

Charities at 'heart' of criminal justice system

Charities could play a bigger part in running prisons and probation services under a new National Offender Management System Bill which will be part of the Queen's speech next month.

Gerry Sutcliffe, justice and management minister, revealed that the Bill would be in the speech and emphasised the role the voluntary sector could play while speaking at a Labour Party fringe meeting organised by the Social Market Foundation and the Rainer charity.

Jan Berry, chairman of the Police Federation, also spoke at the fringe and at a Liberal Democrat conference debating whether charities are tough enough to run prisons and probation services.

Mrs Berry said that the real question is around whether organisations in the charity sector could provide the right skills.

She added: "If they have skills to do it then yes they can do it but the other thing for me is the financial sustainability. The voluntary sector would have to improve the sustainability of funding, the accountability of how money was spent and co-ordination of services."

However, Joyce Moseley, chief executive of Rainer, a national voluntary organisation that works with 18,000 under-supported young people, said that voluntary services had been at the 'heart' of the criminal justice system for years. She added that they are 'flexible and lack bureaucracy' and have gained trust because they are not a state organisation.

Ms Moseley added that they were determined to keep volunteers as they have access to the 'roots and heart' of a community and someone offenders are much more likely to trust.

Ms Berry told the fringe that charities did have a crucial role and could provide essential services, adding: "I have been a police officer for 30 years and I could not have done some of the things I have done without charities."

Could charities run prisons?



Photography: Home Office

Remembering officers killed on duty

Families gathered with colleagues and friends at National Police Memorial Day to pay their respects and remember police officers who were killed while on duty.

Candles were lit at the main ceremony in Belfast's Waterfront Hall, on Sunday, October 1, to remember those who had sacrificed their lives.

More than 2,000 people attended the third National Police Memorial Day alongside VIPs including Home Secretary John Reid and Paul Leighton, deputy chief constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Many were visibly as the Last Post was played. At the end of the service petals were released representing the 4,000 police officers who have died on duty since modern policing began.

On the official date of National Police Memorial Day, St Stephen's Day, September 29, Alan Jones from the Federation of England and Wales joined PC Peter Kemp, a Met officer from Charing Cross police station, to lay a floral tribute at the national police memorial in central London.

Alan Jones, Federation representative, with PC Peter Kemp



Photography: Lisa Ryszkowska

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