
Breakthrough Britain

Locked Up Potential

A strategy for reforming prisons and rehabilitating prisoners

CHAIRMAN'S OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

by Jonathan Aitken

This is the Chairman's overview of the Centre for Social Justice report, *Locked Up Potential*. For further information or to download the full report please visit www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk

It is an unusual but perhaps useful qualification for chairing this Review to have had both a bird's eye and a worm's eye view of the criminal justice system.

Serving an 18 month prison sentence was a steep learning curve. From its depths I saw good and bad sides of prison life in three different establishments – HMPs Belmarsh, Standford Hill and Elmley. Every day my main activity was reading and writing letters for my fellow prisoners. From that experience I developed an insider's understanding of what made many offenders tick and why such a high percentage of them were certain to return to jail.



Also at the worm's eye level I observed the pressures that prison managements and staff have to face. On the whole they coped decently but inadequately with a daily chaos of chronic overcrowding, endemic drug abuse, widespread mental illness, and volatile mood swings. Keeping establishments calm on such seas of trouble can be a tiring task. It is hardly surprising that today's prison officers have to concentrate on containment or warehousing – but precious little else. Under the present overloaded system the notion that they have time to give serious attention to the rehabilitation of offenders is a political myth belied by the facts and figures.

For all the aspirations and activities of the Ministry of Justice's (MOJ) new agency, the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) (a 2004 merger of the Prison and Probation services now employing over 70,000 staff), the principal crisis in our prisons remains the stubbornly high rate of re-offending. Approximately three quarters of young prisoners under 25 and two thirds of all adult prisoners are reconvicted within two years of their release. So our jails have become conveyor belts carrying the same repeat offenders in and out of custody over and over again.

Moreover in the current economic recession, which like all recessions will inevitably lead to more crime, more prisoners and more overcrowding in our jails, the problems described in these pages are certain to get worse.

So the biggest question our Review has attempted to answer is: Are there any realistic new policies, culture changes or initiatives that could take significant numbers of offenders off the prison conveyor belt and into rehabilitated and law abiding lives?

A separate Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) review on courts and sentencing policy will offer its own legal proposals in response to this crisis. Our brief is to search for answers within the prison and offender management system. Here it also has been helpful to have had a bird's eye view of how Whitehall and Westminster tick. This has provided a perspective on which legislative and administrative changes could be acceptable to a new parliament and government following a general election.



In this context the viewpoint of a former Chief Secretary of the Treasury has been useful for I once wrestled in the EDX (Expenditure) committee of the cabinet with the small print of prison and probation service budgets. They have grown exponentially in the past 12 years. Today the annual public expenditure costs of running our prisons and managing offenders is over £5 billion. Of this NOMS/Her Majesty's Prison Service (HMPS) spends £4.7 billion with the remainder coming from other budgets such as the

Department of Health (DoH) and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) which respectively provide prison health and education services. Dwarfing these sums are the annual costs of re-offending which have been conservatively estimated (in 2002) by the Social Exclusion Unit at £11 billion. The combination of these figures means that society is footing a yearly bill for criminal offenders of over £16 billion.

To this should be added the Treasury's agreed new special capital allocation to the Ministry of Justice of £2.3 billion for the Titan prison building programme. We recommend scrapping this, replacing the Titans with smaller and innovatively designed 'academy' prisons. Our Review has a special section on these radically different new training establishments which would have the additional advantage of being significantly cheaper to build. But on the government's current spending plans, one way or another society is now paying over £18 billion for prisons, prisoners, offender management and re-offending costs.

Could this huge sum be spent more wisely with less waste and failure? Of course it could. Shortly before this Review went to press, *The Times* reported on its front page that the National Audit Office (NAO) had severely criticised the MOJ for allowing its prison IT project to overrun by £456 million.¹ But there was an even worse revelation buried away in the small print of the NAO's findings. This was the disclosure that the project had failed in its main objective. For the original purpose of this new IT system (known as NOMIS) had been to connect the Prison Service's records of offenders in prison with the probation service records of what happened to these offenders after they came out of prison. The failure of NOMIS to do this is painfully symptomatic of what is going wrong at the heart of the NOMS. Until we create a joined up system which connects what happens to men and women in prison with a continuous effort at community level to continue their rehabilitation after their release from prison, there will be no substantial reduction in re-offending.

