

The Centre for Criminal Justice Policy and Research

BCU Research Conference 2009

I am delighted to be speaking to you this morning, and my congratulations to David and Keith for promoting the varied research that is ongoing at BCU. These are exciting times.

The CCJPR was launched in Spring 2003 with the aim of developing the existing strength in teaching and of researching criminal justice and criminology at the University. As such the CCJPR was designed to be a centre of excellence in research related to criminal justice and criminology and an exemplar for engagement with the community and those various agencies involved with the delivery of criminal justice. Indeed, the University was one of the first in the country to offer a degree in policing and prior to the Centre being set up, staff within social sciences regularly generated external research income including, for example, a £250K grant with the Children's Society to investigate how young black people were managed within the youth and criminal justice systems – part of the CCJPR's determination to promote equality and inclusion. This latter research resulted in four peer review articles, a major conference hosted by the Children's Society, and a significant amount of national print and broadcast media interest given that this was the first piece of empirical research to uncover the extent of knife carrying amongst young people.

The CCJPR is committed to research, consultancy and scholarship which aims to inform the criminal justice policy debate and promote a better understanding of problems associated with crime, law and order, policing, community safety, imprisonment and its consequences. In this way it has discovered, promoted and

disseminated best practice, engaged with criminal justice professionals and provided a consultancy and research service.

The CCJPR has a number of objectives which guides its work. These include:

- A commitment to undertake funded research programmes which will contribute to the Centre's desire to better inform criminal justice policy,
- To provide a consultancy service for and meet the continuing professional development needs of organisations and practitioners working within the criminal justice system,
- To develop national and international links and to disseminate best practice in the operation of criminal justice services through conferences, occasional papers, books and refereed journal articles.

Research interests within the CCJPR are broad and include issues related to community safety, prisons and penal reform, and policing. Recent research initiatives for example have included an evaluation of "real work" in prisons, the psychological impact of music projects on offenders, the policing of riots, and how convicted paedophiles use the internet.

Professor Mike King, for example, has just published a book based on his research comparing riots in France in 2005 and in the United Kingdom in the 1980s. His research was funded by the ESRC's Anglo-French collaborative Research Workshops Programme, with a particular focus on the role of the police – and given this interest Mike was regularly in the print and broadcast media about how our police recently controlled – or otherwise the recent G8 protests in London.

The CCJPR has organised a number of conferences, and staff from within the Centre regularly Chair or speak at national and international conferences related to various aspects of the criminal justice system. Staff within the CCJPR are members of the Editorial Boards of peer review journals - indeed two CCJPR members are Editors of peer review journals, and some sit on a number of national commissions. For example, I am currently Chair of the national, independent Commission on the State of English Prisons Today, which is due to report in Summer 2009 and whose President is Cherie Blair. CCJPR members are centrally involved in a number of high profile professional and policy networks – which will be of increasing importance under the REF – and use these networks to enhance the quality of teaching, by establishing links between the lecture theatre and professional practice. Most recently these have also resulted in, for example, The Howard League for Penal Reform buying a student place on our MA Criminology programme.

The CCJPR produces a quarterly Newsletter, and has its own website which is regularly updated by a part time CCJPR Administrator. Of note, stories from the CCJPR's Newsletter are regularly converted into press releases by BCU, and are also used on the University's website as "Did You Know" facts about the University. So too the work of the CCJPR regularly features in CONNECT – BCU's Alumni magazine.

The CCJPR benefited from internal investment from the University for the last four years, and used that investment primarily to recruit senior, research active staff, and two research assistants. This investment came as a result of a competitive process. The CCJPR submitted to the latest RAE 2008 and six Category "A" staff were returned under Unit of Assessment 40 (UoA). 90 per cent of this submission was rated at 2 or above, and as a result the CCJPR has been awarded £62Kpa. The RAE review panel was very complimentary about how quickly the CCJPR had

established itself, and also in relation to research activity that “had been built up in a relatively short period of time” with some Centre members having “strong practice backgrounds”. As for research outputs, the RAE Panel commented that “the outputs were largely found to be internationally recognised or better with one being of world-leading quality”. The RAE panel also noted that members of the Centre had good esteem factors and had used the media well.

These are interesting times to be involved with the CCJPR – primarily because our new Faculty arrangements have created an opportunity to re-align what the CCJPR has been doing with research active staff in the Division of Psychology, Law and Security Studies. This will intensify our “applied” focus. Indeed, we have recently appointed Michael Brookes – Director of Therapy at HMP Grendon (the only prison in Europe to operate as a therapeutic community) as Visiting Professor within the Faculty, and a Memorandum of Understanding between the University and the prison has just been signed. This creates a number of opportunities for further research, teaching and the development of better links between theory and practice, and it will come as no surprise to you that we hope to develop the CCJPR into a Centre for Applied Criminology in the months and years to come.

Professor David Wilson