



Revolving Dore

By Humfrey Malins, CBE, MP

Chapter I

The problem of young offenders – anyone under twenty one years old – is so immense and complex that I cannot hope in this mercifully short pamphlet to cover it all. So I won't even try. Instead, I shall focus on the custody regime as it affects young offenders – those under twenty one years old who are locked up for their crimes. And I want to see if the regime works. What do young offenders do whilst they are in custody? Is it purposeful and useful? Are they diverted from crime? Do they come out better people than when they went in – less likely to re-offend? These are the issues I want to address.

Sadly, my conclusion is that the custody regime for young offenders is far from satisfactory and needs reform. It is very bad value for money and fails to prevent young people from re-offending. As we shall see, young offenders in custody, particularly those over sixteen, spend far too many hours a day locked up in their cells. They often serve sentences which are far too short for any useful work to be done with them. They spend too few hours receiving education and training. Their levels of literacy and numeracy at the beginning of their sentence are often appalling, and don't get better. They play far too little sport and in particular team sport. Not enough is done to prepare them for life on the outside- there is not enough emphasis on resettlement which is a vital factor- and too many re-offend within a short time of release. The result is that for many youngsters, the custody estate is all too often a revolving door and this is a tragedy.

There is no magic bullet, but I will suggest a number of policies which I believe may improve the situation and result in less re-offending. These are based on a three pronged approach that includes a full individual plan on admission to custody, a better regime in custody and an improved resettlement programme. In turn, this is aimed at affecting young people in three ways: improving abilities and skills, improving attitude and self esteem and putting them back into a more positive environment.

Chapter II

Value for Money – I Don't Think So!

To decide if we get value for money from the use of custody for young offenders, we must look first at costs and then examine re-offending rates.

Cost – People laugh when they hear that a year in custody is more than expensive than a year at Eton College. In fact a place at Eton costs £28,000 per year and it probably comes out at a little over £30,000 with extras.

This is nearly as expensive as a year in a Young Offender Institution. For example, take Feltham Remand Centre (Young Offender Institution) which is amongst the better known of these institutions. If you are aged fifteen to seventeen, you go into what is called “Feltham A”. Here, according to the Government, the annual cost per inmate is £43,600. If you are between eighteen and twenty one you go into “Feltham B” where the annual cost is £42,050¹.

There are a number of Young Offender Institutions across England and the average cost across the board is £32,799 per year².

Still, £32,799 is a lot for the tax payer to stump up – and the tax payer deserves value for money.

But even £32,799 is not nearly as much as custody costs for the **very young** offenders. Huge resources are devoted to the under fifteens who go into Secure Training Centres that are provided by the Youth Justice Board and privately run, if they've committed sufficiently serious offences. Here the average annual cost per youngster is a staggering £191,618³.

So for a young man sentenced to a year in custody, who goes to an ordinary run of the mill Young Offender Institution, the grateful tax payer will cough up over £16,000 on the six months (out of the 12 sentenced) he spends in custody – why? Well some tax payers will say

¹ Written Parliamentary Question, tabled by Humfrey Malins CBE MP, answered by David Hanson MP, 17th November 2008.

² Written Parliamentary Question, tabled by Humfrey Malins CBE MP, answered by David Hanson MP, 17th November 2008, figures based on 2007-08, provided by the National Offender Management Service.

³ Written Parliamentary Question, tabled by Humfrey Malins CBE MP, answered by David Hanson MP, 17th November 2008, figures based on 2007-08, provided by the Youth Justice Board.

it's to keep him off the streets and punish him and others will go further and say "yes, that's true but we also want him to come out a better young man who is not going to re-offend." But he does re-offend and that proves to me that we are not getting value for money from the young person's custody estate.

Re-offending rates are depressing.