As this example of the expensive omission by NOMIS indicates, following the taxpayer's money trail to identify which forms of offender management work in a cost effective way may well be one of the most

1 *The Times*, '£18 billion scandal as Whitehall's IT plans spin out of control', 2 February 2009

illuminating paths of future prison reform. But first the fundamental issues must be set in a framework of moral principle. This raises the question: what are prisons for?

I have not gone soft on crime because of being in prison. With more direct knowledge than most people, I am well aware that many of the 83,000 inmates locked up in our jails need to be there in order to fulfil two important objectives of imprisonment – the protection of the public and the punishment of law breakers. But, I also know that the third purpose of prison, the rehabilitation of prisoners, has slipped way too far down the criminal justice system's national priorities. This is partly because it is a complex task. Yet a reduction in re-offending is so much in the public interest that it deserves to be tackled with a new strategic agenda of plans and policies.

We have set out our agenda for reform in the following nine sections of this Review preceded by a summary of proposals. It will be seen that there are no instant solutions or quick fixes to the two linked crises in the prison system of re-offending and over-crowding. But there are tested themes and recurring recommendations which, when woven together in a holistic strategy, are likely to deliver the results of reducing the numbers in both these areas of crisis.

The major themes and recommendations that run through this Review include:

- Abolishing NOMS and devolving its centralised powers of commissioning and managing custody places and offender rehabilitation services down to a new network of Community Prison and Rehabilitation Trusts (CPRTs). These CPRTs will be the prison and offender management equivalent of local NHS Trusts.
- As a consequence of abolishing NOMS and establishing CPRTs, HMPS will be changed. While it will still be needed to centrally manage high security establishments, many of its powers will be devolved to CPRTs. The majority of HMPS staff will be employed by the trusts.
- Changing the ethos and training of prison service staff within these CPRTs so that their mission includes the community based rehabilitation of prisoners before and after their release.
- Building future prisons to a radically different, more purposeful design to end human warehousing.
- Expanding and encouraging the involvement of trained volunteers from the voluntary and community sector (VCS) so that they play a major role in the localised rehabilitation of prisoners.
- Ensuring that both volunteers and professionals working to rehabilitate prisoners give a far higher priority to helping them to find employment and accommodation after release.
- Launching a major expansion of local pre-release and post-release mentoring schemes led by volunteers trained to work particularly closely with young short sentence prisoners. This group at present gets the least support after release from NOMS.
- Radically changing the present policies and practices towards drug abuse and drug treatment in prisons, and also for prisoners released into the community with drug and alcohol problems.
- Providing specialised forms of rehabilitation and training for certain categories of offender including ex-servicemen prisoners, women prisoners, older prisoners, disabled prisoners and prisoners with mental health disorders – some of whom should be placed in supervised community homes for offenders, local half-way houses and training centres.
- Radically overhauling the present systems of work, training and education in prison so that many more inmates are better equipped for life and employment after release.
- Encouraging and expanding the role of the private sector in many aspects of prison building, prison management and offender rehabilitation on both sides of the prison wall.
- Encouraging prison workshop partnerships with commercial organisations and offering incentives to local employers in order to increase job opportunities for ex-prisoners.

- Enabling prisoners to earn rehabilitation by making reparation to their victims.
- Encouraging and expanding Restorative Justice Conferences in prison and in the community as a well tested method of rehabilitating offenders.
- Giving victims of crime a greater involvement in the criminal justice system through new local initiatives such as participating in Restorative Justice Conferences, as advisers to Community Prisons and Rehabilitation Trusts, and as advisers to local parole boards in CPRT areas.
- Legislating early in the next Parliament to put three major prison measures on the statute book. The Community Prisons and Rehabilitation Trust Act (superseding parts of the Prisons Act 1952), The Second Chance Act (a radical revision of the 1974 Rehabilitation of Offenders Act) and a new Restorative Justice Act. The government should also utilise any existing Criminal Justice legislation in doing so, such as Section 34 of the Offender Management Act 2007 (section 2.8.3.3).

