

The Criminal Justice Special Interest Group has hung up its handcuffs!

SUE MERCHANT, SECRETARY TO THE CJ SIG

The CJ SIG was set up formally in June 2006, soon after OR47 in Chester, where a well-supported stream of CJ papers energised those present to try to bring different parts of the CJ system together. The overall purpose of the group was to enable practitioners and others interested in Criminal Justice matters to share ideas and OR methods with a view to spreading the word about OR and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of criminal justice services, including police, prison and probation work plus Home Office and MoJ research/analysis. In practice the group also led to many members being encouraged in their use of OR and to become involved in the ORS, and they made many useful contacts.

The group's inaugural and very memorable event, ably arranged by our then chairman Ian Newsome and colleagues from West Yorkshire Police, was held at the Police HQ in Wakefield in January 2006: this was extremely well attended and even opened by the Chief Constable. Amongst several most interesting speakers, Professor Mike Pidd gave us a fascinating insight into his study to improve answering times in a police force. Over the next 13 years the SIG was delighted to receive talks from some 150 speakers (not counting conference streams) including academics, practitioners and invited guests, and we would like to record here our hearty thanks to them all for their immensely hard work. It is difficult to single out talks to give a flavour of topics we covered but if I had to choose four to illustrate the range: Charlie Lee from MoJ spoke about the use of DEA to measure criminal court efficiency; Graham Down and Mark Johnson from Kent Police described their trial of a crime prediction method; Tom McBride from the Early Intervention Foundation told us about his research relating to gang and youth violence; and, Professor Gloria Laycock from the Jill Dando Institute at UCL talked to us about methods to reduce different types of crime.

For those of you who would like further information about the talks we enjoyed, back copies of recent issues of Inside OR (which can be found on the ORS website) include reports of events, and some of the slides/presentations are still to be found on the CJ SIG part of the ORS website.

In the group's heyday over 30 people attended meetings, but sadly with modern day work pressures and the huge reduction in police OR-type groups, it has become increasingly difficult to find speakers and audiences. The committee (especially long serving members such as our chairman Martin Rahman and Ian Seath, plus more recent and equally enthusiastic members Chun-yee Cheng and Graham Ison) deserve a huge vote of thanks for their hard work over the years

in helping me pull a programme together, chairing meetings, welcoming members to events, and helping with the write-ups afterwards. Thanks so much!

We are also very grateful to those members from the Home Office and Ministry of Justice who helped us find super rooms for talks in central London, until government budgets made this tricky! I am especially grateful to Hilary Wilkes who made my life much simpler by finding us alternative venues at reasonable costs to the ORS, frightfully efficiently, and all with a smile! The ORS has provided many other valuable services such as keeping lists up to date, hosting some events for us in Birmingham, and paying speakers' travel expenses. Thanks so much to you all too. 

