

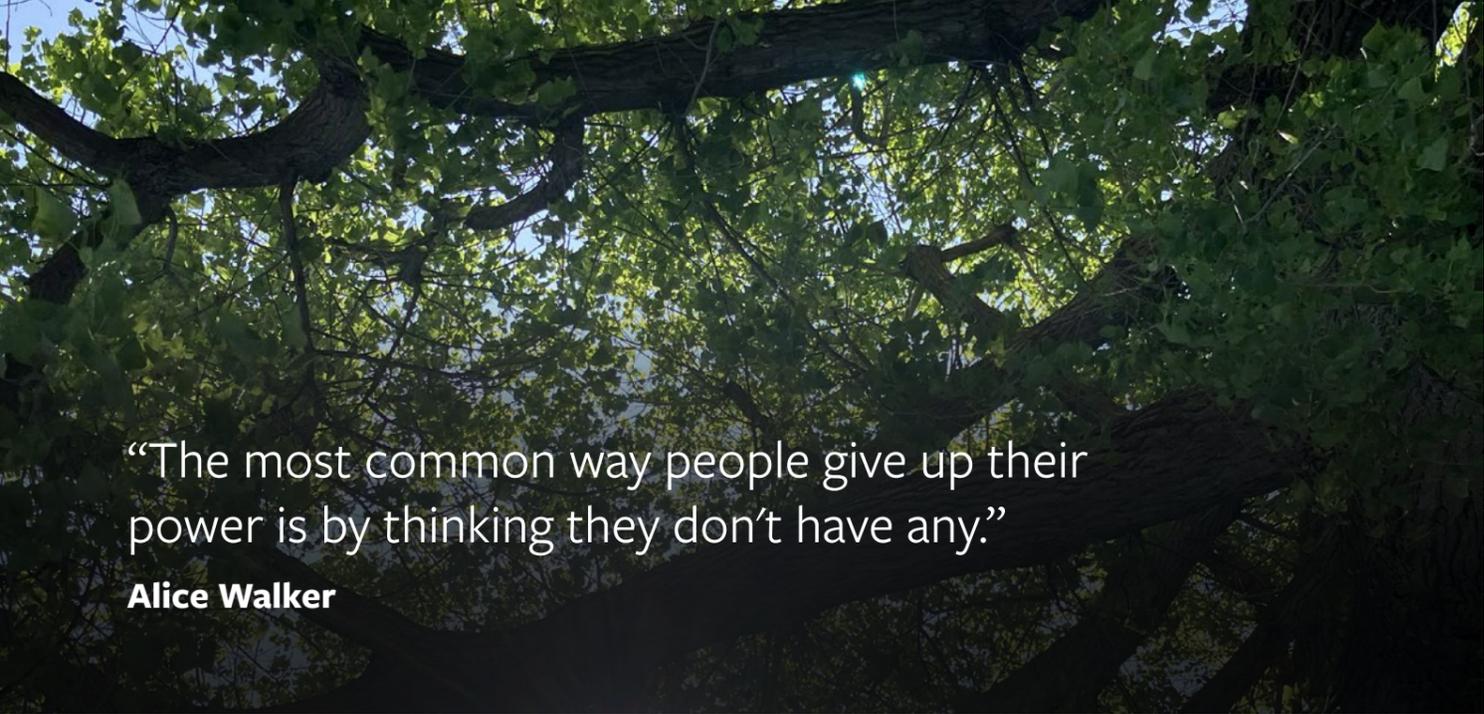


University of
Southampton

GROWING HOPE AND POWER

CHARITIES, ACADEMICS AND EVIDENCE

by **Kate Paradine and Harry Annison**



“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.”

Alice Walker

Hope and Believing in our Power

In this project we explored, with other academics and charities, the dynamics relating to the academic and third sector, particularly the opportunities and challenges to collaborating, with the aim of achieving positive change. Our project took as its particular focus women caught up in the criminal justice system and those experiencing male violence against women and girls.

In our initial ‘provocation’ discussion paper to kick off this small research project, we considered whether ‘learned helplessness’ across charities and academics had settled in. Was there a sense of ‘spinning our wheels’ in the absence of meaningful action by power-holders?

What we actually found was a strong sense of hope, power and belief that a better system of justice for women is possible. The charity leaders and academics involved in this research knew that things often take much longer in partnership and when they are truly rooted in robust evidence. They knew that ‘politics’ of coalitions, including balancing ‘egos’ of individuals and organisations could be energy-sapping and painful, yet there was a hunger to invest time and resources in making collaboration work.

