimes employ unrealistic and impractical deadlines, and are often unaware of the practical difficulties experienced by many religious organisations that have no paid secretarial or administrative staff.¹²

Although the project team were aware of many of these issues at the outset of the research, the aim was to test various consultation channels for their effectiveness, not to limit the exercise to those we knew already to be effective. In many ways, the results of this exercise (see below) have further highlighted the difficulties identified by the Inter Faith Network and other researchers with experience of consulting faith communities.¹³

It is the view of the team that the most effective method of consultation was the focus group. In one case this was usefully combined with the distribution of self-completion questionnaires, and in another with the identification of individuals for interview. This method will be discussed in more detail below. The least effective would seem to be the postal survey method. Forty two per cent (42%) of all the questionnaires distributed to members of faith communities were returned in total. However, those attending the interfaith focus group – who were handed the questionnaire in person - provided the best response rate (75%), with the survey of faith representative bodies (via places of worship) yielding a lower response rate (28%).

Focusing on the survey of faith communities first, if we combine the three survey routes – faith representative bodies, council members of LFCLF (who are link persons for faith networks), and members of the Concord Interfaith Fellowship - the following responses were received:

Faith community	No. of questionnaires distributed	No. of questionnaires returned
Christian (inc. Quaker)	37	16
Muslim	18	10
Jewish	12	6
Sikh	9	1
Buddhist	7	3
Hindu	4	1
Baha'i	2	1
Pagan	1	1
Religion not known	2	0
Total	93	39

¹¹ See Kim Knott, Sean McLoughlin and Melanie Prideaux, Final Report, *The Feasibility of a Regional Faith Forum for Yorkshire and the Humber*, (Community Religions Project, Yorkshire and Humber Assembly and Churches Regional Commission, 2003), and The Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom, *Local Interfaith Activity in the UK: A Survey* (The Inter Faith Network for the UK, 2003).

¹² Inter Faith Network, *Local Interfaith Activity*, pp. 103-4.

¹³ e.g. Researchers at the University of Derby who undertook research on religious discrimination for the Home Office, see Paul Weller, Alice Feldman and Kingsley Purdam, *Religious Discrimination in England and Wales: Home Office Research Study 220*, (Home Office, 2001).

Table 2 The distribution and return of questionnaires by faith community

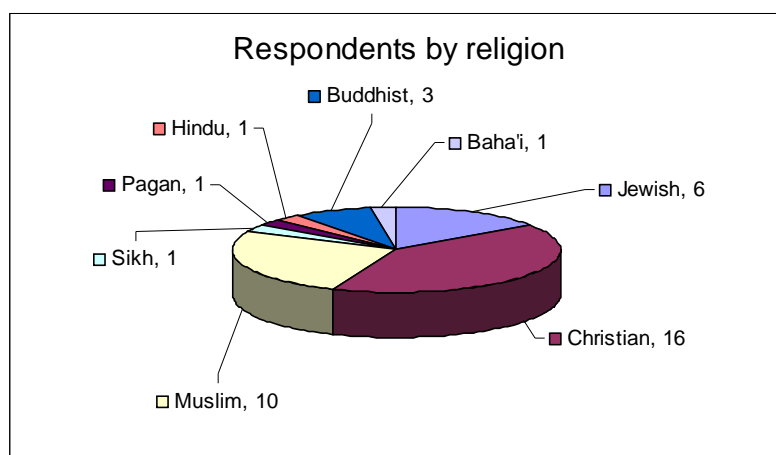


Diagram 1 Faith community respondents by religion ¹⁴

This shows the total number of returns, and the rate of return by faith community (with a rate of 50% or above for Christians, Muslims and Jews). The level of response from Muslims is explained by the lead taken by a Muslim Council member of the LFCLF in distributing and gathering returns. The low return from the Sikh community was compensated in the later stages of the project by an interview.

A variety of factors need to be borne in mind in considering the differential rate of response of faith communities to the survey.¹⁵ These include who the letter or e-mail is addressed to (their role and status within the community, their English language competence etc), the policy concerning issues of representation and consultation within the community, the extent of knowledge about or interest in the subject matter, concerns about confidentiality and how responses will be used, the timing of the request (e.g. with regard to the religious calendar, in this case Ramadan), and the voluntary or professional capacity of the representative and the pressures upon them. It should also be remembered that it is not uncommon for many questionnaires to arrive by post leading to 'survey fatigue' for some faith leaders and secretaries of religious trusts and management committees.

Although the impersonal postal method was of limited effectiveness, interfaith and multi-faith groups and networks proved to be useful vehicles for the distribution of questionnaires to members of faith communities. This is explained by the mixed composition of such groups, the commitment of their members to faith-related activities including research, and the role and experience that many have of linking into their own faith communities. Indeed, the most successful route to questionnaire completion was distribution via the interfaith focus group. In our opinion, there are several reasons for this which include the age, class and status of group members, the focus on 'Punishment' in the discussion that preceded questionnaire distribution, and the direct appeal of the project team to individuals within the group.

¹⁴ The total for Christian responses in the pie chart includes one Christian Scientist.

¹⁵ These were discussed with Dr Sophie Gilliat-Ray on 20 November, and with a Sikh interviewee from Leeds in January.

In addition to surveying the views of members of faith communities, we questioned members of the Community Chaplaincy Project at HM Prison Leeds on comparable issues, and prisoners themselves, using two different questionnaires.¹⁶ A good rate of return was obtained from CCP team members (7 out of 12). This was to be expected given the relevance of the questions to their work. The rate of return was also good for the questionnaire distributed to prisoners (64%).

Faith community	Number of Respondents	Number of Inmates
Atheist	-	2
Baptist	-	1
Buddhist	2	5
Church of England	24	506
Church of Scotland	-	3
Ethiopian Orthodox	-	1
Hindu /Jain	2 ¹⁷	1
Methodist	-	4
Muslim	3	112
Black Muslim	1	1
NIL/No Religion	5	412
Other Christianity	-	5
Orthodox (Greek/Russian)	-	1
Protestant	-	1
Rastafarian	2	2
Roman Catholic	18	179
Seventh Day Adventist	1	1
Sikh	-	4
Total	58	1244

Table 3 Number of inmates and prison respondents by religion (21 Dec 2003)

The religious allegiance of the prisoners who responded to the questionnaire is shown in Table 2, alongside the number of inmates by religious identity for 21 December 2003. This shows a reasonable ratio of respondents to inmates by religion.

Moving now to the focus groups themselves, we consider these to have been highly successful in obtaining a range of views about faith-based attitudes to offending, punishment, sentencing, retribution, forgiveness, and rehabilitation. As a method the focus group has value in allowing for fairly free exchange of views on a given subject, often guided by a researcher. Focus groups may be made up of people who are knowledgeable and interested in the subject to be discussed or those less well informed. Of the groups we organised, two were composed of people with an active interest in the issues (professionals and volunteers, and prisoners themselves); two were made up of those with a deep commitment to faith and multi-faith matters but less formal knowledge (in most cases) of issues relating to justice and rehabilitation. In-depth reflection on the issues was achieved in this approach, and key words and phrases

¹⁶ See appendix 4 and appendix 3.

¹⁷ We note that two questionnaire respondents stated they were Hindu/Jain, but only one inmate registered that affiliation on entry to the prison.

emerged that would not have been used in the completion of the questionnaire (which contained a majority of closed questions requiring fixed responses). In the four focus groups held, different perspectives emerged, some specific to particular religions, but more often shared across religious boundaries. Relevant information was also forthcoming, particularly from the criminal/legal focus group, on existing initiatives undertaken by faith communities in relation to the rehabilitation of offenders. These issues will be reported in more detail in the following chapters.

We conducted ten semi-structured interviews during the research period as a subsidiary rather than a primary method of data collection. Interviews with key informants are an invaluable addition to the other methods used here in adding precision and depth to the findings. We also used interviews as a means of 'filling gaps' in our profile of responses from faith communities.¹⁸ Although interviewing is the major qualitative method for gathering data on opinions and attitudes (e.g. on restorative justice and the role of faith communities in rehabilitation), it is time consuming. Given the time-limited nature of this consultation exercise, we decided to use this method in the later stages of the project to fill gaps that had emerged and to target those with a specific interest or knowledge. As a result of the limited role that interviews played in the consultation exercise, there is little further to add about their effectiveness suffice it to say that, in a project with a longer time-scale, we would have made more use of them.

In conclusion, in a time-limited study directed at consulting faith communities, we would advocate the use of targeted focus groups as a primary method, with the associated distribution of questionnaires to focus group members (and by them to others in their communities). The use of existing networks and organisations, such as Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum, the Concord Interfaith Fellowship, and the Community Chaplaincy Project team, was invaluable in facilitating the identification of groups suitable for this focused approach, and of individuals for interview.

Those wishing to consult faith communities should consider carefully the time frame for consultation as well as the methods to be employed. Awareness of differences between faith communities - in terms of internal structure, leadership, paid and voluntary roles, language etc – is important for understanding differential rates of response and (apparent) levels of interest. It is likely that effective faith consultation, whether locally, regionally or nationally, depends to a considerable extent on the presence of multi-faith bodies which are able to demonstrate good links to grass roots level with local faith communities. Examples of such bodies include Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum (at local level), the emerging regional faith forums (e.g. South East England Faith Forum), and the Inter Faith Network for the UK at national level. Support for and development of such bodies will be important for enabling local and national government to consult faith communities fairly and effectively.

¹⁸ We chose to interview a Sikh and a Black Christian as we thought we had insufficient responses from these groups.

4. Findings by method

To ensure we received as broad a range of responses as possible from the members of Leeds' faith communities we undertook data collection by three main channels. These different methods also allowed us to collate both quantitative and qualitative data, and we have outlined a selection of the findings from each of these channels below.

1. Questionnaires
2. Focus Groups
3. Interviews

4.1 Questionnaires

Three different questionnaires were used in the course of the project. As well as the questionnaire¹⁹ circulated amongst members of faith and inter-faith bodies ('faith respondents')²⁰ we also surveyed the opinions of those working within the chaplaincy at HMP Leeds and through the chaplaincy itself the views of 64 inmates were also accumulated.²¹

The questionnaires combined qualitative (open-ended) questions with quantitative (fixed-choice) questions. This dual approach enabled us to provide both statistical results as well as greater depth on certain key issues. In this section we have drawn out examples of some of the questions asked in each questionnaire. Other questions will be addressed in Chapter 5, which will attend to key themes arising from our research.

4.1.1 Questionnaire to faith respondents

Amongst the open-ended questions, faith respondents were asked, 'What does your religion say about how people who commit a crime should be treated?'.²² A variety of responses were obtained, and these include:

"Whatever the country's law dictates- with the added factors of 'what goes around, comes around'/'natural justice'/'taking responsibility.'" [Pagan]

"They have to take responsibility for their actions. But the authorities have to recognise that no actions occur in isolation and that individual's actions are a product of their (usually poor) conditions." [Buddhist]

"With justice and humanely." [Jewish]

¹⁹ See Appendix 2 for the questionnaire.

²⁰ This includes faith representative bodies, the LFCLF council members, and members of Concord.

²¹ See Appendices 3 and 4 for the inmate's and chaplaincy worker's questionnaires respectively.

²² Appendix 2, question 5.

“My own view is that there should be a balance of being held responsible (Punishment), opportunity to make amends and forgiveness (Rehabilitation).” [Christian]

They were then asked two linked questions to which they were offered a variety of possible answers (of which more than one could be selected):

‘What is your personal view, informed by your faith, of what kind of response would be reasonable if someone within your faith community broke into a car?’²³

‘What is your personal view, informed by your faith, of what kind of response would be reasonable if someone within your faith community assaulted someone?’²⁴

The results in the following charts show the different views of faith respondents on punishment options for those who have committed either a material or physical crime. Meeting with the victim and apologising face-to-face and community service featured highly in both. Prison was seen as appropriate only for crimes of violence.

