



Local Talking Justice meetings – a basic guide

What is Talking Justice?

The Prison Reform Trust's Talking Justice programme, supported by the Monument Trust, is aimed at informing debate about prison and community sentencing, and inspiring and equipping people outside the criminal justice system to help make it better by volunteering or seeking reforms.

The Prison Reform Trust is working with the U3A, Pact, Victim Support, the Magistrates' Association and others to co-ordinate locally organised Talking Justice meetings nationwide, to get people talking and getting involved.

In May 2013 we launched two new, free resources which can be used at the meetings:

- **Where Do You Stand?** - produced with the U3A - is an authoritative and engaging set of discussion tools about prison and community sentencing
- **What Can I Do?** is a comprehensive guide to volunteering and seeking reforms in the criminal justice system, produced with Pact.

Talking Justice in Canterbury

The first local Talking Justice meeting was held in June at the Friends Meeting House in Canterbury and was attended by 11 people plus the organiser, local U3A Chair, Ursula Steiger. The main part of the meeting lasted an hour, with another hour for mingling and discussion afterwards. Those attending included local magistrates, Soroptimists, U3A members, a former prison chaplain and a representative of the local probation trust.

Find out more and download both publications: www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/talkingjustice

What are the meetings about?

The purpose of the meetings is to provide a space where members of the public can find out more about the penal system in England and Wales and take part in an informed discussion, and to raise awareness about how people can get involved by volunteering or seeking reforms.

"I am really excited by the buzz the session created."

Ursula Steiger, U3A
Local meeting organiser

What happens at the meetings?

The format of local meetings will vary. Numbers attending may range anywhere from six to 50, depending on local interest and capacity to organise the event, and may last from one hour to three hours or more.

The meeting may be led by the local organiser or someone else. Part of the meeting will consist of selected activities from the **Where Do You Stand?** pack, including the 'before

and after' attitudes survey (Activities 2 and 7) where time allows. You don't need to be an expert to lead the activities, but having one or more people with experience in the criminal justice system taking part may add depth to the discussion.

Copies of the **What Can I Do?** volunteering guide should be available, and representatives of local voluntary organisations should be invited to talk about what's on offer. You may also want to invite someone with firsthand experience of the penal system (e.g. magistrate/probation worker/person with convictions) to speak about their experiences.

Try to conclude the discussion by asking participants to sum up what they think they have learned, how this has changed their attitudes if at all, whether they think plan to take their interest further and, if so, how.

What is involved in organising a local meeting?

If you are interested in organising a local Talking Justice meeting, you would usually need to:

- Plan and possibly (but not necessarily) lead the meeting
- Book a venue
- Invite people to come
- Invite expert speakers where wanted
- Send feedback to Prison Reform Trust

What help is available from the Prison Reform Trust?

We can help you organise your meeting. For example, we can:

- Help with any queries about the resources and give guidance on how to run the meeting
- Provide copies of the resources
- Help to arrange local expert speakers
- Help to find and book a venue
- Help to spread the word about your meeting to local voluntary organisations.

We may be able to cover some costs, such as venue hire, catering (tea and biscuits) and travel expenses for those who need assistance, by written agreement in advance and on production of receipts. We are also planning to run a number of **'train the trainer' workshops** for those wanting to try out the materials before running their own session.

Please tell us about your meeting!

Even if you don't need our help to organise your meeting, we would still like to hear about your plans and to receive feedback and survey results afterwards. We are particularly interested in hearing about any planned follow up activity. This might range from arranging a further meeting to writing to your local MP about matters of local concern or researching local volunteering opportunities.

I'm interested - what should I do next?

Contact us if you are interested in organising or attending a local meeting or 'train the trainer' workshop, if you want more information or if you would like to receive a printed copy of **What Can I Do?** or the **Talking Justice DVD**.