There was a strong sense that ‘evidence’ needs to be understood holistically: a holy alliance of quantitative and qualitative data, theoretical perspectives, alongside the stories and ideas of people with lived experience of the justice system.

These were 5 practical changes that people felt were needed:

- 1 Shared vision and plan** for actions so organisations and individuals can have a stronger sense of where their work ‘fits’.
- 2 Map of research which models people’s journeys through the justice system**, so it can be seen where individual research ‘fits’ in the puzzle, including evidence about what does and doesn’t work and what has failed – all connected to the reality ‘on the ground’.
- 3 Platform to share research questions and highlight gaps in knowledge** to direct the attention of researchers and enable charities working on the ground to shape the evidence base.
- 4 Creating spaces to have the difficult conversations** and embracing divergent views, including on punishment and visions and values relating to reformist and abolitionist perspectives.
- 5 Sustainable funding models** of at least 3-5 years with an overview of the funding picture, so that funders can direct their resources where they are most needed.

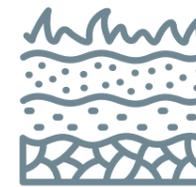
Creating a shared vision, mission and plan for the future

In responding to the key challenges identified during this project, we use the Strategy Tree model (conceived by Robert Laycock, **Yes We Can Community**) to conceptualise the potential for a shared cross-sector and cross-organisational language, vision and plan to build the evidence for a future justice system that works for women, girls and everyone affected by it. We use the tree image to ‘break down’ the components of this vision and plan.



Roots

The roots are the charity and academic sectors, including their individual and collective perspectives and experiences which form the context of change. This project focused on two sectors but policy makers, politicians and a whole host of other ‘roots’ come into play here – policing, the courts, probation, prisons, health, education.



Soil

The soil is an analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) that form the context of the tree’s growth. We found much nourishment to celebrate and be hopeful about here, but some poisons and pollutants too.



Trunk

The trunk is the core of the tree articulating the shared vision and mission - a crucial part of all actions which follow. Whilst the complexity of a shared vision was accepted there was also a sense that a ‘good enough’ consensus is possible.



Branches

The branches are the clear objectives and workstreams for a plan, underpinned by common values and ways of working together ‘running through’ the core of each branch.



Leaves

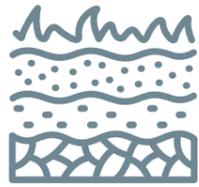
The leaves are where we get into the specific actions and deliverables needed to achieve these objectives and take forward the vision and mission.



Blossom and Fruit

We add these concepts to point to the specific examples of what success can look like. During this research we record some examples which we came across **HERE**.

In our research discussions, we spoke to charity leaders and academics about what is working well in partnerships between charities and academics in terms of driving change and what needs to be different. We found a deep commitment to, and hunger for, deep and lasting partnerships between the two sectors which ensure it is evidence and lived experience, rather than dogma, that shapes social change. We discovered many examples of these collaborations. Our discussions about what is working well and what is not enabled us to produce a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the ‘soil’ and to summarise the respective experiences and interests that make up the charity and academic sector ‘roots’ for the tree.



SOIL (CONTEXT)

State of the sector(s)

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats

Strengths

- Weight of varied evidence. A sense that in many respects the ‘argument has been won’ in relation to the harms of women’s imprisonment
- Cross-party support for policy change nationally (eg. **Commons Justice Committee**) and in local pockets
- Commitment to co-production with people who have lived experience
- Trusted sources of facts (eg. **Prison Reform Trust Bromley Briefings**), and making research accessible with summaries (eg. **Russell Webster blogs**, **College of Policing Practice Bank**)
- Cost/benefit analysis (eg. **Value of Women’s Centres report**)
- Investing in long term partnerships, that are planned, sustainable and well-led (eg. **Centre for Policing Research and learning**)

Opportunities

- Research Excellence Framework (REF) focus on Impact (and related support such as **ESRC Impact Acceleration**)
- General election and areas amenable to cross-party action
- Using a combination of data and stories in campaigns
- Research Map, targeting gaps and duplication (eg. **College of Policing Research Map**)
- Appetite for a shared vision, strategy and theory of change
- Building evidence for what does and doesn’t work
- Locally based in-depth evaluations (eg. **One Small Thing**)
- Leading role for people with lived experience
- Public engagement with evidence, (eg. **Transform Justice Court Watch London, Citizen panels, Public Engagement Research Unit; The Conversation**) and new podcast platforms