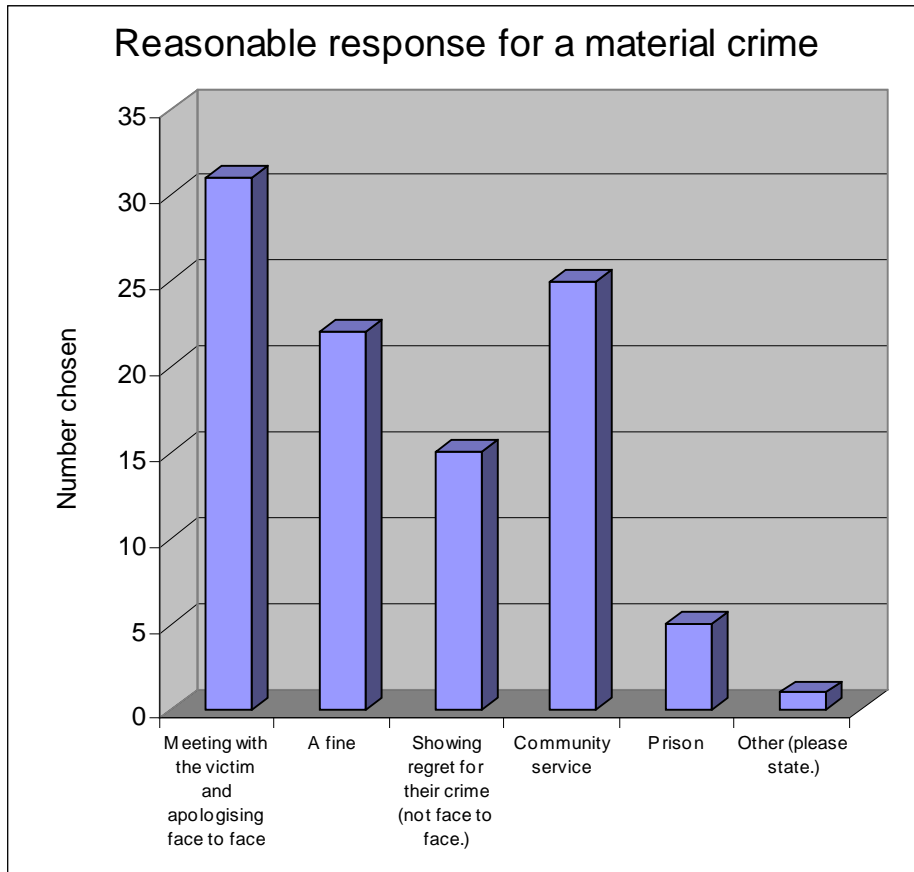


Diagram 2 What is seen as a reasonable response for a material crime

²³ Appendix 2, question 6.

²⁴ Appendix 2, question 7.

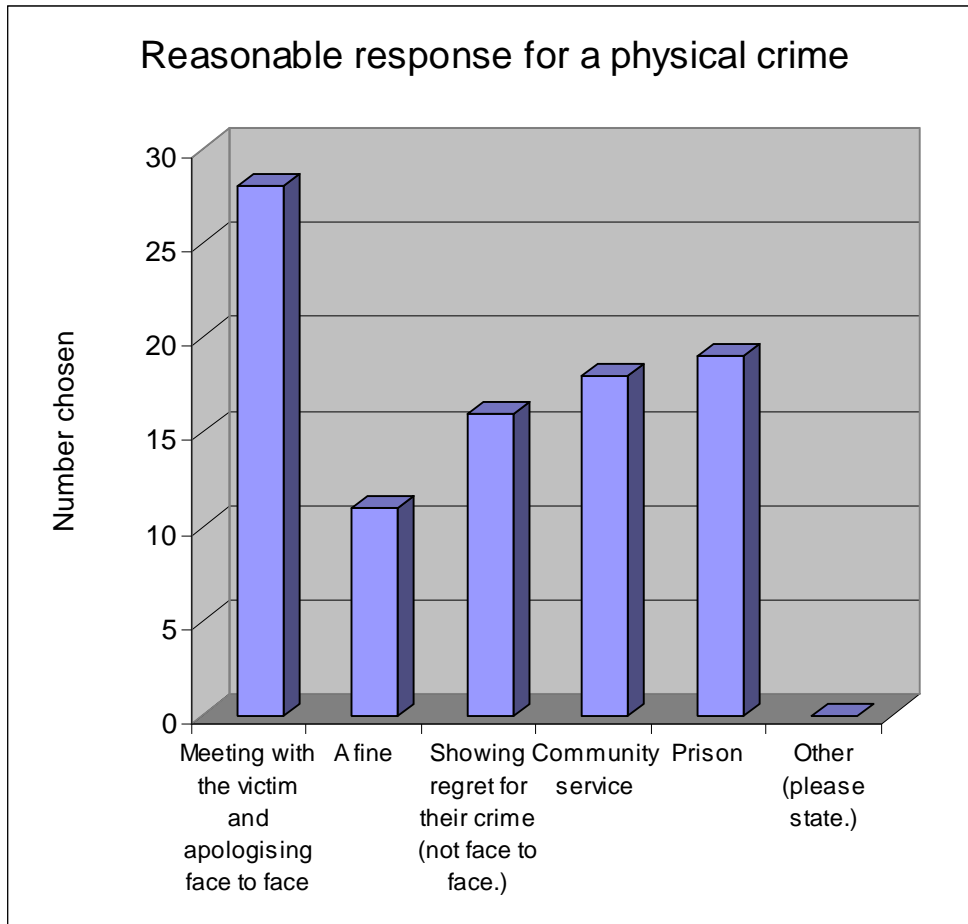


Diagram 3 What is seen as a reasonable response for a physical crime

Later in the questionnaire respondents were asked about existing and potential means of supporting prisoners and ex-offenders.²⁵ The charts below indicate that, of the options listed (see below), only spiritual support/prayer groups and discussion or counselling groups were not currently offered by the majority of faith groups. Material help for ex-offenders and discussion or counselling groups were services that some respondents would like to see offered.

²⁵ Appendix 2, question 11.

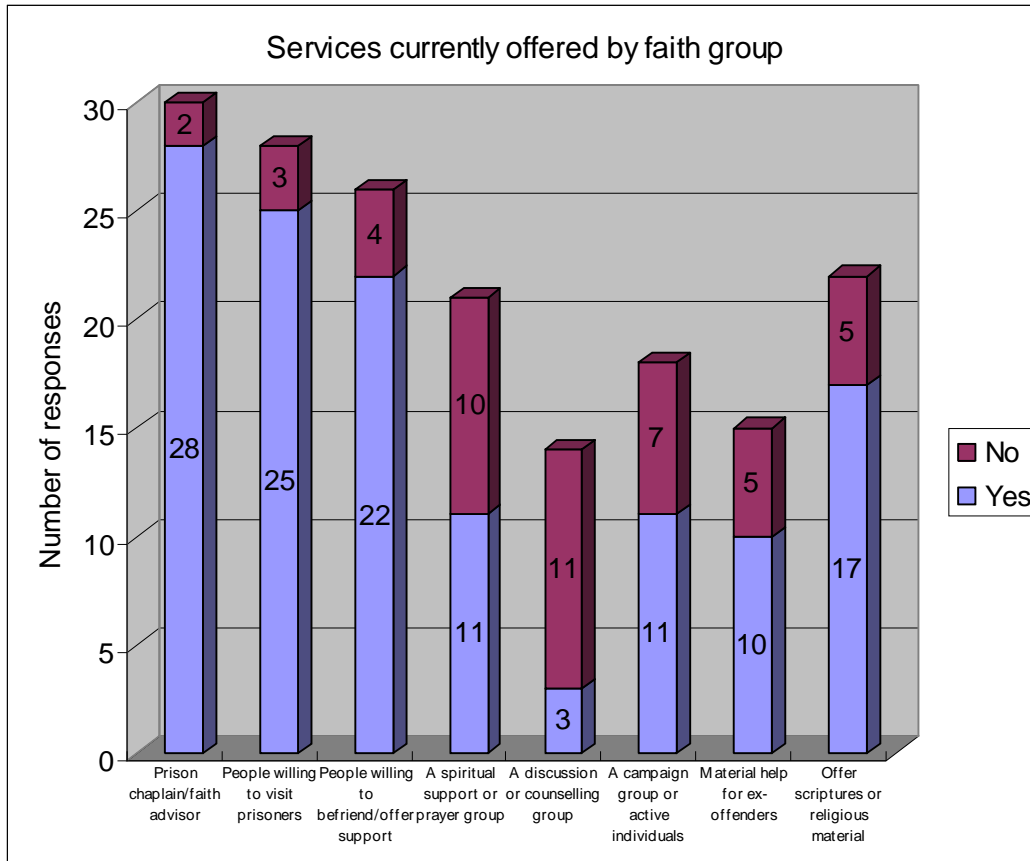


Diagram 4 Services respondents know to be offered by their faith groups

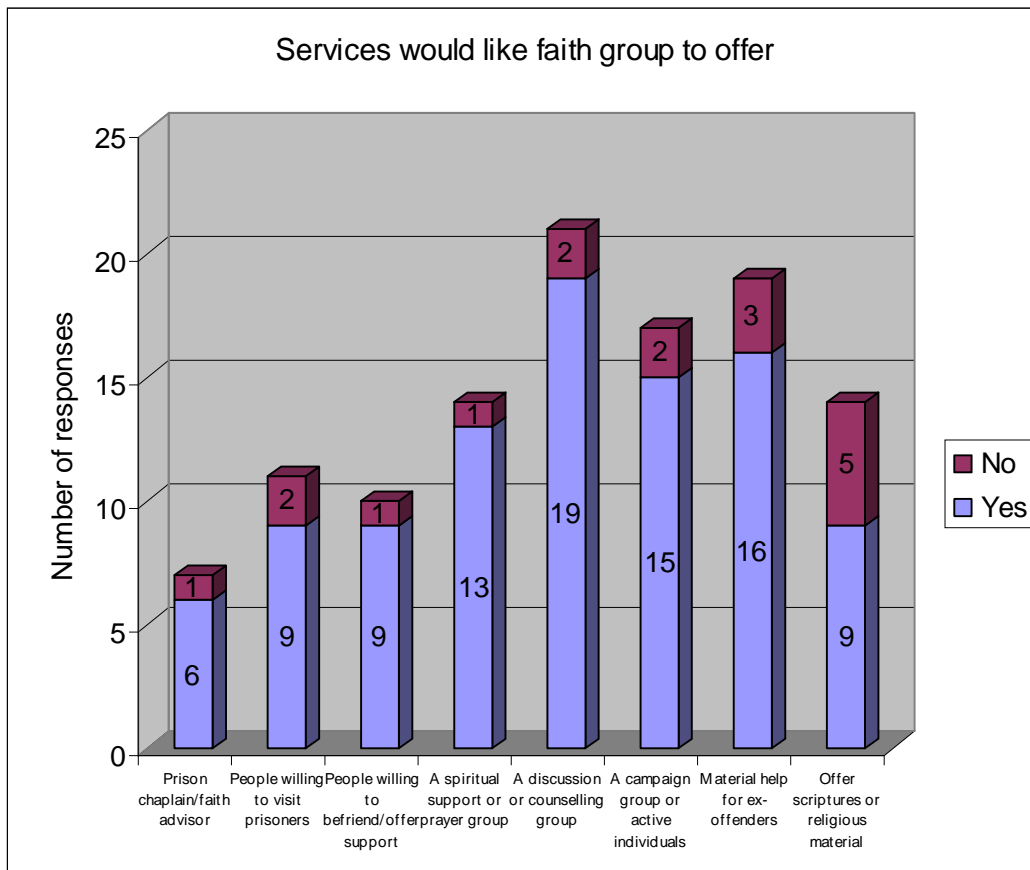


Diagram 5 Services respondents would like (or not) their faith group to offer

4.1.2 Questionnaire to chaplaincy workers

Although the target group was small we felt that the views of those who work within the chaplaincy at HMP Leeds would provide a valuable and interesting contrast with the views expressed by the lay-members of their respective faith communities. We were also interested in how much support they felt they received from their home community, so we asked them to grade this on a five point scale from 'antipathy' to 'strong support'.²⁶

