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28th Annual Cumberland Lodge Police Conference

Freedom From Fear: Public Perceptions of Crime and Justice

24th-26th April 2009

Speakers

Mr Ashley **Ames**, Head of Crime and Justice Research, Ipsos MORI
Sir Norman **Bettison**, Chief Constable, West Yorkshire Police
Hon Alex **Calabrese**, Presiding Judge, Red Hook Community Justice Center, New York
HH Judge David **Carruthers**, Chairman, New Zealand Parole Board
Ms Louise **Casey**, CB, Director General, Neighbourhood Crime and Justice, Home Office
Mr Richard **Edwards**, Crime Correspondent, Daily Telegraph
Rt Hon the Lord **Falconer of Thoroton, QC**, Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP
HH Judge David **Fletcher**, Judge, The Community Justice Centre, North Liverpool
Professor Frank **Furedi**, Professor of Sociology, University of Kent
Mr Roger **Graef**, CEO, Films of Record
Mr Peter **Lewis**, CEO, Crown Prosecution Service
Mr Will **Riley**, Managing Partner, Intermedia Partners
Mrs Alison **Rose**, Chief Superintendent, West Yorkshire
Professor Lawrence **Sherman**, Wolfson Professor of Criminology, University of Cambridge
Mrs Julie **Spence**, Chief Constable, Cambridge Constabulary
Mr Paul **West**, Chief Constable, West Mercia Police
Mr Phil **Wheatley**, Director General, National Offender Management Service
Mr Peter **Woolf**, Restorative justice consultant

Conference Summary

88 senior Police Officers, academics, members of the Judiciary and the Crown Prosecution Service along with several journalists met to discuss the fact that despite falling crime rates and increasing conviction rates, the public are more fearful of crime than ever before. This problem was shown to be complex:

1. The 'fear of crime' jargon is self-fulfilling. It is unhelpful that the language of our society seems to focus increasingly on fear. So if a poll asks whether you are frightened of crime, this may well *cause* you to *be* frightened of crime. The paradigm needs to change.
2. The Criminal Justice System is anonymous, fragmented and in some areas demoralised. An Ipsos MORI poll in 2006, for instance, found that 49% of Police Officers would speak critically of the Criminal Justice System. If this is the message that the Police themselves pass on to the public, is it any wonder that the public lacks confidence in the CJS?
3. The fragmentation of the CJS means that repeat offenders are often treated impersonally and ineffectually. Repeat offending could be reduced by using interventions targeted at the particular individual. But that can only work if different parts of the CJS talk to each other more effectively.

4. Clear channels of communication between the CJS and the public are not well established: if no one attends town-hall meetings anymore, perhaps more modern ways of communicating with the public should be used.
5. Unscrupulous journalism and unrealistic dramas generate fear and disappointment in the CJS. Journalism is under increasing commercial pressure to produce more news stories with less time to check sources. The relationship between the media and the CJS is fraught: because of a lack of trust of journalists, information is not willingly divulged and this leads to a distortion of facts – with missing information being filled in by unscrupulous and hard-pressed editors. The net result is a media focused more on the justice failures than successes. It does not help that much of the fictionalised representations of the Criminal Justice System raise the public's expectations of what it can achieve, with every crime being solved within the hour.

The superb depth of analysis of the problem was matched by an inspirational series of attempts at solving it:

1. Community Justice builds confidence in the Justice System. The conference heard national and international examples of how Community Justice Centres have been set up which engage the community in the Criminal Justice System. Not only do Judges in these centres have special powers to issue tailor-made punishments, they have a level of understanding of the offender that is simply unparalleled in conventional courts. This means that the offence is dealt with as a problem for which the solution may not just be custody, but could be a variety of other more focussed interventions. This has been called 'Therapeutic Justice', and it works: re-offending goes down, public confidence goes up. Judges at these centres are visible members of the community: they explain their verdicts in plain English and they regularly meet with members of the community *in the presence of other Criminal Justice agencies*. In these localities the Criminal Justice System really is joined up and engaged with the public.
2. Restorative Justice gives more satisfaction to the victim. Properly conducted conferences between the victim and the perpetrator of the crime have shown to produce a greater confidence in the victim that justice is being done. Instead of being treated anonymously, the victim is taken seriously and this process reduces their fear that the crime could happen again and again.
3. Integrated Offender Management cuts re-offending. It is possible for different agencies to work together to tackle prolific offenders. Surely it is obvious that offending behaviour has a variety of causes and therefore needs a variety of solutions: health, education, housing and police services could work together better to provide those solutions, and when they do it is effective at cutting crime.



Left to right, HH Judge David Fletcher; Hon Alex M Calabrese; Will Riley

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A Selection of Testimonials from the Participants

"This was an excellent conference, very professionally organised and run, with real implications for the improvement of policing and criminal justice"

Sir Charles Pollard, Chairman, Restorative Solutions CIC

"I have attended and presented at many large-scale conferences. This is by far the most informative and insightful event I have attended"

Robert Nixon, Chief Superintendent, Leicestershire Constabulary

"CL is an excellent forum for stimulating speakers with important ideas, and contributions from all participants both in and out of the sessions make it more than just another conference. It can inspire real change"

Roger Graef, CEO, Films of Record

"Inspirational speakers of the highest order in splendid and convivial surroundings"

Barry Hughes, Chief Crown Prosecutor, Avon & Somerset CPS

"A special opportunity to share insights with an impressive group of delegates"

Sara Thornton, Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police

100% of participants who filled in an evaluation form were 'satisfied' or 'more than satisfied' that this conference had lived up to their expectations.