Table 1

Age ⁽¹⁾		Number of releases from custody	One year	
			Rate of reoffending (Percentage)	Number of offences per 100 offenders
13 ⁽²⁾	2004	20	95.0	740.0
	2005	18	100.0	588.9
	2006	19	79.0	531.6
14 ⁽²⁾	2004	47	83.0	363.8
	2005	53	75.6	447.2
	2006	46	95.7	500.0
15	2004	140	77.1	457.9
	2005	118	80.5	465.3
	2006	131	78.6	432.8
16	2004	244	77.1	401.6
	2005	275	70.2	424.7
	2006	262	79.4	433.2
17	2004	362	73.8	397.0
	2005	374	71.7	370.3
	2006	355	71.8	349.0

⁽¹⁾ The figures relating to juveniles aged 10 to 12 have been removed as the extremely low numbers (fewer than 10 offenders) make the data unreliable for interpretation.

⁽²⁾ Greater than 10 and less than 50 offenders, treat the data with caution.

Table 2 shows the same information for offenders aged between 18 and 20.

Table 2

Age		Number of offenders releases from custody	One year	
			Rate of reoffending (Percentage)	Number of offences per 100 offender
18	2004	559	63.3	355.5
	2005	551	68.4	336.8
	2006	477	58.9	271.9
19	2004	783	58.1	295.3
	2005	689	57.0	278.5
	2006	644	57.1	270.7
20	2004	789	60.0	289.7
	2005	738	52.0	238.5
	2006	695	50.8	219.7

You will have seen, for example, that in 2005 a thirteen year old released from custody was 100% sure of re-offending within the next year. The last column indicates that he probably committed nearly six further offences in that year.

You will see that a sixteen year old released in 2006 had a 79.4% chance of re-offending within a year of release and not just re-offending once. According to a Government answer, this young man will commit four or more offences in the first year after release from custody.

But it's worse than that. Low detection rates together with all the anecdotal evidence, suggests that a criminal is only caught (and therefore only comes to the Government's statisticians attention) once per four or five crimes committed. An Illustration of this is that the rate of successfully detected total recorded crimes for 2006/2007 was 26% and for 2007/2008 it was 28%⁴. For many crimes such as robbery (20%), burglary (13%) and theft (23%), successful detection rates were lower and these are just the crimes that are reported.

So, we're spending over £32,000 on a young man in custody for a year with the following result – he comes out and within 12 months of release the odds are very heavy that he will offend not just four times, but perhaps over twenty times.

This is an enormous sum of money and costs society greatly.

It is failure on a grand scale.

⁴ Home Office Statistical Bulletin 07/08, Crime in England and Wales 2007/2008, Table 7.01

Chapter III

The Link Between Offending and Literacy

A 2004 Prisons Inspectorate Report on juveniles in custody said that 83% of boys under 18 who were in custody had been excluded from school⁵.

And another figure- the Ministry of Justice reports that 52% of Young Offenders in custody aged 18-20 said they had been permanently excluded from school⁶. These are astonishing figures and point, do they not, to a link between school exclusions and crime.

It is probable that those excluded from school were so excluded because of bad behaviour, and this is often linked to the fact that the boy cannot keep up with his peers and mates in class. The young man falls behind at school, starts to behave badly and begins to truant- partly for fear of being called stupid or out of embarrassment. Lacking in encouragement at home, the boy becomes disruptive when he does attend school, he lacks the ability to read work sheets or write exercises and his lack of verbal skills mean he cannot follow or take part in lessons, and therefore becomes a prime candidate for exclusion.

In a 2007 report by the Institute for Criminal Policy Research at King's College London, the results of research undertaken with 18-21 year olds at Feltham YOI showed that the mean score for non-verbal IQ was 88.7 and 81.5 for verbal IQ⁷. This is a significant gap, which demonstrates a comparative lack of verbal skills amongst young offenders. It has been suggested that this gap is even wider amongst the Under 17 year olds. The research also showed that 39% could be considered to have an IQ in the mild or border Learning Disability range.

I believe there is a real link between illiteracy and bad behaviour, exclusion, and then crime.

Support for this argument comes from the fact that both in our Young Offender estate and adult prisons, illiteracy and semi literacy are prevalent. Talk to those in the criminal justice system and opinions vary but few with experience ever suggest that in the adult prison population illiteracy and semi literacy apply to less than half the prison population.