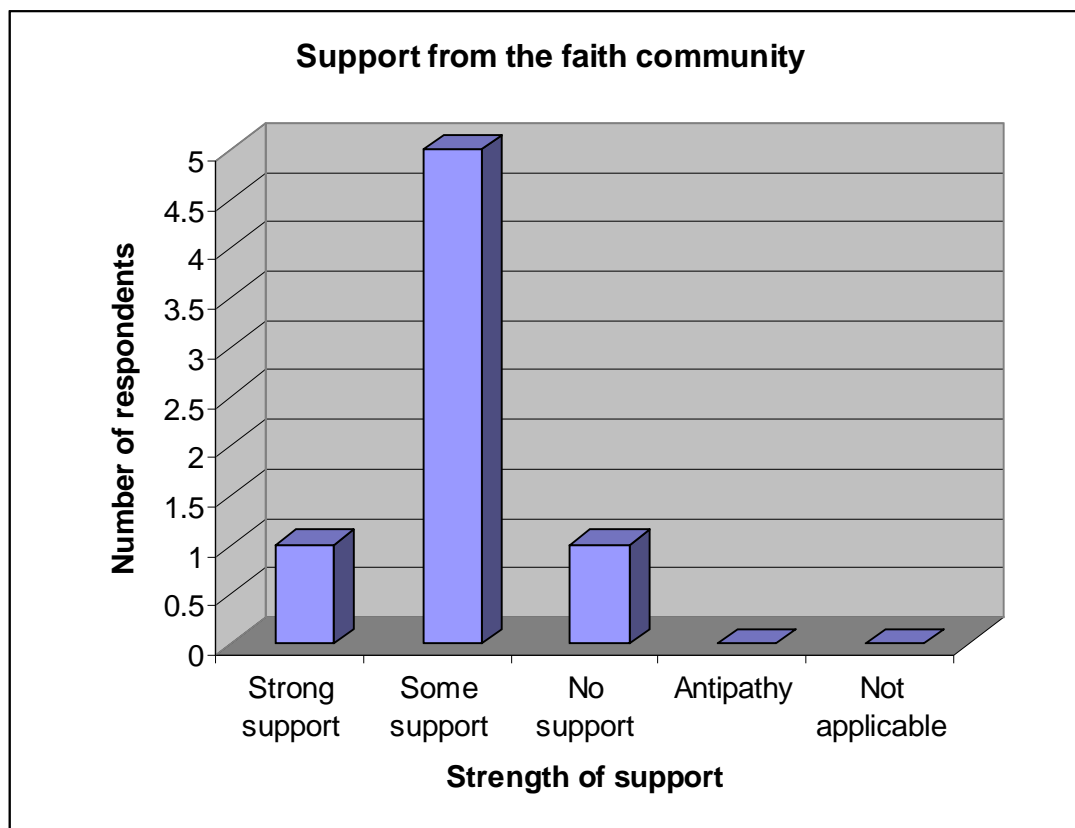


Diagram 6 Support for prison workers from their faith communities

The question was applicable to all the chaplaincy workers as they represented various faith communities and it was positive to note that none of them felt their work was viewed with antipathy by those communities. In addition to asking them to grade the level of support they felt they received, we also asked:

“If you are supported by your faith community, what is the nature of the support? (e.g. financial reimbursement, support group, training opportunities, etc.)”²⁷

Their responses included “prayer”; “taking an interest in projects”; “dialogue with a support group”; and one respondent, who noted that whilst the church organisation provided financial support, the home “worshipping community” was largely unaware of the extent of the work taking place.

These responses reflected the variety of roles that the respondents filled within the chaplaincy, which ranged from full time paid staff, undertaking

²⁶ Appendix 4, question 3- “To what extent are you supported in your prison work by your faith community? (Please circle the option closest to your view.)”

²⁷ Appendix 4, question 4.

statutory duties such as “First Night Induction” through to volunteer members who run support groups for self-harmers.

4.1.3 Questionnaire to inmates

The questionnaire was devised with staff from the chaplaincy with the dual aim of assisting this research and providing information for the steering group of the community chaplaincy project.

One of the questions that provided an interesting response was directed to prisoners who had served a sentence in the past: “When you were released last time, did you receive any support after you left prison?”²⁸

Of the respondents who answered this question, 33% stated that they had received support, whilst 67% stated that they hadn't. We followed this question up by asking who provided the support²⁹ (mainly the probation service, though family and social services were also mentioned) and whether the support was helpful (50% found it helpful, 50% didn't.)³⁰ Again, we used fixed-response questions to introduce topics, followed up by open-ended questions to query why, for example, certain support wasn't helpful. This process allows those analysing the data to investigate answers to problems, as opposed to just highlighting them.

4.2 Focus Groups

Four focus groups were held during which more than sixty people participated. All of the groups were multi-faith in type, and they focused on different aspects of punishment, justice and rehabilitation. Within groups of manageable size a facilitator was able to clarify any points causing confusion and ensure that the conversation remained on the key themes, thus guaranteeing that the group provided excellent material for the researchers. Some questions were prepared for these groups, to assist with guiding the conversation. These questions are listed in Appendix 5.

The groups were as follows:

- Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship (12 November)
- Professional and voluntary organisations working with offenders (18 November)
- Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum, Council Members (15 December)
- Prisoners and Chaplaincy Staff (15 December)

We have displayed here some of the data we received from the focus groups and as an example have gone into the comments made from the professional and voluntary organisations focus group, in greater depth. Further data is explored within the key themes investigated in Chapter 5.

²⁸ Appendix 3, question 3.

²⁹ Appendix 3, question 4.

³⁰ Appendix 3, question 5.

4.2.1 Leeds Concord Interfaith Fellowship

The Concord focus group addressed the theme of ‘Crime and Punishment’ and had been organised prior to our commencing research. The contributors were largely well educated and had a good understanding of the issues involved. Comments made addressed issues such as why people felt the need to cause suffering and what causes criminal behaviour, but also focused on interesting issues relating to deterring crime. On this topic the effectiveness of prison was questioned and the point made that only “the certainty that you will be caught” is a real deterrent. Prison was felt to encompass two tiers of punishment- the first meted out by the state (incarceration) and the second meted out by other prisoners (“indignities”). In addition, it was felt that the government’s strategy of restorative justice is not always the soft option it is commonly perceived to be, and that some prisoners would actually prefer to extend their incarceration rather than meet their victim.

4.2.2 Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum, Council Members

Hosted by the Leeds Church Institute this group focused on the theme of restorative justice and representatives of most of the major faith communities within Leeds attended in addition to MPs John Battle and Fiona McTaggart. Those attending were asked to provide their opinions on how their faith interpreted issues of justice, mercy, discipline and education. Also addressed was how individual faith communities dealt with offending behaviour. For example, some communities saw the courts as a last possible means of coping with offences. They preferred to deal with the matter, and help the offender and victim, internally within the faith community. This did not mean, however, that any of the faith groups present dismissed the importance of following the law of the land. For all faiths it was important that the secular legal system was upheld, though in some cases it could be foreseen that there might be opposition to certain laws were they to be introduced (for example, Buddhist faith groups would protest against capital punishment should it be re-introduced.)

4.2.3 Prisoners and Chaplaincy Staff³¹

This meeting was held in the chaplaincy of HMP Leeds and discussed the needs of offenders on release, and what support faith communities could provide. Participants were asked to look at what difference faith could make to an individual and what support offenders received from their faith communities. The chaplaincy was seen as a source of moral support for all, even those with no faith. The religious element is supplemented by drug awareness, bereavement counselling and other services, making attending the chaplaincy “a bit like seeing the nurse”! However, the point was also made that, outside the prison, faith groups were seen as unwelcoming, non-accepting and uncomfortable. It was felt that the need to educate the faith community to the needs of ex-offenders was important and it was hoped that the proposed multi-faith Community Chaplaincy Project would provide a way

³¹ We are grateful to Philomena O’Hare for providing the notes for this meeting.

of utilizing existing faith groups to provide safe and non-judgemental support to ex-offenders.

4.2.4 Professional and voluntary organisations working with offenders

This focus group, addressing the role of faith communities and faith-based voluntary organisations in rehabilitation, was arranged by the chaplaincy team and held at HMP Leeds. The contributors were drawn from the prison and probation services, as well as staff from voluntary agencies. Issues raised included leaving prison; linking in to communities; offenders and faith issues; volunteering and training issues; faith communities and rehabilitation; and the role of a multi-faith service. We will explore the last two from this list in the Chapter 5, but opinions regarding the other issues are listed here.

Leaving prison can be a challenging experience for offenders and it was felt that a loss of support, opportunities, a place to be, a community, a routine, and something to do can all be contributory factors in an offender failing to make a successful return to society. For example, support for drug and alcohol addiction were felt to be more easily available within prison, and the withdrawal of such support on release is a likely contributory factor to regression. In addition, whilst prison life is based upon a dictated routine this structure is often absent from the offender's life when they return to the community. This absence can lead to a lack of motivation and achievement. Finally, whilst the offender may have a community to return to, this is not always the case as, dependent on the crime and other factors, the offender may face ostracism. Where the offender is accepted back into the community this does not necessarily mean he is welcomed, nor that he feels he occupies a worthwhile place within it. These are further contributory factors that can lead to the offender returning to offending patterns of behaviour.

The difficulties facing an offender in this regard are in stark contrast to life within prison, where there can be a strong sense of community. The chaplaincy plays a part in fostering this communal atmosphere and, if the offender is to avoid returning to 'an offending community' where they feel they will fit then he will need help in making links with faith communities, the local community, and the wider community.

Whilst matters of faith remain central to this report it was also pointed out that many young people know very little about religion or spirituality when they enter prison. In many cases religion may also seem unrelated to the lives that prisoners lead and, due to the dearth of contact with faith communities before entering prison, they won't necessarily know how to make contact when they leave. These are issues which the chaplaincy helps to address, though the important point was made that the relationship between an ex-offender and a faith community must be freely chosen and never forced.

Volunteering and training issues were also raised, as properly trained volunteers clearly have a vital role to play in this area. The volunteer was often thought to be more genuine than a professional (not motivated by pay or the demands of the job). However, befrienders (for example) need access to support, protection, and training and the mentoring/befriending structures

need formalising and strengthening, for instance with the introduction of a code of practice.

4.3 Interviews

Interviews were conducted by the research team both to follow-up lines of enquiry that had arisen from the questionnaires and focus groups, and to plug gaps where it was felt that certain faith groups were under-represented in the data we had received. Interviews were conducted with the following:

- A Sikh;
- A Black Christian;
- An employee of Leeds Simon Community;
- An employee of West Yorkshire Probation Service;
- Six Prisoners.