Weaknesses

- Not enough funding, time, ‘space to think’ and resource
- No shared theory of change, vision or strategy - Not discussing different visions and values (eg. **abolition, prison reform and ‘carceral’ approaches**)
- Too much relies on individuals, as there is a lack of systems for collaboration
- Academic research ‘too slow’, ‘jargony’, not digestible
- Lack of follow up or collective memory, resulting in ‘reinventing the wheel’
- No oversight of gaps in research resulting in duplication and poorly targeted resources
- Lack of understanding about different cultures and systems in academia and charities
- Lack of openness by power holders to engage with evidence, insufficient political will and a political cycle that breeds short termism and risk aversion (eg. access to prisons)

Threats

- Funding short term and limited charity funding for policy and research work
- Fear of identifying and unpicking failure (of initiatives, funded projects, campaigns)
- Partnerships not sustained due to competition and retreat to silos
- ‘Group think’, monolithic agreement and bland messaging
- Pockets of despair and some ‘learned helplessness’
- Loss of perceived independence for academics closely associated with specific charities or causes
- ‘Leaders’ committing to evidence, but not centring ‘front line’ practitioners
- Lack of ambition with insufficient focus on big vision systems change
- Ignoring/glossing over perspectives of victims of crime
- Punitive charity fault-lines (eg. push for harsher sentences by some charities)
- Lack of perceived common ground between reformist and abolitionist visions
- Lack of capacity and capability to keep up with technological developments (eg. artificial intelligence)



ROOTS (FOUNDATIONS)

Experience

Collective knowledge, understanding, skills, experience, expertise

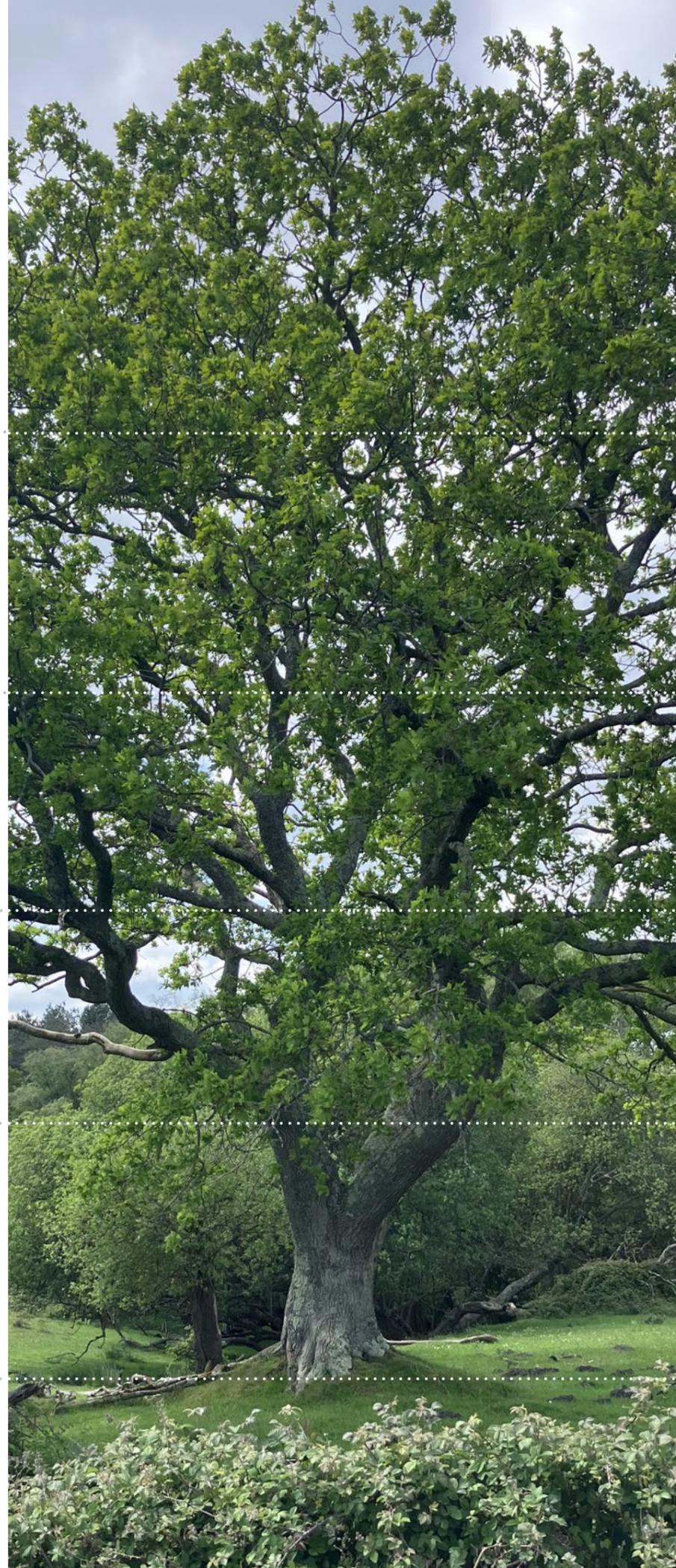
| Academics | Charities |
|--|--|
| Evidence | On the ground reality and ‘doing’ |
| Observation and analysis | Delivering services |
| Impartiality and objective analysis | Impact of systems failures |
| Data and how to use it | Advocacy and campaigning |
| Theoretical perspectives & conceptual insights | Needs/experiences of people affected by the justice system |