⁵ 'Juveniles in Custody', HM Inspectorate of Prisons report, 2004, pg 7.

⁶ 'The problems and needs of newly sentenced prisoners: results from a national survey', Ministry of Justice Research Series 16/08, October 2008, pg 10.

⁷ 'Assessing the Prevalence of Learning Disability among young adult offenders in Feltham' 2007, Institute for Criminal Policy Research, School of Law, King's college London, pg 16.

The situation in the Young Offender Estate is also bad- possibly worse. One senior official in the Young Offender Estate told me that in his judgement over 80% of youngsters aged 15 had the literacy and numeracy level of an 8 year old.

So where do we go for our statistics? I asked the Secretary of State for Justice in November 2008 what percentage of young offenders in custody were unable to read or write on admission and on release. A slightly disappointing answer referred to the Learning and Skills Assessments which were carried out in Young Offender Institutions for young people under the age of 18.

The answer was that 24% of those assessments showed literacy levels below Level 1 with numeracy levels below Level 1 running at 33%⁸. The figures for over 18s were not available, as learning and skills assessments are only carried out if a problem is raised.

To put it another way, around a quarter of the persons assessed had a literacy level of a child somewhere between four and eleven years old. About a third of those assessed had the same problem with numeracy. And the problem at some institutions is much worse, I know from my own enquiries that of the 2008 results for Feltham YOI, 41.5% of young people were below level 1 for literacy and 62.6% were below level 1 for numeracy⁹.

But what does all this mean? Actually it's rather hard to find out but what follows is going to give you a pretty good idea. The 24% who are below Level 1 so far as literacy is concerned can probably read and understand simple phrases. They can probably read a child's short story with easy words and they will understand signs like "no smoking" and probably a bus stop sign. But they probably can't read and understand a newspaper article. They can write a little bit – but not very well – perhaps in capitals.

On the numeracy side, they'd struggle with their times tables and would have problems adding sums of money together. In short, they are going to struggle to cope in society. No complicated form-filling for them, no ability to draw up a CV, no comprehension of a manual which might explain a little about a car engine.

⁸ Written Parliamentary Question, tabled by Humfrey Malins CBE MP, answered by David Hanson MP, 4th November 2008.

⁹ Levels from 2008 Education induction on Reception at Feltham A YOI.

From all this I conclude that more emphasis should be placed in our Young Offender Institutions on ensuring that young offenders read and write competently and can add and subtract. Such abilities give them a better chance of success in the outside world.

And so it is an opportune moment to have a look at the statistics to see how much time and money is spent purely on education at the Young Offender Institutions across the country.

But before we do, make your own judgement as to how much time in a seven day week at a Young Offender Institution should be spent undergoing education or training. What do you think? 25 hours? 30 hours? After all, a mere four hours per day in a seven day week would mean 28 hours per week in education – not that much. So what is your conclusion about what is needed?

Having decided how much time should be spent, have a guess at how much time is actually spent.

Consider this Parliamentary answer of November 2008.

<i>Prison</i>	<i>Average number of hours spent on education or training activities per prisoner per week</i>
Ashfield	15.4
Aylesbury	6.1
Brinsford	9.6
Castington	10
Cookham Wood	14.1
Deerbolt	7.9
Feltham	7.5
Glen Parva	5.3
Hindley	12.2
Huntercombe	12.2
Lancaster Farms	9.7
Northallerton	9.8
Portland	5.9
Reading	4.9
Rochester	3.6
Stoke Heath	6.8
Swinfen Hall	8.2
Thorn Cross	11.5
Warren Hill	17
Werrington	19.8
Wetherby	12.2

⁽¹⁾ Data are provisional and subject to ongoing validation.

The position is terrible, is it not?

Take Feltham Young Offender Institution – a place we have mentioned earlier. 7.5 is the average number of hours spent on education or training activities per prisoner per week. At Feltham there are many people serving life sentences, and a great number who are remanded in custody prior to trial sometimes for months on end. 7.5 hours of education per week is laughable.