In the following sections we will draw out examples from a couple of answers with each interviewee, with the exception of the responses from the prisoners, where we will present a cross-analysis of several of the answers. The complete list of questions that were used to guide each interview are available in appendix 6 for the interviews with inmates, appendix 7 for the interviews with members of faith groups and appendix 8 for the interviews with professionals.

Please note that the questions were only for the guidance of the interviewer, and are only reproduced here and in the appendices to illustrate the topics covered. The research team would also like to draw attention to the fact that the interviewees were asked to answer the questions from their personal perspective, and were not asked to respond on behalf of the community or organisation they were a part of. The opinions recorded here should not, therefore, be taken as the official position of their respective groups.

4.3.1 Interview with a member of the Sikh Community

Q) We have had little/no response from members of your faith community. Why do you think this is? (E.g. a need to defer to an 'authority'; no knowledge of the subject area; not enough explanation/time given for response)

Two reasons. Because lots of questionnaires are received from different organisations, so there is a tendency to put them to one side and because mail always goes to the office, so would be opened by the general secretary/leadership (so would have to wait for response.)

Additional reasons are that: The leadership is not always highly articulate, whoever opened it may not have deemed a response necessary, and because the questionnaire was not addressed to a particular individual, no-one would take responsibility for answering the questions, so it just would have been binned.

Q) If you could write government policy with regards to issues facing ex-offenders, what would be your top three points to tackle? How would you encourage faith communities to be involved?

1. Work towards creating awareness- the role of the community is most important in these issues and they should be made aware of this and educated.
2. Making the faith communities (particularly the immigrant faith communities) feel part of the wider community (not just in a faith sense) and not as just a sub-section [of wider society].

4.3.2 Interview with a member of a black-majority church

Q) The Community Chaplaincy Project is a multi-faith support group working within Armley gaol. What do you think would be the benefits/disadvantages (as opposed to a single-faith approach) of such a project being extended to the wider community (to help ex-offenders). Would you/your community support such a project?

There are benefits if it covers different faith groups. It would be good because ex-offenders are from a number of different religions. So a wider representation of religions within the project can be positive.

However, a downside for most black-majority churches is that they are often linked with other faiths due to ethnicity, rather than religion (they are seen as black first, Christian second, rather than the other way around). So, anything that has a multi-faith basis could get some members' backs up. So, if the respondent was selling it to his church he would, despite knowing and being happy of its multi-faith basis, sell it as a Christian effort.

Q) If you could write government policy with regards to issues facing ex-offenders, what would be your top three points to tackle? How would you encourage faith communities to be involved?

1. Employment;
2. Housing;
3. Emotional support- e.g. for family relationships, for depression, etc. and this is where a Community Chaplaincy Project could help.

4.3.3 Interview with an employee of Leeds Simon Community

Q) As part of the information gathering exercise of this project, we recently held a focus group with both professional agencies and faith groups. What benefits (if any) could you see from a joint discussion along these lines (would you like to see such an event in the future)?

There is a problem of perception in that the [Leeds Simon] Community is seen as not professional because it is volunteer based. Faith groups probably suffer even more from this view. At meetings, therefore, they [volunteer

groups] tend to get sidelined by the statutory agencies. But such meetings would be helpful, and certainly between the volunteers as a lot have more experience than the 'professionals' [probation officers, social workers, etc.]

Q) If you could write government policy with regards to issues facing ex-offenders, what would be your top three points to tackle? How would you encourage faith communities to be involved?

1. A lot of drug addicts get sorted inside and decide that want to leave Leeds on release- to go to residential rehabilitation centres. If they could go straight there after release, rather than waiting 3 weeks (what it often takes to organise), then that would stop a lot of people going back on drugs. Funding issues and the inability to make a pre-stay visit (a requirement of lots of these centres, which has obvious difficulties for someone serving a sentence to meet) are what generally causes these delays.

There is a lot of praise for the support given on the inside, but in some individual's cases it is non-existent, e.g. if an offender is sentenced for 6/8 months then they don't get access to rehab groups (so there are bigger problems for those on shorter sentences as they don't get so much chance to change.) Of course the willingness to change has to be there, but even when it has been there, the support is not addressing the right things (the causes)- there is a detox culture and people don't seem to get enough time to spend with proper drug workers. Such programmes should be person-centred rather than sentence-centred (i.e. addressing causes for addiction, not just tackling via detox.)

2. The motivation for workers in the prison service only lies on the inside, and the prison service tends to think of anything post-release as not their problem (though there are a few who do try to address this) e.g. they often leave such issues to probation workers. This focus should be shifted to include post-release issues.
3. If someone gets clean and then slips then that is seen as not wanting to change, like a 'one strike and you're out' policy. These organisations should be more supportive (it is their role) and better education for people on understanding why people can't cope, why they turn back to drugs, is needed. This would lead to people being more supportive.

4.3.4 Interview with an employee of West Yorkshire Probation Service

Q) As part of the information gathering exercise of this project, we recently held a focus group with both professional agencies and faith groups. What benefits (if any) could you see from a joint discussion along these lines (would you like to see such an event in the future)?

It was very positive having such a focus group meeting. The respondent was quite surprised that such a forum was being held as faith does have a role to

play- but is often over-looked. For example often faith helps a person away from offending.

Q) If you could write government policy with regards to issues facing ex-offenders, what would be your top three points to tackle? How would you encourage faith communities to be involved?

1. Employment. Look at employability of ex-offenders. More work and research into employers who would employ ex-offenders. To provide better incentives for them to do so. For example forklift driving is quite a common job for ex-offenders (to the point of the two often being synonymous) but it is very low paid. So there has to be more scope-more options available to ex-offenders.
2. Housing. Resettling and stabilising back into the community is difficult for ex-offenders. The transition from prison to independent living can be hard. Improving this area is key for a successful return to society.
3. Sentencing Options. Need to look at the legal framework for certain crimes. E.g. for certain crimes the sentence should be more severe than it is (e.g. sexual offences).

Also the legal system is too old- there is no deterrence from crime, e.g. there are more drivers than burglars locked-up. This shows the priority of the government. In some cases the sentences for murder/rape are too short. E.g. for manslaughter the sentence is often 6/7 years. But the offender will only serve half of that, and the rest will be on probation. If there was more of a deterrent provided in the first place then that would help, e.g. capital punishment.

4.3.5 Interviews with prisoners

Three of the interviews with prisoners were conducted by the research team and three by prisoners themselves. In this section we have selected three sets of responses (one respondent saw himself as a Christian or a Jehovah Witness, one was a Rastafarian and one a Seventh-Day Adventist) and provided them side by side after each question (in different fonts for each respondent). This method of analysis (although obviously limited for the purposes of this report) presented us with a clearer cross-analysis of the range of opinions regarding specific issues.

The quality of the responses from the prisoner-prisoner interviews was understandably variable and given more time for the project the research team would have liked to have better prepared the interviewers.

Q) Has your contact with any religion or faith increased or decreased during the course of your sentence (in comparison to pre-sentence)? Do you think your contact with this religion will be maintained/increase/decrease upon your release?

It has increased. The respondent spoke to a chaplaincy bereavement counsellor when he got inside, and has also seen a Jehovah Witness inside. He wouldn't go to a faith group for help, as he is self-reliant. But he will see about a decision on who to join on release (between Church of England and Jehovah Witness)

The respondent likes to discuss religion, but contact as such has not increased. He wouldn't normally go to church, and there aren't any regular Rastafarian meetings in Leeds.

Contact with religion has increased through contact with the chaplaincy. But even outside of that the respondent saw himself as a Christian-minded person, and liked the atmosphere in the chaplaincy.

This contact will probably increase on release because then he can be in easier contact with the 7th Day Adventists. He met them on the inside and he will see them for support when he gets released.

Q) What difficulties have you/do you expect to, come across after completing your sentence? (E.g. loss of accommodation; lack of employment; difficulty settling back into home community)

The respondent said that employment issues were likely to be difficult, like how he was going to explain his absence (from work.) Although there is supposed to be home leave prisoners rarely get it and so he anticipated a problem with reintegration into the community. For many (but not for him) handling money again would be a problem, like being unable to budget properly. Also life skills like cleaning and cooking are things that many struggle with.

There is also a big problem with probation. If you do the slightest thing wrong then they bring you straight back inside. There is nobody on your side and you really need someone to help you with the probation services. This is linked to a difficulty in communication (skills of) and he felt that often he had difficulties in explaining himself.

Racism is a problem- throughout the judicial system. Armley is quite a stressful prison (in terms of atmosphere etc.). However, the respondent is personally finding this sentence easier than his first sentence, and a few of the staff do go out of their way to be helpful (though that is rare.)

He is self-employed, so could have his job back again if he wants to [so employment on release not an issue.] He believes you can turn prison into a positive experience, through education etc, through changing your perspective on things, and getting qualifications etc.

Some prisoners don't think about what they are going to do on release, so they get pushed into crime.

Employment issues, and also a stigma attached to you in the community. Even though people in your church may forgive and forget, people in the community might still not forgive.

In addition to the stigma people attach to you, there is also the stigma (about yourself) that you carry around in your own mind.

Conclusion

Many of the opinions stated above speak for themselves, though the research team has provided more focused analysis in chapter five. Although, as previously stated, the research team believes that focus groups proved to be the best method for obtaining a wide variety of opinions, interviews, as displayed above, proved to be an invaluable source of data.

5. Findings by theme

In this final chapter we will move from a consideration of the data by the channels in which they were collected to an examination of the data by theme. In the initial document which laid out the requirements for the research the following questions were asked:

(i) What happens to young men on discharge from prison: does their experience post-custody contribute to preventing re-offending and enabling them to play a positive role in society? Do faith groups have a role to play in supporting ex-offenders who may be cut off from the links which help people avoid crime, such as family, employment and a sense of connectedness to society?

(ii) At the same time and in conjunction with this, what do faiths have to contribute to the sentencing regimes contained in the new Criminal Justice Act? These provide for greater opportunities to undertake reparative activities and for victims to confront offenders, within the requirements of a community sentence and during the licence period of a custodial sentence. Most faiths have views on reparation and redemption; faith perspectives may therefore provide insights on how to create a community-based sentencing regime that is rehabilitative as well as challenging.³²

A variety of issues related to these questions were raised with respondents, focus group members and interviewees during the research. Drawing together some of their responses we will now look at the following themes: Faith voices on restorative justice; faith communities and the rehabilitation of ex-offenders; and multi-faith chaplaincy.

5.1 Faith voices on restorative justice

The context for the interest in this issue was the Government's period of consultation following the publication in July 2003 of its strategy document on restorative justice. In that document it was made clear that the Government aims to maximise the use of restorative justice in the criminal justice system, to encourage more 'visible reparation' by offenders to the community, and to improve 'victim satisfaction' and public confidence. The following definition was provided.

Restorative justice brings victims and offenders into contact, so that victims can get answers to their questions, tell the offender what the real impact of their offending was and receive an apology. Restorative justice gives offenders the chance to make amends for their crime, either to the victim themselves, or to the community.³³

During the research members of faith communities were asked several questions relating to these issues. In one of the focus groups (with members of LFCLF Council), participants were asked what their religion says about

³² Faith Communities Unit, *Leeds Pilot Consultation Exercise: Scoping Document*, September 2003, p.2.

