

# All our justice: People with convictions and 'participatory' criminal justice

Gillian Buck, Kemi Ryan, Natasha Ryan, TP Conference 2019

From Gillian Buck, Paula Harriott, Kemi Ryan, Natasha Ryan, Philippa Tomczak,  
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Routledge Handbook of Service User Involvement in Human Services Research  
and Education*. Oxon: Routledge.

# Introduction

- Introduction to the writing partnership (Gill)
- Practice issues raised (Kemi and Tasha)
- Reflections on the partnership (Kemi and Tasha)
- Future challenges for participatory justice AND research partnerships (All)

# Working together for voice

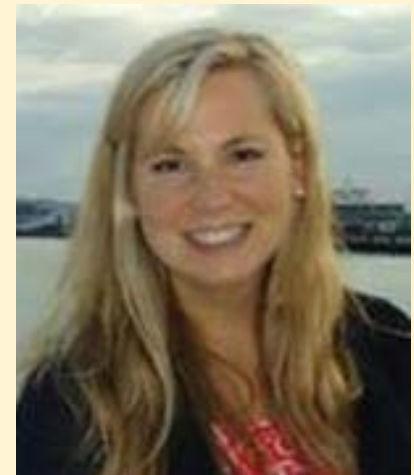


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- **Paula**

- I am a senior manager at *the Prison Reform Trust*, leading prisoner involvement nationally.
- I am a woman with lived experience of imprisonment, having served an eight-year sentence for supplying Class A drugs (four years in prison and four years on licence). Reflecting on my life experiences and activating them for social purpose informs my approach to my work. *But, why would traumatised prisoners want to help improve the very system that has traumatised them? Why do we get involved?*

- ‘Data’ we present was gathered through three prompts: *approach to involvement, enablers and barriers, and future challenges*. Paula (in writing), and Kemi and Natasha (in voice) reflected on their lived experiences of criminalisation; stigma; discrimination; and supporting others through the ‘aftermath’ of crime. Gill and **Philippa** used the prompts to analyse the existing literature.



# Why participatory criminal justice?

- Criminalised people involved in development and delivery of criminal justice services around the world.
- Peer mentoring, design, commissioning, delivery and policy lobbying.
- Yet, criminalised people rarely feature in texts on service user involvement
- Consulted but not meaningfully included (Haines & Case, 2015).
- Participation and engagement **vital for democratic, sustainable and responsive public services** (Bovaird, 2007)
- User-led service provision credible, innovative, alternative solutions (Buck, 2019).



# Why a joint approach?

- (We know) people with lived experiences of CJS are involved with, and excluded from, criminal justice knowledge production.
- Following Beresford's (2016, p. 3) weaving of the personal and the political, we adopt a reflective **critical storytelling approach**, weaving 'experiential and academic knowledge, lived experience and research findings'.
- 'Leaders' with lived **experiences** reflect on (lack of) choice, control and involvement in services, research and education.
- 'Academics' reflect on **research** findings.
- We all reflect on (situated) privilege and disadvantage.





# Centring the practitioner experience

- Approach taken (Reformed – community relations)
- Barriers (discrimination and rejection)
- Enablers (togetherness, trust, diverse representation)
- ***Reflections on writing partnership***



# Three future challenges



- Avoid **tokenism** and be sensitive shame/trauma-invoking life experiences. This means honest reflections on power held and how prepared (or not) to share.
- Explore **coproduction** to engage communities in a movement for change, mindful of the need for holistic, often long-term support (e.g. housing, health).
- Include a **range of perspectives**. A single 'user voice' is not possible, but BAME men and women are overrepresented as recipients of punishment and underrepresented as leaders and influencers.



# Future challenges for research partnerships



- Avoid **tokenism**, create meaningful research partnerships mindful of the realities of practice demands and unequal power in partnerships.
- Explore **coproduction** in setting priorities for research, seeking funding and carrying out. *PAR will not answer every question, but can build meaningful partnerships.*
- Include a **range** of perspectives. *Where are the gaps in our knowledge? Who is not supported to develop research and can we remove barriers?*