Aylesbury – this houses over four hundred young men serving sometimes quite long sentences. 6.1 hours per week education.

What about the Young Offender Institution at Reading? 4.9 hours per week education or training.

These figures are absolutely horrifying and the situation has got to change. The position may be worse than we think- because the figures just relate to “education or training” in general- much of which probably is not about literacy.

Last November I asked the Minister the following question – in relation to Young Offender Institutions, how much of the £32,799 average annual cost was spent on education.

The answer was £1,190, a miniscule proportion of the total figure. The Young Offender Estate must grip the problem early and act swiftly.

I do not want to suggest that improving a young offender’s literacy and numeracy is the single solution to stopping re-offending. Inability to read and write is obviously not the only reason for an individual partaking in criminal behaviour. The link is only justifiably an indirect one. Similarly, it is not the single solution. As the Literacy Trust has recently reported, “Literacy should not be held up as a panacea for crime prevention and reduction. It would be more productive to recognise literacy as one of a range of tools that should be implemented to effectively rehabilitate”¹⁰. Indeed, at Secure Training Centres such as Oakhill, where 1 month education is said to be the equivalent of 5 months of normal development, although re-offending rates are not kept by the Government, it is thought that they are similar to regular YOIs.

¹⁰ ‘Literacy changes lives: The role of literacy in offending behaviour- a discussion piece’ National Literacy trust, November 2008, pg 7.

However, if we are to help a young offender not to re-offend, there must be a significant change in his situation, his abilities and his mindset. I see literacy in particular as a crucial life skill that can act as a catalyst towards such change.

So I suggest the following policies:

-There should be a thorough assessment of a young person's literacy and numeracy immediately on admission to the young offender custodial estate. Indeed the probation pre sentence report presented to the court prior to sentence should contain relevant material on this subject.

-If the child has been statemented at school (has a learning disability), a full copy of the statement must be provided to the Governor who must be legally obliged to act on it. Individual circumstances should not be ignored.

-Following the assessment, an individual plan must be drawn up, in conjunction with the offender and agreed with him, setting out what are for HIM realistic goals in literacy, numeracy and education generally.

-The goals will be based on the young man abilities, potential and length of sentence and early release should be linked in part to achievement.

-Guarantee a minimum of 25 hours per week education for each young offender in custody with a huge emphasis on literacy and numeracy and verbal skills.

-Assess progress monthly and write individual reports for each young offender.

-Make attendance at education classes compulsory for under 16s, and for those 16-20 make early release in part dependent on progress and effort in education and training.

Chapter IV

Locked up for too long

I mentioned at the beginning that youngsters in custody spend far too many hours locked up in their cells.

You may be interested to know how long young people are spent locked up and the parliamentary answer set out below gives us the answer.

Average time unlocked per prisoner per weekday

<i>Prison</i>	<i>Average time unlocked per prisoner per weekday</i>
Ashfield	9.7
Aylesbury	7.0
Brinsford	⁽¹⁾ —
Castington	8.8
Cookham Wood	18.6
Deerbolt	7.0
Feltham	9.5
Glen Parva	8.3
Hindley	9.2
Huntercombe	6.6
Lancaster Farms	7.8
Northallerton	7.6
Portland	7.9
Reading	7.5
Rochester	7.6
Stoke Heath	8.5
Swinfen Hall	7.8
Thorn Cross	12.5
Warren Hill	9.7
Wellington	10.1
Wetherby	10.7

Figures vary from one Young Offender Institution to another, but I think it is shameful and counter productive, for example in an institution such as Aylesbury, Deerbolt, Huntercombe and Reading, the young man spends 16 or 17 hours per day locked up in his cell.

The reason I think it is harmful for a young man to be locked up for 17 hours a day is that whilst he is locked up he is not receiving education, training, teaching on literacy and numeracy, or playing sport, all of which are vital and life-enhancing activities.

I have met boys in custody who have not seen the sky for 5 months- their sport is limited to a gym.

