



Beyond Crisis Webinar

The Beyond crisis, cost and punishment: changing the crime and justice debate webinar explored how public opinions on crime and justice policy remain firmly penal and what the voluntary sector can do to tell a better story to progress understanding on the ways we should deal with crime.

Public still have strongly held beliefs that:

- 'prison too easy'
- a fatalistic attitude that people will always commit crime and not much can be done.
- that 'punishment works'
- that it is a personal choice to be a criminal.

This is called the 'rational actor' belief and is the 'biggest obstacle to reform arguments'.

A big reason for this is that the criminal justice system always focuses on the individual.

These attitudes can be difficult to challenge and so reframing the debate is critical if attitudes are to change.

See an excellent toolkit on reframing - https://www.transformjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/TJ_Framing_Toolkit_WEB4.pdf

Other useful tips mentioned by participants for reframing are:

- Referring to our moral values around compassion
- Using metaphors to explain e.g. criminal world is a raging river – need to bring people to safer shores or the 'gears' metaphor – that using prison is like driving in 5th gear – only use sometimes otherwise would wreck car.
- Do not focus on the financial cost of sending someone to prison argument.
- Try not to contradict people, but talk about 'what has worked'.
- Use social media to show journeys - free course on US Frameworks website - <https://frameworksacademy.org/products/wide-angle-lens> Peer Power have a 'Code of Ethics'.
- Use a positive, solutions focussed narrative
- Tailor to the audience. For example – see Howard League [letter to Rishi Sunak](#)

Howard League talked about the need for and value in having these discussions with internal work teams too. Culture change starts at home.

Howard League receive a lot of calls from media but they only comment when they can add value, and try where possible to bring the stories *to* the media instead of the other way round. That way the journalists need their help to tell the story and they stand a better chance of retaining control and achieving better outcomes.



Some places have published guides for journalists – e.g. On Road Media – regarding the reporting of poverty. The CJA is currently working on a briefing on this as well having spoken to journalists and academics and charities to get insights. Hoping to publish within the next few months

Moving inputs from Sherry Peck, Safer London and Stephen from Changing Lives, Newcastle around reframing knife crime and homelessness debate.

Chris McCully, CJVSF talked about how far Scotland has to go, despite having a seemingly more 'progressive' system.

Conclusions were:

- That language matters because it causes harm.
- that communication and social media is a very important tool for reframing that most organisations cannot make best use of but we need to try if we are to change the debate.

If you would like to listen contact fionnuala@transformjustice.org.uk for a **recording of the session**.

If you want to start applying reframing to your work, Transform Justice's new [step-by-step guide](#) to reframing your communications is an excellent place to start. And there's much more information on the [reframing page](#) of their website.

If the discussion about **how to build personal experiences into your communications (or not)** piqued your interest, have a read of this blog from TJ director Penelope Gibbs: [Are personal stories too personal? How to influence more progressive criminal justice media coverage](#)