³³ Home Office, *Restorative Justice: the Government's strategy* (Home Office, 2003), p.9.

what should happen to those who commit a crime. They were also asked their views, as members of faith communities, about the Government's approach to restorative justice and reparation (giving something back to the victim or the community). In the questionnaire, faith community members were asked what their religion says about how people who commit a crime should be treated. They were then asked what, in their personal view, would be a reasonable response if someone from their faith community had committed either a material crime (e.g. breaking into a car) or a physical crime (e.g. assault). They were invited to select one of several possible answers, including meeting the victim and receiving an apology, a fine, community service and prison. (The conclusions to this question were reported in the previous chapter.) Respondents were then asked whether the faith community required anything additional from offenders before accepting them back into the community. Similar issues were also raised with interviewees.

On the subject of religious perspectives on how offenders should be treated, the range of opinions was considerable and many different terms were used by people to summarise their views: mercy, justice, forgiveness, contrition, repentance, reform, change, punishment, zero tolerance, retribution, reparation, humanity, the law of the land, respect. It was evident that perspectives generally crossed religious boundaries rather than being confined to them, though people from particular faith communities sometimes held a common view.

Issues of justice, mercy, restoration and forgiveness were often raised by Christians, though Jews, Muslims and Sikhs also used these terms. One Christian, for example, said that issues of justice and mercy were vital to a Christian understanding, but that what 'should come from punishment is restoration – that people from communities can come together again'. Other Christians also stressed this notion of community. Restoration is not just about an individual offender responding to an individual victim; rather it concerns the restoration of 'the individual and the community' and both the faith community and the wider community need to take responsibility for it.

Furthermore, an offender's relationship with God must be restored because 'when we commit crime we commit blasphemy in harming another human being, as that person is made in the image of God, though the offender [too] is made in the image of god and that too should be remembered'.³⁴ Committing a crime – a sin in the eyes of society – breaks the link of trust between an individual and his or her faith community. The offender's family and wider faith group may feel let down, responsible or implicated in some way by the crime. Restoration is not just a matter of completing a term in prison or even of making some reparation to the wider society. As one black Christian said, the faith community may make its own demands in terms of restoration before the relationship with the offender is healed. However, there may also be a need for the community itself to change, to be prepared to hear and recognise its own failings, its inability to understand and support those on the margins of the community, those with drug-related problems, those with a history of convictions.

Forgiveness too was seen as a core value of the Christian faith.

³⁴ The comments cited here formed part of a discussion at the focus group held at Leeds Church Institute on 15 December 2003.

Christians are encouraged to forgive. Repentance or remorse may be encouraged but may not be a prerequisite to forgiveness. Christians are reminded that all have sinned and therefore all need to receive as well as offer forgiveness. As children of God we are all called to support each other, including those who offend, and to seek to see Christ in all people.³⁵

Several questionnaire respondents, mostly Christian but including one Sikh, mentioned the issue of forgiveness in their responses to the question about how an offender should be treated. Some called for forgiveness with contrition or repentance by the offender; some for forgiveness with a readiness to reform or change. Whether individuals could change was an issue raised and discussed at one of the focus groups. Most of the participants believed they could. Muslims felt that people could change but that Allah's will was all important: they would need to pray to Allah to understand His will. A Buddhist referred to the law of karma and the need for an offender to change his or her karma.

A sincere desire to change was seen by some as central to the idea of repentance. An apology is not restorative unless it signifies that the offender has understood that the crime he or she committed was wrong, was hurtful or damaging to another person. Jewish and Muslim participants stressed the importance of due recompense and appropriate reparation. Several mentioned that the punishment should fit the crime; one quoted 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'.

As well as a consideration of the nature of the crime committed, the importance of 'the law of the land' was also mentioned. Abiding by the law of the country in which one lived was stressed by Jewish, Sikh, Baha'i and Pagan participants: 'We should take our criminal law from the country in which we are resident.'³⁶ Respondents differed, however, on the issue of whether their religious group might call for that country's laws to be changed in accordance with their own beliefs or values. Whilst two Jewish representatives suggested that they thought it unlikely, Buddhists and Quaker Christians at the focus groups thought that their groups might campaign on legal issues, e.g. if the death penalty were to be reintroduced.

Muslims and black Christians raised two other issues in their contributions to the discussion about 'the law of the land'. One of these was the recognition that nations and religions may have different laws. One Muslim mentioned Shari'ah law; one member of a Black majority church stressed the importance of Romans 12 in understanding God's law. The 'spiritual justice system' was deemed by these respondents to be important alongside the law of the country when they reflect with offenders on their crimes. The second issue was that of equality within the law. 'Was the law equal?', one black Christian asked, and she invited us to remember the high proportion of young black men in prison. We were reminded too that discrimination also takes place when whole communities are exposed to public criticism by a mass media that insists on identifying some perpetrators as 'black', 'Asian' or 'Muslim' when the colour or religion of a white offender is generally ignored.

³⁵ Comment made by a Christian questionnaire respondent.

³⁶ Comment made by a Jewish focus group participant.

Appropriate punishment and judgement were discussed, but compassion, kindness and humanity were also stated as important responses in the treatment of offenders – by Muslims, Buddhists, Jews and Christians. ‘There, but for the Grace of God, go I!’ was a maxim repeated by several of those we spoke to. The recognition of ‘that of God in everyone’, in offenders as well as victims, was stressed, particularly by Quakers. Furthermore, the individual needs of victims and offenders were considered. Whilst the majority of those who participated favoured a restorative approach to justice, with offenders being encouraged to meet their victims, to hear their side of the story, and to apologise for their actions, this would only work in some cases.

This idea... for the offender to meet the victim is a very good opportunity, but it can be a very sensitive issue for the victim. I can imagine a situation where the offender is very keen to meet the victim, almost as a part of their self-forgiveness, but actually the victim is very sensitive, and that obviously needs to be respected, so that maybe people need to work with the victim to help them move on [without feeling the need to be forgiven face to face]. Faith communities are places where you confront reality, and admit your weaknesses and shortcomings, as well as being seen as safe places... They are the kind of places where resources should be available [to assist in the process of restoration].³⁷

Others saw faith groups as places of ‘healing’ and ‘reconciliation’ with an important potential role to play in restorative justice. One Christian said, however, that faith groups must be aware of their own limitations, whether material or professional, in stating a willingness to be involved in the process. They may have the spiritual resources, but lack the time, qualifications or money to serve everyone’s best interests ‘for as long as it takes’.

5.2 Faith Communities and the rehabilitation of ex-offenders

This was raised in the first of two sets of questions posed by the Faith Communities Unit in its initial document (see above). The questions asked whether faith groups have a role to play in supporting ex-offenders and in enabling them to avoid re-offending and to play a positive role in society. We pursued these issues in the questionnaire, focus groups and interviews, and have organised the responses as follows: What are the needs of ex-offenders when they leave prison?; what faith communities can do to help ex-offenders; existing faith-based initiatives for helping ex-offenders.

5.2.1 What are the needs of ex-offenders when they leave prison?

We asked both prisoners themselves, many of whom were repeat offenders, and members of faith communities to comment on the needs of ex-offenders.

Employment, money and accommodation were seen by prisoners as the key issues they would face upon release, along with the temptation to re-offend. One prisoner whom we interviewed raised these very issues. Employment would be difficult, he thought, like how he was going to explain his time away

³⁷ A comment made by a Christian member of the Community Chaplaincy Project.

from work. For many (though not for him) handling money again would be a problem, for example, being unable to budget properly. Also life skills like cleaning and cooking were things that he thought many ex-offenders struggled with. He anticipated problems in general with reintegrating into the community. Another prisoner approached this from a different angle, saying that more preparation was needed whilst prisoners were *inside* for life on the *outside*. It is not just about the provision of support services post-release.

When asked what services prisoners would like to see offered to support them at this time, they favoured housing, benefit, financial, and drugs and alcohol advice. A Prisoners Advice Bureau was suggested by one interviewee, an agency that could provide advice according to the needs of the individual offender on release. Inmates were less concerned about some of the things that – as we shall see below - were mentioned by professional and voluntary bodies involved in rehabilitation, things like befriending and counselling.

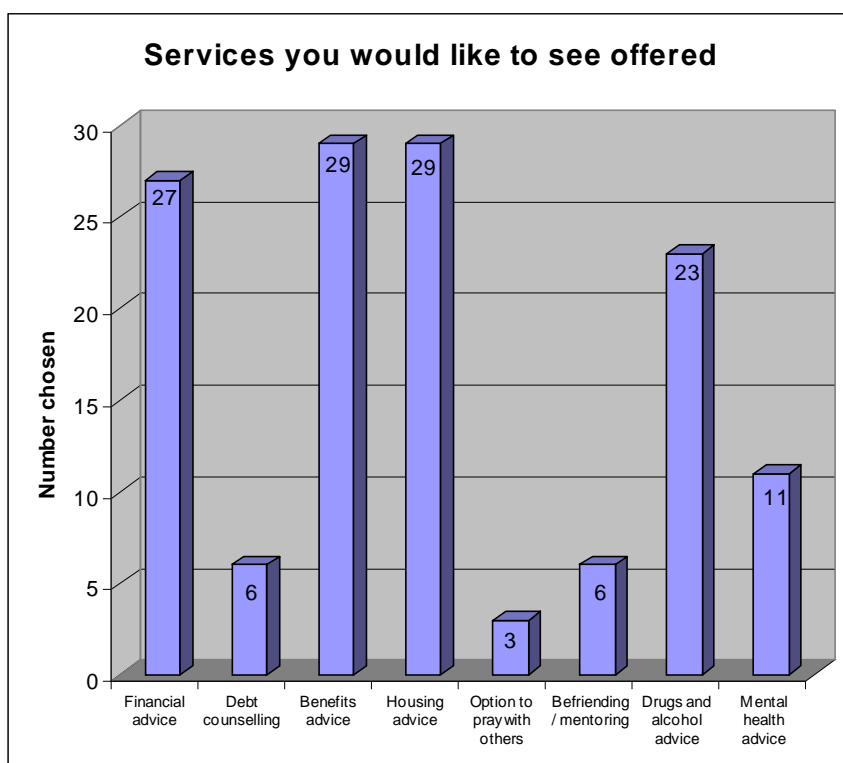


Diagram 7 Services prisoners would like to see offered on release

One prisoner we interviewed voiced an important fear about leaving prison, that of stigmatisation. Even though people in your own church may forgive and forget, he said, people in the wider community might not. And then, in addition to the views of others, there is the stigma that you carry around in your own mind.

Members of faith communities expressed many of the same ideas as the prisoners about the needs of ex-offenders. One interviewee who worked for the Probation Service said that employment and accommodation were key issues. Others noted these too, plus the lack of money. One Sikh interviewee made the point that shame would be a factor for people of Asian background – the shame of both the offender and the community.

5.2.2 What faith communities can do to help ex-offenders

In our questionnaire to members of faith communities we asked people what they thought their communities already did to help those re-entering the community after a period in prison, and what, in addition, they could do. Many already offered a chaplain or faith advisor, and had people willing to visit or befriend prisoners. Fewer people thought that their communities offered material help, discussions, counselling and prayer groups, and campaigning on behalf of offenders. Many thought that these would be good additions to the services already offered.

In the focus group with professionals and volunteers working with ex-offenders some of the same services and activities were mentioned, but others too. They stressed the importance of faith communities actively welcoming offenders on their release, and providing them with help to break destructive relationships and to create new, constructive ones. A key religious role would be for faith communities to help ex-offenders to acquire the tools necessary to develop their own spirituality.

But they were realistic too. They recognised that many faith groups found it difficult to welcome ex-offenders, to relate to them both socially and culturally, and to understand their needs. There was often a tendency to judge them, or to expect them to change overnight. Many faith groups were already over-committed and found it difficult to give the time and resources needed.