Sport

I want to make brief reference to Sport and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. In the judgement of many professionals, team sport can bring discipline and self discipline. Time spent playing in a team, whether it is football or rugby, can bring many qualities: the ability to take a knock without losing ones temper, the awareness of the needs of others, a degree of unselfishness, the ability to lose gracefully and as well as win magnanimously, learning to channel and control violence, working with others. All these are fine qualities, much needed in life, which come through team sport. The trouble is we've lost many of our playing fields in our prison estate. But if young men in particular can learn to control their violence and to channel it by playing team sport, that is all to the good.

This is a hard thing to prove, but there have been many studies that look at the link between sport and crime. One shining example is shown through the range of sporting opportunities that a youth centre in Bristol has provided, set up by Bristol City Council in November 1997. Sport England reported that between October 1997 and January 1998, juvenile crime in the local police beat area reduced by 43% compared with the same period 12 months earlier¹¹. The report goes on to say that "Experiential evidence exists to show that sport can have an indirect impact on reducing juvenile crime by providing challenge, adventure, and giving meaning and a sense of purpose to young people's lives where previously there was a vacuum. Sport delivered in a sound ethical framework can engender self-respect, self-esteem, confidence and leadership abilities."

I asked a parliamentary question about how many hours were spent playing sport per week. You will see the answers below.



<i>Prison</i>	<i>Average number of hours spent on sport or other physical activity per prisoner per week</i>
Ashfield	8.2
Aylesbury	3.5
Brinsford	2.5
Castington	2.6
Cookham Wood	7.7
Deerbolt	4.7
Feltham	3.1
Glen Parva	2.8

¹¹ 'The value of sport to local authorities, Sport England, June 2009, pg 8.

Hindley	4.2
Huntercombe	4.5
Lancaster Farms	2.2
Northallerton	3.1
Portland	2
Reading	3.7
Rochester	3
Stoke Heath	3.9
Swinfen Hall	3.1
Thorn Cross	7.3
Warren Hill	2.6
Wellington	4.1
Wetherby	4.4

(1) Data are provisional and subject to ongoing validation.

These figures include PE and pushing weights in the gym- and are in my judgement too low. In too many of our YOIs young men are spending fewer than 3 hours per week on physical education and recreational sport.

Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme

And on the same subject of physical exercise, I remember an employer once telling me that he always interviewed any job applicant who had done the gold Duke of Edinburgh Award. Why cannot this wonderful activity be more widespread in the Young Offender Institutions? The table below shows the frequency of the scheme at four of the major YOIs. All the awards are at bronze level.

	<i>Feltham</i>	<i>Portland⁽¹⁾</i>	<i>Glen Parva</i>	<i>Aylesbury</i>
2005	0	0	0	2
2006	0	0	0	8
2007	0	0	0	8
2008	1	0	0	2
2009	1	0	0	0

⁽¹⁾ Portland have enrolled six prisoners this year to undertake bronze level.

The answer to the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme question is very disappointing. I know that efforts are being made to introduce this into the young offender estate, but it does so much for a young person that I think the efforts need to be redoubled. Certainly many of the professionals who work in our youth custody estate are convinced of the need for it. People who successfully complete gold or silver awards invariably achieve confidence and self esteem which are very good qualities to take back into the community.

The DofE reports that in a recent survey of Gold award holders (not achieved in custody): 85% reported increased self-confidence, 83% had greater team-working skills, 79% felt they had better leadership ability, 78% believed their decision-making was much improved and nearly two out of three respondents said that having an Award had helped them gain their current job¹². As well as this, recent research jointly undertaken by Cardiff and Glyndŵr Universities indicated through CRIME-PICS II analysis that young people in custody demonstrated a more positive attitude towards offending in general, higher levels of victim empathy, perceived reward for crime, reduced anticipation of re-offending, and perceived fewer life problems in the future¹³.

And so my policy recommendations are:

-The Young Offender should be out of his cell for 12 hours a day at least, engaged in really purposeful activity and plenty of it outdoors.

-In all our Young Offender Institutions, offenders should spend 10 hours per week on sport or other physical activity, preferably team sport.