Interest

Personal, professional, individual, collective

| Academics | Charities |
|--|---|
| Building evidence for what does and doesn’t work | Proving what we do ‘works’ and understanding what doesn’t |
| Proving impact (REF) | Making case for systems change |
| Elevating voices of people with lived experience | |
| Organisational impact | |
| Personal legacy | |

Growing a Strategy Tree: Trunk, Branches, Leaves



Leaves (Detail)

5

ACTIONS

Things we are doing and need to do to make this happen



4

STRATEGIES

How we will achieve these objectives



3

OBJECTIVES

Targets to achieve the mission over 1-3 years

2

MISSION

What we can do to achieve this vision



1

VISION

The change we want to see in relation to the justice system

Branches (Connections)

Trunk (Core)



Map of evidence modelled on the journeys of people with lived experience 

Communities of practice for academics and charities 

Action Learning Sets for charity leaders and staff 

Evidence map of what we do and don't know and what has failed 

Platform for charities to 'float' research questions and gaps 

Create virtual and face-to-face spaces to have deep discussions about values 

Positive and solution-focused

Embracing difference

Learning from failure

Centring lived experience

Trust and collaboration

Valuing independence



OBJECTIVES

1 Create spaces and cultures to build evidence

2 Develop and use tools to share evidence

3 Communicate evidence to change the 'hearts and minds' of different audiences



MISSION

People with lived experience, charities, academics, policy makers and practitioners work together and challenge each other to grow, share and disseminate all forms of evidence to re-imagine, re-design and create the vision.



VISION

A trusted, evidence-based, community justice system which reduces crime and harm, addresses root causes of offending and ensures everyone feels and is safe, treated equitably, and able to thrive.

About

Professor Harry Annison works at Southampton Law School, University of Southampton. Dr Kate Paradine is a Visiting Fellow at Southampton Law School, and former CEO of the national charity, Women in Prison.

In Spring 2023, we explored with other academics and charities the dynamics relating to the academic and third sector, particularly the opportunities and challenges to collaborating with the aim of achieving positive change. Our project took as its particular focus women caught up in the criminal justice system and those experiencing male violence against women and girls.

Our work included one-to-one research discussions and interactive workshops with a range of stakeholders, including leaders and former leaders of criminal justice and women's charities and independent funders. This briefing draws together insights from this research and sets out a draft strategy with practical ideas for change. Our intention is to stimulate further reflection, discussion and action-planning. We hope that this ultimately contributes to the building of a better evidence-informed system of justice for everyone.

To facilitate this ongoing discussion, we invite comments on this briefing **HERE**. You can find an up to date list of contributors to this project **HERE**, examples of where things are going well and how the Strategy Tree is developing **HERE**.



**To continue this discussion,
please get in touch:**

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Thank You

This briefing builds on a **discussion paper** written by Dr Kate Paradine in March 2023 and is part of "Building academic-third sector praxis in criminal justice", a collaborative project between Dr Kate Paradine, Professor Harry Annison and Dr Megan Pearson (both Southampton Law School) supported by the UKRI Higher Education Innovation Fund. Thank you to Damola Ogunfoye for her research assistance.

Thank you to all the individuals and organisations contributing to this research and sharing their thoughts, ideas and experiences so generously. This includes the following organisations:

Barrow Cadbury Trust

Beyond the Streets

Birth Companions

Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (CCJS)

Centre for Justice Innovation

Clinks

College of Policing

Criminal Justice Alliance

Howard League for Penal Reform

Longford Trust

NACRO

National Women's Justice Coalition (NWJC)

One Small Thing

Open University

Police Foundation

Prisoners' Education Trust (PET)

Prison Reform Trust (PRT)

Revolving Doors

Russell Webster

Sheila McKechnie Foundation (SMK)

Transform Justice

Working Chance

Zahid Mubarek Trust (ZMT)



Find out more:

www.southampton.ac.uk

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