Two key issues which faith communities could tackle were, first, their insularity - some saw it as their duty to help only those of their own faith – and, second, the readiness of their members to be open to ex-offenders. Faith communities needed to educate their own members in the needs and issues faced by offenders, particularly to encourage them to act as role models in employing ex-offenders and providing them with accommodation.

Those we interviewed from faith communities often had stories to tell of the ways in which their faith communities provided support and assistance. Voluntary service and training were two areas mentioned (by Sikh and black Christian interviewees), but there was an awareness of the potential pitfalls, such as a lack of supervision and insufficient resources. These problems were also mentioned by those professionals and members of voluntary bodies we spoke too. They stressed the need, for example, for contracts between befrienders and offenders, and for standards and a code of practice for both parties. Without these it was possible that abusive relationships or an inequality of provision might develop.

5.2.3 Existing faith-based initiatives for helping ex-offenders

It became evident during the project that there were already a range of faith-based initiatives underway in Leeds targeted at the rehabilitation of ex-offenders. We were able to gather information about these from interviews, the focus group with professionals and members of voluntary bodies, and from the websites of relevant organisations. Those we were able to identify were Leeds Simon Community, St George's Advice Centre, St Anne's No Fixed Abode Scheme, Oxford Place Methodist Mission, IQRA and the

Parkside Community Project. Most of these work with the rootless and homeless, including ex-offenders, by providing them with food, shelter, advice, befriending, or a combination of these.

A good example is Leeds Simon Community, a branch of a national organisation of the same name. The Leeds group comprises a small number of volunteers who provide emotional and practical support to people who are homeless and living on the streets, including a weekly soup-run in Leeds city centre. It sees itself as offering 'a network of relationships' that help to provide a sense of belonging.³⁸ It offers advocacy on behalf of those who are ex-offenders and, where possible, long-term befriending. It also has a campaigning function through which it seeks to alert government and the public to the needs of people who are rootless and 'socially inadequate'.³⁹

The voluntary nature of an organisation like the Simon Community was seen by those who spoke about it as both its strength and weakness. Volunteers are often taken more seriously than professionals by ex-offenders because their motivations are thought to be more genuine: they are not paid for what they do. Conversely, they may be taken less seriously by professionals themselves. They are often 'side-lined by statutory agencies'.⁴⁰

We turn now to a national organisation which is in the early stages of developing a local profile (based in Leeds 11). The IQRA Trust *Prisoners Welfare* works at a national level to promote a better understanding of the needs of Muslim inmates in British prisons. It does this by supporting prison-imams, and organising cultural awareness events for prison officers, catering staff and chaplains. It also provides Islamic books and educational materials for Muslim prisoners. Its Ramadan scheme was established in 1997 to provide dates, halal meat, and imam support for *tarawih prayers* (evening congregation) wherever it is acceptable to prison establishments. On its national website can be found data on the Muslim prison population in England in recent years.⁴¹ Locally, IQRA aims to bridge the gap for ex-offenders between prison and the agencies and groups that can help them when they leave. Whilst Muslim prisoners are given considerable support from the Chaplaincy when they are inside, there is no formal structure within the Muslim community to help them when they are released.⁴²

The last organisation we shall mention has no local branch or outreach, though any Leeds resident may make use of its resources and participate in its work. The Churches Criminal Justice Forum is a national body which focuses on encouraging Christian churches and their members to become involved in the criminal justice system, through voluntary activities, campaigning or fundraising. Its booklet, *What Can I Do?*, co-produced with two other criminal justice organisations, provides information about the types of activities that individuals can involve themselves in, either through statutory bodies (such as membership of a Youth Offender Panel or of Prison Board of Visitors), or voluntary organisations (such as victim support or circles of support for ex-offenders).⁴³ It raises issues of criminal justice and discusses

³⁸ Comment by a worker from Leeds Simon Community, focus group, 18th November 2003

³⁹ From the Leeds Simon Community website, www.leedssimoncommunity.org.uk.

⁴⁰ Comment by an interviewee.

⁴¹ www.iqraprisonerswelfare.org

⁴² Information provided at focus group, 18th November 2003.

⁴³ For details, see www.ccfj.org.uk.

these in a Christian context. It offers practical suggestions for churches, and seeks to raise the awareness of their members.

5.3 *The role of a multi-faith chaplaincy*

Throughout the course of this research a key partner of the research team and of the steering group for the project has been the multi-faith chaplaincy within HM Prison Leeds. In addressing questions about the role of faith and faith groups in relation to offending patterns of behaviour the chaplaincy has proved to be an obvious focus both of the research, and in facilitating many of the channels that we used to obtain the required data.

The chaplaincy is comprised of a team of chaplains from all faith traditions and Christian denominations. All prisons have such teams, but what makes the team at HMP Leeds a little different from others is that over a 3 year period from January 2000 to January 2003 they have evolved from sharing a Christian chapel with Muslims and other faith groups, to agreeing to share the space as equal partners. This means that each faith tradition makes use of the multi-faith centre, by right, at previously agreed times.

They also share the statutory duties of the chaplaincy regardless of faith background, unless the issue is specific to a particular religion. They are not allowed to seek converts from one faith to another, anyway, but this collaborative working arrangement means that they begin from a position of mutual respect for each other's beliefs. Sometimes they have dialogue about their respective teachings, but mostly they work together to meet the widespread needs of the whole prison constituency – 1250 inmates, and 700 staff.

It is the belief of the chaplaincy team that the ways they have found of working together can have application in the wider community outside the jail, and it is this belief that has led to support for the development of a community chaplaincy project.

The need for this proposed organisation, known as the West Yorkshire Multi-Faith Community Chaplaincy Project (CCP) arises from a significant shift in emphasis for the Probation Service towards risk assessment and licence supervision/policing. Owing to this shift there are very visible gaps in the support structures available to people leaving prison. The CCP's objective is to enable faith communities to make a concerted response to the needs of ex-offenders alongside other secular and voluntary provision.

They will be establishing a team of employed chaplains, based in three West Yorkshire areas, whose work will be to recruit, train and supervise teams of volunteers. These volunteers will act as mentors and provide one-to-one support for ex-offenders released into the West Yorkshire area. They hope to receive funding from Government, the Church Urban Fund, and Charitable Trusts and aim to establish a centre in Leeds in mid-2004, with centres in Dewsbury and Bradford the following year.

Services which will be on offer will include housing advice, drugs and alcohol awareness training, counselling, debt-counselling, benefits' advice, and job-seeking support.

As part of our study the research team sought the views, through all available channels, of offenders, members of faith groups, and professionals on the possible benefits of this scheme. The opinions received confirmed the suggestion that there is a gap in the provision of post-sentence care for offenders, and that the CCP would provide a much needed service in the drive to reduce rates of re-offending.

In establishing what difficulties offenders were likely to face when released respondents were asked to choose from a selection of common problems (highlighted by staff within the chaplaincy).⁴⁴

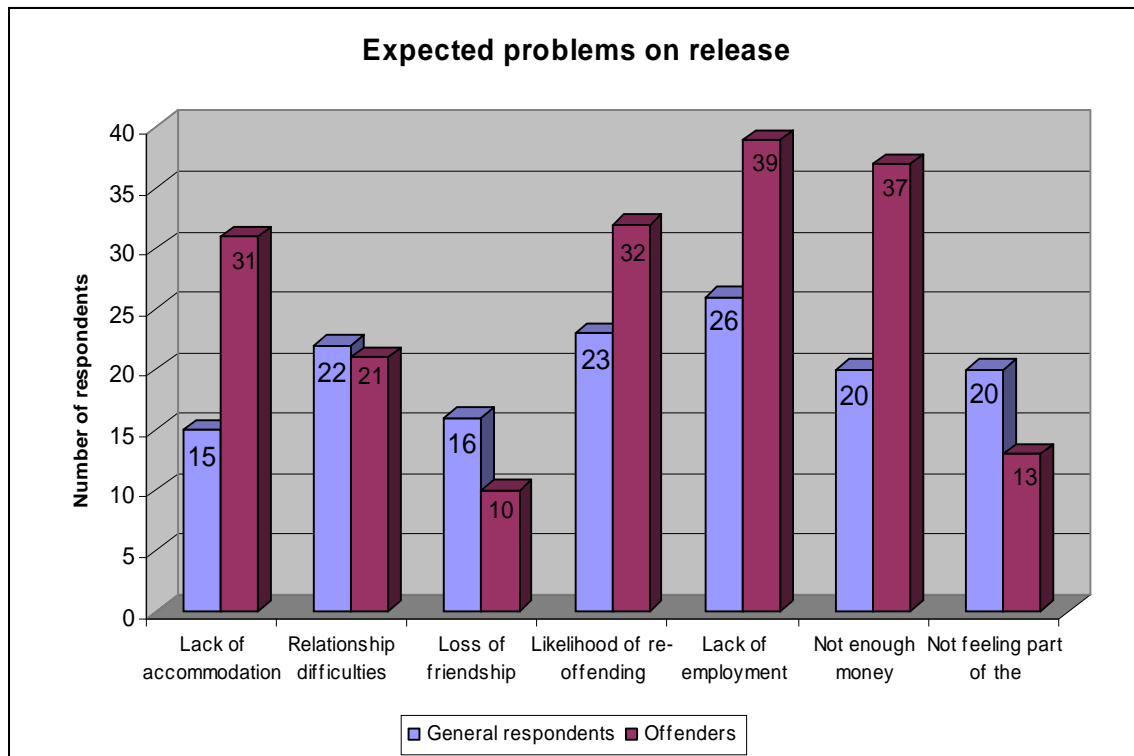


Diagram 8 Faith members' and prisoners' views about expected problems on release

In the above table the responses have been separated into general respondents (members from faith communities and workers within the chaplaincy) and offenders. Respondents from faith communities were given the option to choose 'not applicable' where they had no direct experience which they could bring to answering the question. The quality of the responses in the offender category is underlined by the fact that over 85% of the respondents had served more than one sentence (so had direct experience of these problems.) Indeed the average number of sentences served was over four, with some respondents having served as many as ten or eleven sentences.

The difficulties highlighted in the above table were repeated in the interviews, for example:

⁴⁴ See Appendix 2, question 9; Appendix 3, question 9; Appendix 4, question 8.

“The worst difficulties I will experience has got to be getting good employment to have money in my pocket to live and pay bills and eat food.”⁴⁵

“Employment is a big issue- there are barriers to access due to criminal record, lack of skills (e.g. CVs) and even clothing for interviews.”⁴⁶

Further responses on expected problems, as expressed by offenders, were presented in the previous chapter.

Having highlighted likely post-sentence difficulties we also asked offenders what services they felt would assist their reintegration into the community.⁴⁷ We saw their responses to this in a previous section (5.2.1) in which they stressed the need for advice on a range of issues.

Three out of the top four services that offenders would like to see provided are amongst those that the CCP proposes to offer (in addition, ‘financial advice’ the remaining top-four option is closely linked in subject matter to the ‘debt counselling’ service that the CCP aims to provide.)