-Ensure the widespread introduction of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme in the young offender estate and I believe we will see changes for the better. There is so little Duke of Edinburgh work going on at the moment that there can be no evidence on the point.

¹² http://www.dofe.org/en/content/cms/About_Us/Benefits___impact/Benefits___impact.aspx

¹³ 'The Duke of Edinburgh Award: Making a difference with young people in custody', The Social Exclusion Research Unit of Glyndŵr University (Wrexham) and Cardiff School of Social Sciences, 2009.

Chapter V

Shorter or Longer Sentences

My policy here is simple – there is no earthly point in putting a young man in custody for just a few weeks or a few months because there is not enough time to turn him round and make him a better citizen with more chances of success in the outside world. No young offender should serve less than 9 months.

Because, if you are in for a few weeks only, you will probably lie low and do nothing and learn little. But you won't come out better fitted to cope in the world outside.

A detention and training centre order for those in their early teens can be made for blocks of 4 months, 6 months, 8 months, 12 months, 18 months and 24 months. Rather an odd combination of possible sentences but there we are. Given you serve only half of it, on a 4 month sentence you're going to be out in no more than 8 weeks, and likewise on a 6 month sentence in less than 12 weeks.

This has got to stop and the law must be changed. There is no evidence for my proposition, indeed there cannot be, I rely on the views of numerous people to whom I've spoken who were in the criminal justice system including numbers of District Judges, Judges and Magistrates. They do not want to be quoted for obvious reasons.

If the offence is not serious enough for such a sentence then the youngster should be dealt with in the community

A carrot and stick approach is important and the carrot could be a form of remission. There must be some incentives if you perform well, and some problems for you if you don't. This means that the minimum custodial sentence for a young offender should be 12 months with the real possibility for the youngster, by achieving all that is agreed in the comprehensive plan that is set up on admission, to get released after 9 months of his sentence.

And so I recommend:

-No young person should be placed in custody otherwise than for a minimum period of 12 months. This is because there is not otherwise enough time to turn him round and

make him a better citizen with a better chance of success in the outside world. Offences that do not merit 12 months in custody should be served in the community.

-There must be a possible one quarter remission of sentence for POSITIVE excellent behaviour and progress that is linked to an individual's education and training plan (rather than just sitting quietly doing nothing and keeping out of trouble) and this principle should apply all the way up the sentencing scale.

Chapter VI

The Gang Culture

Violence throughout the young offender estate is prevalent, increasing and worrying. This is encouraged by the gang culture. Gang related violence in the young offender estate is increasingly widespread and must be stamped on hard.

The problem is that a young man goes into custody and is immediately asked to join a particular group on the basis of "If you keep one person safe, you keep us all safe. Mess with you and they mess with all of us" is the standard comment I gather from some of the gang leaders.

I asked a parliamentary question about incidents of violence between young offenders in Feltham A and Feltham B young offender's institutions over the last 12 months.

The answer dated 11th December 2008 gave me the figures of recorded incidents of young man on young man assaults in Feltham A and Feltham B in the last 12 months.

Astonishingly, in Feltham A which holds the younger section of boys, a total of 350 recorded incidents of violence from one young boy on another in the last 12 months.

And in Feltham B, holding 18-21 year olds, 200 such incidents in the last 12 months.

The rather complacent parliamentary answer added, "As regrettable as each assault incident is, the numbers are within the expected range".

Well they're not in my expected range and the gang culture is in part responsible for this.

The gangs increasingly look to be based either on postcodes or on religious beliefs

On my visit to Aylesbury Young Offender Institution – holding young men between 18 and 21 – I was told that large numbers of youngsters are coming in with either no religious belief or nominally Church of England, and are rapidly becoming Muslims. On the 8th December there was a riot at that Young Offender Institution – of the 170 young men there declared as Muslim (most of those were not Muslim when they went in) 87 of them rioted and reeked havoc in the wing outside the Mosque.

