



'The Voluntary Sector in Criminal Justice: A Seminar to Set the Research Agenda'

SLSA Seminar Competition 2016-2017

The University of Sheffield Centre for Criminological Research was delighted to host a two day international, multidisciplinary, cross-sectoral seminar from Monday 5th – Tuesday 6th June, entitled: '**The Voluntary Sector in Criminal Justice: Setting the Research Agenda**'. At this seminar, [Dr Philippa Tomczak](#) (Leverhulme Trust Early Career Research Fellow, Author of [The Penal Voluntary Sector](#)) launched the new voluntary sector in criminal justice **research network for academics, practitioners and policymakers**. This network fills an important gap in scholarship and infrastructure because the criminal justice voluntary/charitable sector is now more topical than ever before, but has not received academic attention commensurate with its importance anywhere in the world.

The seminar benefitted greatly from generous funding awarded to Philippa from the Socio-Legal Studies Association (Seminar Competition). This enabled the participation of three speakers from the USA, who greatly enhanced the range of presentations and provided further international context. We welcomed:

- ♣ Professor Michael Hallett (Professor of Criminology, University of North Florida, USA)
- ♣ Dr Emma Hughes (Criminology Department Chair, California State University, Fresno, USA)
- ♣ Professor Tobi Jacobi (Professor of English, Colorado State University, USA)

Professor Hallett gave a presentation on the topic 'Bad Faith: Charity, Privatisation, and Religious Volunteerism in American Corrections', illustrating the extent to which American prisons are reliant on faith-based programming and questioning the constitutionality of such programmes. He gave a fascinating case study of Angola prison in Louisiana. Dr Hughes opened the conference, offering a paper entitled 'The States We're In: Reflections on Voluntary Sector Engagement in US Prisons'. She highlighted the sheer scale of imprisonment in the USA and provided a Californian case study of regional variations in voluntary sector programme provision, explaining benefits and limitations of

voluntary sector programmes and the importance of gatekeepers. Professor Jacobi presented 'Volunteer Training and Self-Care in a US Jail Writing Programme', which provided an insightful account of the need for ongoing training and self-care of and amongst prison volunteers, who undertake risky work with people experiencing trauma and are vulnerable to burnout. Delegates were delighted to receive copies of the *Speak Out* journal from Tobi, which publishes inmate creative writing.

Everyone who gave feedback rated the event overall as 'good' or 'excellent'. Feedback included:

- ^ 'Good sense of humour and pragmatism in how it was organised, so lovely to be looked after. The opportunities to learn from and engage with senior academics were fantastic. Good mix of presentations.'
- ^ 'Thanks so much for organising. Looking forward to the next stages.'
- ^ 'Great to gather so many different people and perspectives within criminal justice. Nice venue and we were well taken care of.'
- ^ 'Stimulating and intellectual. Would be keen to help support stuff to happen next. Well done to all and thank you.'
- ^ 'I'll be more aware of university work and how we could be involved, and I'm interested in looking at policy together.'
- ^ '....However one participant did state that they didn't enjoy the wet weather and advised 'see what you can do'.

SLSA funding covered travel, accommodation and catering for these US speakers, who enhanced the comparative content and applications of the seminar tremendously. The full sum awarded (£3655.65) was spent by these speakers, whose final costs were topped up by internal University of Sheffield School of Law funding. The SLSA logo and funding were gratefully acknowledged on the event booking webpage (https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/law/research/clusters/ccr/conferences/voluntary_sector_criminal_justice) and in the conference introduction session. We will also acknowledge this SLSA funding in any further outputs resulting from the event. The event was live tweeted using #voluntaryjustice.

We were pleased to have also secured British Academy funding. Philippa is part of the British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award Scheme. This award supported a separate but complimentary element of the seminar, facilitating the attendance of 10 early career researchers and further UK and European keynote speakers. We were also delighted to welcome a substantial number of practitioner delegates. Each panel included a presentation from a practitioner and we also ran a workshop session where participants were divided into small groups for a targeted discussion of their specific research needs, with questions provided to stimulate discussion. One key point emerging from these discussions was the burden of evidence faced by 'innovative' voluntary sector projects, to prove their contribution.

Future activities for the network include:

- ⤴ Developing our website and online repository of accessible resources
- ⤴ Presenting four thematic panels on the criminal justice voluntary sector at the forthcoming American Society of Criminology annual conference (Philadelphia, November 2017)
- ⤴ Developing a special issue of a peer-reviewed academic journal
- ⤴ Holding a second seminar at the British Academy, London in early January 2018.

Anyone wishing to join the network should feel free to contact Dr Philippa Tomczak by emailing p.j.tomczak@sheffield.ac.uk. Academics, practitioners and policymakers are most welcome.



Dr Tomczak welcoming delegates to the seminar, with Professor Joanna Shapland, Professor Sir Anthony Bottoms and Dr David Thompson.



Professor Hallett presenting his paper.



Discussion session entitled 'What role should the voluntary sector play in criminal justice?', with Nathan Dick from Clinks and Anita Dockley from the Howard League for Penal Reform.