A key aspect to the proposals of the CCP, besides the above services which match a demonstrable need, is the multi-faith as opposed to single-faith, approach. The research team questioned the benefits of this aspect with members of faith groups:⁴⁸

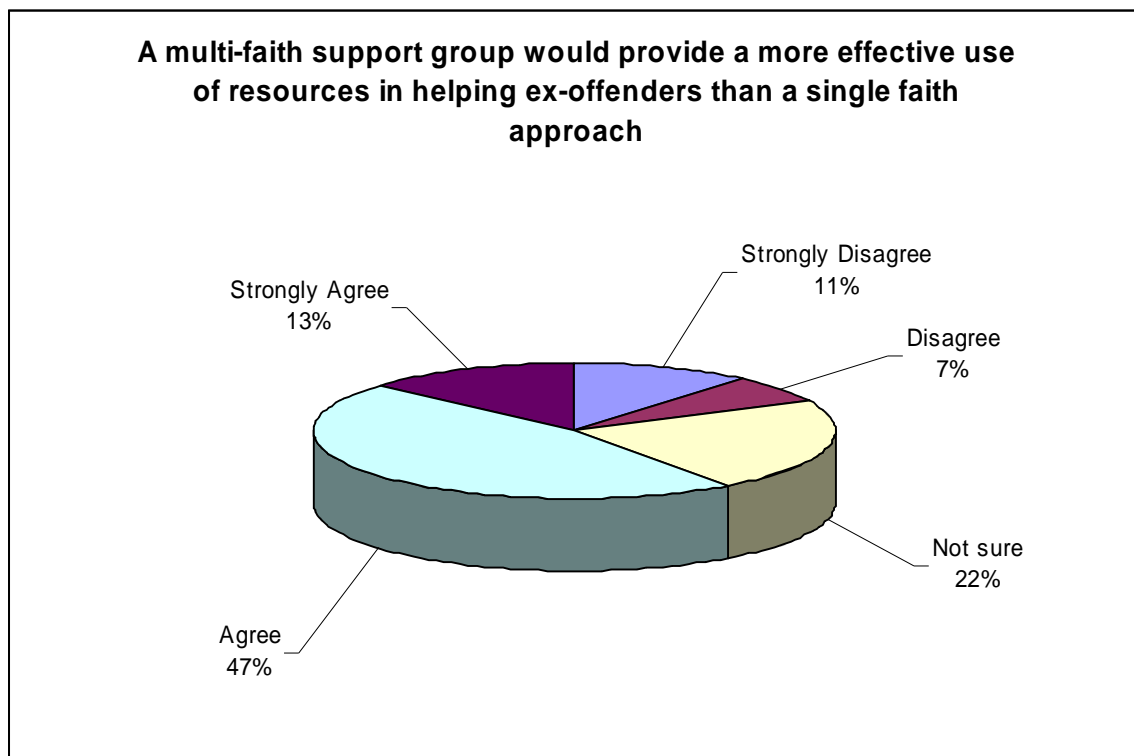


Diagram 9 The effectiveness of a multi-faith as opposed to single-faith approach

⁴⁵ Response from an offender stated in a ‘prisoner to prisoner’ interview.

⁴⁶ Response from an interview with an employee of the West Yorkshire Probation Service.

⁴⁷ Appendix 3, question 12.

⁴⁸ Appendix 2, question 13.

In addition to the 60% of respondents from faith groups who either agreed or strongly agreed that a multi-faith approach was more effective than a single-faith approach, 63% of offenders said they would welcome resettlement support from a multi-faith group on release.⁴⁹

Further support was in evidence from the interviews conducted by the research team:

There are more benefits than disadvantages [to a multi-faith approach]. It would be a step in the right direction- good for consistency to service provided on the inside and on release. There are limited services at the moment, so it would be a very beneficial step in the right direction. They [the CCP] need money- shouldn't be a token effort in terms of funding, they [the CCP] could provide a quite specialist function.⁵⁰

This would need some contribution from the government, but ex-offenders would definitely benefit, not least because it would continue the multi-faith atmosphere outside the prison, and could be used to put ex-offenders into contact with groups, networks, etc. and help with re-integration.⁵¹

There are problems with the linking of 'inside' with 'outside'. So a project on these lines would be a good idea. The two different areas [prison based initiatives vs. post-release services] don't seem to know what each other are doing. Linking the two would definitely be good (especially re housing).⁵²

Multi-faith centre is the perfect idea. It would bring people together as it treats people all the same, regardless of their faith... the help that faith groups can offer shouldn't be judged by religion, but for the help that they can offer.⁵³

The above responses are representative of views from members of faith groups, professionals and offenders. It is the opinion of the research team that the proposed Community Chaplaincy Project can only benefit the lives of ex-offenders and the communities into which they seek reintegration. Moreover the multi-faith component, central to the ethos of the chaplaincy and at the heart of its proposed extension into the community, is essential to its success. That a proposed multi-faith service receives such wide support from across all the faith groups surveyed suggests that this conclusion is entirely accurate.

Whilst the financial benefits of any post-sentence service would be difficult to quantify, it is the belief of the research team that the multi-faith chaplaincy can play a potential role in the reduction of rates of re-offending.

⁴⁹ Appendix 3, question 11.

⁵⁰ From an interview with an employee of the West Yorkshire Probation Service.

⁵¹ From an interview with a member of the Sikh community.

⁵² From an interview with a worker at the Leeds Simon Community.

⁵³ From an interview with an offender.

6. Conclusion

The major findings of the research team have been presented in chapters three and five. However, there are some additional concluding points that are best dealt with within the overall context of the research project.

Foremost amongst these we would draw attention to the twofold nature of this project. This research has been structured so as to focus on the two quite separate aims of the original scoping document. One aim was to provide a report with a broadly methodological orientation in order to investigate and evaluate different channels of communication for consulting with faith communities. The second was to do justice to the substantive findings on restorative justice and the rehabilitation of ex-offenders. Whilst both of these aims have proved interesting in both approach and findings, producing a single report encompassing this dual nature has proved complicated, and has led to a more diluted examination of each area than we would ideally have sought.

Furthermore, whilst we have amassed a plethora of data through the various channels we employed, due to the time-limited nature of the project we have not been able to explore this in the depth we would have liked. This is regrettable as issues such as restorative justice have clearly excited the interest of those we contacted, and there is scope to provide still further analysis of the responses of interested parties to the issues raised. On this point the limited duration of the project has meant that we have not been able to collect as much data on the subject as its apparent importance requires. In addition, the difficulties inherent in extracting opinions from faith communities (see chapter three) could clearly have been lessened by extending the length of the consultative process.

Bearing these restrictions in mind, however, we recognise that the nature of policy review often requires that the government place such time limitations on consultative exercises. In light of this, we feel that this report provides constructive findings on the value of consultation where time is limited by necessity. We would, therefore, reiterate our earlier conclusion that in such situations the use of focus groups is invaluable in gathering a range of views in an expedient fashion.

Finally, we would like to point out that the success of this pilot has been aided to a considerable degree by the presence in Leeds of organisations and communication structures which facilitated our research. For example, the nature and role of the Leeds Faith Community Liaison Forum, Leeds Church Institute as well as the multi-faith chaplaincy at HMP Leeds, have proved indispensable in allowing us to contact so many groups and individuals so quickly.⁵⁴

The existence of mature relationships between the research team, under the auspices of the Community Religions Project, and the faith and inter-faith groups within Leeds has also greatly enhanced our ability to gather the

⁵⁴ The multi-faith nature of the Steering Group for the Community Chaplaincy Project, and arrangements such as the Leeds Compact Agreement are also evidence of the structures within Leeds that facilitate this kind of co-operation and research.

required data. For future projects then, it should be noted that, where such structures and relationships do not already exist, the ability of research teams to reproduce the quantity and quality of data that we have achieved here is not necessarily assured.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Dates of Meetings and Mailings

Thursday 23rd October

Steering Group Meeting with Matthew Francis (MF)

Tuesday 28th October

Steering Group Meeting with team

Thursday 30th October

Steering Group Meeting with team

Monday 3rd November

Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum (LFCLF) Council Meeting with team and John Battle MP

Wednesday 5th November

Steering Group Meeting with team

Friday 7th November

Questionnaires posted to non-Christian places of worship (bar Hindus, Baha'is)

Monday 10th November

Questionnaires posted to Hindus, Baha'is, Christians

Wednesday 12th November

Concord Interfaith Fellowship focus group meeting
Distribution of questionnaires to group members

Thursday 13th November

Questionnaire emailed to LFCLF subsidiary contacts

Tuesday 18th November

Criminal Legal Focus Group with Steering Group
Discussion with professionals and members of voluntary bodies working with ex-offenders in Leeds (including Leeds Simon Community, IQRA)

Thursday 20th November

Telephone interview with Dr Sophie Gilliat-Ray

Friday 21st November

Questionnaire emailed/posted to Community Chaplaincy Project Working Group

Monday 24th November

Interim report circulated to Home Office, Steering Group, LFCLF council members
Questionnaires posted to LFCLF council members

Monday 15th December

Visit by Home Office minister, Fiona McTaggart
Focus groups held with LFCLF council members, and prisoners and chaplaincy staff

Sunday 21st to Monday 22nd December

Questionnaire distributed amongst prisoners at HM Prison Leeds

Thursday 15th January

Interview with a member of the Sikh community

Interviews by a member of the team with three prisoners at HM Prison Leeds

Friday 16th January

Interview with a full-time volunteer, Leeds Simon Community

Tuesday 20th January

Consultative Seminar organised by LFCLF at which the findings of the research were reported to a public audience, Civic Hall, Leeds (attended by Home Office team, and by Dr Sean McLoughlin, project evaluator)

Discussion with Stuart Dew, Churches Criminal Justice Forum

Thursday 22nd January

Interview with a member of a black majority church in Leeds

Friday 23rd January

Interview with an employee of the West Yorkshire Probation Service

Tuesday 26th January

Steering Group meeting

Interviews conducted by three prisoners with other inmates at HM Prison Leeds

31st January

Date of submission of final report

Questionnaires
Faith Communities and Young Offenders Project

Appendix 2

- 1) Which faith group do you belong to? (e.g. Islam; Christianity, Baptist; Judaism)
- 2) Are you Male / Female ? (Please circle.)
- 3) Please tick your age group.
 - a) Under 25
 - b) 25-40
 - c) 41-60
 - d) 61-75
 - e) Over 75
- 4) Have you ever been a victim of crime?
Yes / No (Please circle.)
- 5) What does your religion say about how people who commit a crime should be treated?
- 6) What is your personal view, informed by your faith, of what kind of response would be reasonable if someone within your faith community broke into a car? (Choose as many as applicable.)
 - a) Meeting with the victim and apologising face to face.
 - b) A fine.
 - c) Showing regret for their crime (not face to face.)
 - d) Community service.
 - e) Prison.
 - f) Other (please state.)
- 7) What is your personal view, informed by your faith, of what kind of response would be reasonable if someone within your faith community assaulted someone? (Choose as many as applicable.)
 - a) Meeting with the victim and apologising face to face.
 - b) A fine.
 - c) Showing regret for their crime (not face to face.)
 - d) Community service.
 - e) Prison.
 - f) Other (please state.)
- 8) In addition to any sentence ordered by the court is there anything an offender would need to do before being accepted back into your faith community? (e.g. ritual cleansing, or some form of penance.)
- 9) In your experience have ex-offenders in your community encountered any of the following difficulties after completing their sentence? (Please tick as many as apply.)
 - a) Lack of accommodation.
 - b) Relationship difficulties.
 - c) Loss of friendship.
 - d) Likelihood of re-offending.
 - e) Lack of employment.
 - f) Not enough money.
 - g) Not feeling part of the community.
 - h) Not applicable.
 - i) Other (please state.)

10) Do you think ex offenders should be supported by:

- a) The government.
- b) Faith community.
- c) Local community.
- d) Other (please state.)

11) Below are some suggestions of ways to support prisoners and ex-offenders. Does your faith group, or individuals within it, already offer any of these? Would you like to see your faith group provide any of these?