I'm not troubled by whether people change religion – if people can have a religious belief that's all to the good – but it seemed to me that there was something unhealthy about this immediate conversion to another religion – it really is so they can be part of the gang – and efforts should be made break up such gangs. There is a not dissimilar problem at Feltham A and Feltham B – there have been 33 changes in faith over the last 9 months in that institution according to an official parliamentary answer dated 8th December 2008 – that's to say there have been 12 changes from Christian to Muslim and 6 changes from no faith to Muslim. I am not sure what all this means, but if we are seeing wholesale conversions from one religion to another in the young offender estate, it may well be because of the gang mentality. We need to watch this carefully and work to stop it. More positive interventions, segregations and anger management courses are vital. And the ability of the Governor to punish and punish hard by way of loss of remission must be established.

Prison staff- they deserve to be treated as a profession and should be respected and professional in their outlook- should be better trained to provide the right sort of interventions and guidance.

Even in the otherwise excellent Oakhill Secure Training Centre- near Milton Keynes- which you may remember looks after young boys, some as young as 12, there is a problem. The authorities there say that 68% of their youngsters are in for a violent crime, and there are gangs there based in part on postcodes and in part on religion. They are trying to segregate postcodes at Oakhill, and they are disturbed by the number of youngsters who are converting to Islam soon after entry. Are the authorities generally aware of this and acting on a rather widespread and disturbing trend?

Those who work in the young offender estate tell me that many young offenders join a gang on the day they arrive – safety in numbers – the troubling issue about this is the atmosphere that is created is like a heightened version of the criminal gangs that operate in our communities. A first time offender is particularly vulnerable, because he might quickly find himself in a gang alongside repeat or serious offenders and get further sucked into the world of criminal behaviour.

Whether the gang is based on Islam, Manchester United or Gangster Rap, the fact is that this is an aggressive cohesion. It causes an aggressive atmosphere that requires a high level of security, which is expensive. If we tackle the gangs, and provide a full regime of education and sport, then there will be less aggression and a lower required level of security.

This also brings me to comment on a common complaint amongst staff- the information and intelligence on youngsters when they arrive is very limited- too limited. Far too little is known about a young offender's previous involvement in gangs. Oakhill describes this state of affairs as "one of the biggest issues" facing them. They are not only referring to the absence of knowledge of the boy's educational ability and background but also much more about his involvement in gangs before he got there.

-It's just not acceptable for our YOIs to act as gang factories and a national move to reduce violence in our young offender estate is a priority.

-Intelligence from local services about previous gang involvement should be passed on to the YOI.

Chapter VII

Resettlement and Working with Families

Whatever we do, whether it is education or sporting or anger management provision, our custodial system for young people fails utterly unless we put them back into the community with a better chance. There are a number of vital areas to work on.

a) Resettlement wings

All YOIs should set up within their existing accommodation a totally separate and special resettlement unit where all youngsters in the last quarter of their sentence should live and work and mix together. The whole emphasis should be on a good and productive life outside. I am reminded of the resettlement prison called Blantyre in Kent, where adult “lifers” spend the last portion of their sentence before release. They can work outside the prison, keep all the money they earn and huge efforts are made to secure decent housing. They often take large sums of saved money out with them and most have employment. This approach must be adopted in the young offender estate. More and better trained prison officers should operate in the resettlement wing, to help motivate the offender and help him plan his future life. I have not yet referred to the problem of drugs in the young offender estate- official figures show that 76% of young male offenders aged 18 to 21 were dependent on at least one drug on admission¹⁴- but the current work on getting our young prisoner’s drug-free must be intensified in the resettlement wing. A comprehensive plan must be prepared for each young offender prior to release- a plan in respect of which the young offender must have a real input.

b) Housing

Housing is a vital issue. It is depressing to note in passing that Surrey Young Offenders on release from custody are regularly sent to Bed and Breakfast in Slough. If our young offender wants to, or has to go back to his family home in the community from which he came, then the resettlement plan must help make sure that the family are ready. Whilst in, and especially towards the end, increase his family contact and visits dramatically. Outside bodies should be brought in to help provide intensive parenting and training courses for parents. Currently there is no agency at all responsible for helping families prepare for the

¹⁴ Written Parliamentary Question, tabled by Humfrey Malins CBE MP, answered by David Hanson MP, 3rd November 2008.

return of a young offender. Work done with parents will pay dividends. The resettlement unit will have a duty to ensure that it happens.

There must be another housing option if returning home to the same community is neither possible nor desirable. Here I commend the Intensive Fostering Programme run by Action for Children, currently piloted in Hampshire and London on a very limited basis. It applies to youngsters on remand, and as an alternative to custody, but I think this principle should be extended to young people up to 18 on release from custody. Families who are willing to receive young offenders on release into their homes, and provide them with a structured, loving and constructive base, could receive appropriate financial reward for so doing. A new family, perhaps in a new area, could be just the fresh start that the young offender needs. Clearly it should only be available for youngsters who want to make a go of it. Such fostering would not be permanent, of course, but it could be a great stepping stone into a better world.

C) Jobs and Education

A lot of people both in the resettlement wing and outside need to work together to ensure that wherever possible every under 16 year old should return to full time education on release- currently not very many do. Between April and December 2008, only 26.9% of 18 to 20 year olds released from custody went into employment and just 14.5% into Education or Training of any sort¹⁵. For those over 16, a job is vital. The situation is also not good enough for the 15 to 17 year olds, in the same period 53.1% were discharged to Education or Training and just 5.4% to employment. The government are unable to provide the statistics for Secure Training Centres, which cost the tax payer over £190,000 per place per year, with regard to release into full time education or training and re-offending rates. It is not worth spending money on a good regime of education unless the resettlement programme is good enough for young people to continue the progress that they have made in the outside world.

For everyone released, there is a job to be done by a mentor, an independent, friendly face from outside the custody estate, the role model. The mentor, could be an ex offender, an ex policeman or prison officer, quite simply anyone who is prepared. He or she would obviously be trained and paid appropriately for this work in giving time and help to our young offender. The mentor should be visiting the young offender throughout his time in custody, and helping him in so many ways, not least in securing a job outside. He could help the youngster write a

¹⁵ Written Parliamentary Question, tabled by Humfrey Malins CBE MP, answered by David Hanson MP, 12th February 2009.

CV, accompany him to any interviews on the outside, and generally be supportive. He should be meeting the young offender on a one-to-one basis for at least an hour a week, increasing dramatically in the resettlement wing and continuing after release. I would like to think that every youngster released from custody would have a mentor who would continue his or her work for up to a year after his release.

And as for employment, I see no potential problem at all for employers who provide work for our young offenders being rewarded with financial incentives, such as tax breaks on National Insurance Contributions. Resettlement wings could work together with local authorities, local businesses, chambers of commerce, churches and charities to do everything possible to secure a suitable job for our young offender on release.

Of all the issues I have talked about in this pamphlet a strong resettlement plan and programme is the most vital. This will involve extra expense no doubt, but if, as I believe, it will result in less re-offending, the long term savings will be enormous.

Executive Summary

I list below, in short form, policies which I would introduce:

- 1) In the young offender estate, focus on literacy and numeracy.
- 2) Assess a young offender thoroughly on admission and work out an individual plan in relation to education, literacy and numeracy. Set targets.
- 3) Guarantee a minimum of 25 hours per week education for the young offender in custody
- 4) Make attendance at education classes compulsory for under 16s.
- 5) For over 16s, make early release in part dependent on progress and effort in education and training.
- 6) Ensure that no young offender spends more than 12 hours a day locked up in cells
- 7) Ensure that every young offender spends 10 hours a week sport, including team sport, and has an opportunity to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.
- 8) Abolish short sentences for young offenders- make 12 months the minimum custodial sentence.
- 9) Permit one quarter remission of sentence but only for positive, excellent behaviour and progress.
- 10) Concentrate on stamping out violence and gang violence in our young offender estate.
- 11) Set up resettlement wings in all young offender institutions.
- 12) Draw up a comprehensive plan for each young person as he nears release with particular emphasis on housing, employment and education.