		Already offered?		Would like to offer?	
		Yes.	No.	Yes.	No.
a)	Prison chaplain/faith advisor.				
b)	People willing to visit prisoners.				
c)	People willing to befriend/offer support to ex-offenders.				
d)	A spiritual support or prayer group that devotes some its time to remembering prisoners and/or ex-offenders.				
e)	A discussion group or counselling service for ex-offenders.				
f)	A campaign group or active individuals with an interest in social justice including issues relating to prisoners and ex-offenders.				
g)	Material help for ex-offenders (e.g. money/clothing/accommodation).				
h)	Offer scriptures or religious material.				

12) Are there any roles or activities within your faith community that would help ex-offenders in their return to society?

13) A multi-faith support group would provide a more effective use of resources in helping ex-offenders than a single-faith approach. (Please circle, and make a comment if you would like to.)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not sure Agree Strongly Agree

14) Would you have answered any of the above questions differently if the ex-offender had completed a sentence for murder or a crime of a sexual nature and, if so, how?

15) Do you think the majority of members of your community share these views?
Yes / No (Please circle)

If 'No' how would they differ?

CONFIDENTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR INMATES AT

HMP LEEDS & HMYOI WETHERBY

On behalf of the RESEARCH PROJECT

authorised by the HOME OFFICE

to discover how Faith Communities communicate with each other and how they can influence the development of legislation and policy which affects Faith communities.

Please circle your RELIGIOUS REGISTRATION as it is on your Prison Record

Atheist	Hindu/Jain	NIL/No religion
Baptist	Methodist	Other Christian Religion
Buddhist	Mormon	Orthodox (Russian/Greek)
Celestial Church of God	Muslim	Rastafarian
Church of England	Black Muslim	Roman Catholic
Church of Scotland	Non-Conformist	Seventh Day Adventist
Sikh	United Reform	Welsh Independent

Please circle your ETHNIC ORIGIN as is it is on your Prison Record

Asian - Bangladeshi	Black	Mixed - White/Asian
Asian - Indian	Black - African	Mixed - White/Caribbean
Asian - Other	Black - Caribbean	Mixed - Other
Asian - Pakistani	Black - Other	White - Other
White	White - Irish	White - British

Please insert your HOME POSTCODE in the space (e.g. LS12)

1. How many prison sentences have you served?

2. Is this your first prison sentence? (please circle your answer)

Yes (go to question 9)

No (go to question 3)

3. When you were released last time, did you receive any support after you left prison? (Please circle your answer)

Yes No

4. Who provided this support?

5. Did it help? Yes No (please circle answer)

If yes, how did it help?

If no, why did it not help?

6. What other support would have been useful?

7. Did you return to the address where you lived before you came to prison?

Yes No (please circle answer)

If not, why was this?

8. What was the most difficult thing about resettling back into your home community?

9. What do you think are the main problems facing men being released from this prison? (Tick as many as apply)

Lack of accommodation

Lack of employment

Relationship difficulties

Not enough money

Loss of friendship

Not feeling part of the community

Likelihood of re-offending

10. Have you taken part in any activities organised by the Chaplaincy whilst you have been in prison? For instance: drugs awareness, self harm support group, alcohol awareness etc.

Yes No (please circle answer)

List those you have taken part in:

11. A multi-faith chaplaincy operates in the prison; would you welcome resettlement support from a similar multi-faith group after you are released?

Yes No (please circle answer)

12. If we were to offer the following services to you after you are released, which of them would you use? (Tick as many as apply)

Financial advice

Opportunities to pray with others

Debt counselling

Befriending / mentoring

Benefits advice

Drugs and alcohol advice

Housing advice

Mental health advice

What other services would be useful?

13. Would you welcome being put in touch with someone from your faith community to provide you with support when you are released from prison?

Yes No

14. What would make the biggest difference in preventing you from re-offending when you are released?

Appendix 4

Community Chaplaincy Working Group Questionnaire

This questionnaire comes to you on behalf of Leeds Faith Communities Liaison Forum, in association with West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy Project and the University of Leeds Community Religions Project. As you may have heard, we are involved in a national pilot on behalf of the Home Office but reporting to a group of Ministers from different Departments.

We are conducting research on the role of faith communities in penal policy and the support of young offenders leaving prison and would like to hear your views.

We would be very grateful if you would complete the questionnaire and return it by email to interfaith2@mat-francis.org preferably by 28th November 2003.

Thank you in advance for your help. If you would like to be interviewed (via telephone) on this matter or have any questions, please email us on the above address.

Thank you for your time.

- 1) Please describe briefly your role and work as a prison chaplain / prison visitor / member of the chaplaincy team / relationship to the chaplaincy team / other.

- 2) Is this role paid or voluntary?

- 3) To what extent are you supported in your prison work by your faith community? (Please circle the option closest to your view.)

Strong support Some support No support Antipathy Not applicable

- 4) If you are supported by your faith community, what is the nature of the support? (e.g. financial reimbursement, support group, training opportunities, etc.)

- 5) Have you ever been asked to speak to others within your faith community or beyond it about your work in prison?
 - a) Within your faith community Yes / No
 - b) To people outside your faith community Yes / No

- 6) What does your religion say about how people who commit a crime should be treated?

7) In addition to any sentence ordered by the court is there anything an offender would need to do before being accepted back into your faith community? (e.g. ritual cleansing, or some form of penance.)

8) What kinds of difficulties might ex-offenders face on their return to the community? (Please tick as many as apply.)

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Lack of accommodation. | <input type="checkbox"/> | g) Not feeling part of the community. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Relationship difficulties. | <input type="checkbox"/> | h) Not applicable. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Loss of friendship. | <input type="checkbox"/> | i) Other (please state.) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Likelihood of re-offending. | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| e) Lack of employment. | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| f) Not enough money. | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

9) What role do you think faith communities could play in supporting ex-offenders?

10) “A multi-faith support group would provide a more effective use of resources in helping ex-offenders than a single-faith approach.” Please circle, and make a comment if you would like to.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Not sure Agree Strongly Agree

11) Do you think the majority of members of your community share these views?

Focus Group Questions

LFCLF Questions

1. What does your religion say about how people who commit a crime should be treated?
2. The Government's current strategy on criminal justice focuses upon 'restorative justice'.

Restorative justice 'brings victims and offenders into contact, so that victims can get answers to their questions, tell the offender what the real impact of their offending was and receive an apology. [It] gives offenders the chance to make amends for their crime...'

As a member of your faith community, what are your views about this approach?

3. 'Restorative justice can often lead to reparation which benefits victims.'
Reparation means giving something back to the victim or the community, e.g. in the form of community service.

In what ways could your faith community help in this process,

- (a) if the offender was a member of your own community,
- (b) if the offender was not a member of your community.



Questions for professional and voluntary organisations working with offenders

What roles could faith communities play, if any, in (a) rehabilitation, and (b) alternative sentencing?

What, from your professional point of view, do you think faith communities could offer to young ex-offenders?

- Be-friending/friendship
- Financial support
- Employment or training opportunities
- Community involvement
- Help with relationships
- Anything else?

Would it be possible for organisations and agencies with professional experience of criminal justice and the prison system to help faith communities to be more supportive and effective in working with ex-offenders (e.g. through training)?

Are there any ways in which such organisations and agencies could learn or benefit from the knowledge or experience of faith communities?

A multi-faith support group works with prisoners at HMP Leeds. Could you see such a group assisting in the rehabilitation of ex-offenders? In what ways might it help?

Would you benefit from further opportunities to discuss these matters in the future?



Questions for Prisoners and Chaplaincy Staff⁵⁵

- 1. Does faith make a difference to you in jail or outside jail?
- 2. What sort of support does your faith community give you outside jail?
- 3. Can faith communities make an impact beyond their own community?

⁵⁵ We are grateful to Philomena O’Hare for providing this information.

Interview Questions

For interviews with professionals

In your experience have any ex-offenders encountered difficulties in faith communities after completing their sentence? If so, what kind of difficulties? (E.g. loss of accommodation; lack of employment; disengagement with home community.)

Are there any roles or activities within faith communities that would help ex-offenders in their return to society? (E.g. community involvement; Be-friending/friendship; Employment/training opportunities.)

Do you think your organisation could assist/or use the help of, faith communities in bringing victims and offenders into contact and in helping an offender give something back to the victim or community (e.g. in the form of community service). [This relates to the government's increased focus on restorative and reparative justice]

Would it be possible for organisations and agencies with professional experience of criminal justice and the prison system to help faith communities to be more supportive and effective in working with ex-offenders (e.g. through training)?

Are there any ways in which such organisations and agencies could learn or benefit from the knowledge or experience of faith communities?

The Community Chaplaincy Project is a multi-faith support group working within Armley gaol. What do you think would be the benefits/disadvantages (as opposed to a single-faith approach) of such a project being extended to the wider community (to help ex-offenders). Would your organisation support such a project?

As part of the information gathering exercise of this project, we recently held a focus group with both professional agencies and faith groups. What benefits (if any) could you see from a joint discussion along these lines (would you like to see such an event in the future)?

If you could write government policy with regards to issues facing ex-offenders, what would be your top three points to tackle? How would you encourage faith communities to be involved?

For interviews with members of faith communities

Optional (depending on relevance)

We have had little/no response from members of your faith community. Why do you think this is? (E.g. a need to defer to an 'authority'; no knowledge of the subject area; not enough explanation/time given for response)

For all interviewees

What does your religion say about how people who commit a crime should be treated?

In your experience have any ex-offenders encountered difficulties in your faith community after completing their sentence? If so, what kind of difficulties? (E.g. loss of accommodation; lack of employment; disengagement with home community)

Are there any roles or activities within your faith community that would help ex-offenders in their return to society? (E.g. community involvement; Befriending/friendship; Employment/training opportunities)

How would your faith community feel about the opportunity to bring victims and offenders into contact, so that victims can get answers to their questions, tell the offender about the impact of their crime, and to receive an apology. [This relates to the government's focus on restorative justice.] Could your community assist in the facilitation of this policy?

How do you think your faith community could help an offender in giving something back to the victim or community (e.g. in the form of community service). [This relates to the government's increased focus on reparative justice] How could this differ if the offender was not a member of your faith community?

The Community Chaplaincy Project is a multi-faith support group working within Armley gaol. What do you think would be the benefits/disadvantages (as opposed to a single-faith approach) of such a project being extended to the wider community (to help ex-offenders). Would you/your community support such a project?

As part of the information gathering exercise of this project, we recently held a focus group with both professional agencies and faith groups. What benefits (if any) could you see from a joint discussion along these lines (would you like to see such an event in the future)?

If you could write government policy with regards to issues facing ex-offenders, what would be your top three points to tackle? How would you encourage faith communities to be involved?

Interview Questions for inmates

Please number the answers according to the following questions. Write as much or as little as appropriate, just making sure that you record at least what the respondent feels are the important points in their answer.

Respondent's faith/religion:.....

Date of interview:.....

- 1) Has your contact with any religion or faith increased or decreased during the course of your sentence (in comparison to pre-sentence)? Do you think your contact with this religion will be maintained/increase/decrease upon your release?
- 2) What does your religion say about how people who commit a crime should be treated?
- 3) What difficulties have you/do you expect to, come across after completing your sentence? (E.g. loss of accommodation; lack of employment; difficulty settling back into home community)
- 4) Can you think of, or do you know of, any roles or activities within your faith community that would help you on your release? (E.g. community involvement; Be-friending/friendship; Employment/training opportunities)
- 5) The Chaplaincy is a multi-faith support group working within Armley gaol. What do you think would be the benefits/disadvantages (as opposed to a single-faith approach) of such a project being extended to the wider community? Would you use such a project?
- 6) If you could write government policy with regards to issues facing ex-offenders, what would be your top three points to tackle? How would you encourage faith communities to be involved?

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