Two general questions will immediately arise in the minds of observers who have become accustomed to so much failure in prison policy during the last two decades: Are these proposals workable? Are they affordable?

The reason why we believe our Review's recommendations are likely to prove effective is because the eleven members of our working group committee putting these proposals forward are idealists without illusions, approaching the issues realistically on the basis of their own wide and varied experiences of the prison world. Several members of our team have held management appointments with responsibility for offenders at levels such as prison governor, youth justice board chairman, probation service leaders and NOMS senior executives. Two have been involved in the private sector side of prisons and three have held senior management positions in voluntary sector rehabilitation organisations. Three of us have served prison sentences. In addition we have all had our own extensive professional or personal contacts with prisoners and ex-prisoners, often through voluntary work, charities, community organisations, faith based groups or private friendships. After listening to some 15 months worth of evidence hearings from experts, making many visits to prison establishments both domestic and international, and utilising our own experiences to the full, we think we know what might succeed in reducing the repeat offending rates and in easing the prison overcrowding crisis.

Is our agenda affordable? Most certainly it is if it results in making even a small dent in the 75 per cent rate of repeat offending by younger prisoners and the 62 per cent rate by all adult offenders. Taking the accepted figure from the Social Exclusion Unit in 2002 that the annual cost of re-offending is £11 billion (or well over £12 billion when adjusted for inflation), it can be seen that a mere ten per cent fall in repeat offending would save around £1.2 billion a year. We present other such encouraging figures throughout this report, as well as emphasising that all our proposals are at worst cost neutral over the period of a Parliament. However, the greatest gains from our recommendations are not solely to be measured in terms of public expenditure.

A sustained and successful drive to reduce re-offending by released prisoners would reduce their criminal behaviour and make local communities safer. It would also reduce the soul destroying human wastage that is the main consequence of the conveyor belt of crime and imprisonment. These goals are so much in the public interest in comparison to the present status quo of jails bursting at the seams, overflowing with drugs, and releasing prisoners certain to return to custody, that we hope our proposals will be acted upon by an incoming government.

There is nothing ideological about the strategy recommended in this report. It is rooted in the CSJ's idealism to fix or at least repair one of the saddest parts of broken Britain. In that context, as an individual response to the CSJ ideal, I end this foreword, as it began, on a personal note.

During my seven months as a prisoner I often wondered whether such a negative experience could ever be put to any positive purpose. Throughout the long hours of loneliness in a cell, my fretful mind kept asking if all that I was seeing and hearing might one day be used for helping others to avoid the misery of imprisonment. From those stirrings there gradually emerged a desire, perhaps a passion, to change our prison system and to help rehabilitate offenders. So I am deeply grateful to Iain Duncan Smith and the CSJ for offering me the opportunity to chair this Review.



It is now for others to decide what to do with our proposals. What I am sure of is that without the implementation of a strategy along the lines we have recommended, Britain's prisons will slide further backwards into overcrowded sinks of repeat offending from which fewer and fewer released prisoners will have the chance of being rehabilitated to start law abiding lives. At such a crossroads of hope or despair, may this Review encourage new thinking and new ways forward in the reform of our prisons.

Summary of Policy Proposals

The strategy that has formulated our Review has two principal objectives: the reduction of re-offending and the easing of prison overcrowding. These are our major recommendations:

LOCALISING THE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF OUR PRISON SYSTEM

1. NOMS has been a failure and should be abolished. Its centralised powers, as well as those exercised by HMPS, of commissioning and managing custody places and offender rehabilitation services, should be devolved to a new network of Community Prison and Rehabilitation Trusts (CPRTs). These new CPRTs would be the prison and offender management equivalent of local NHS Trusts (section 2.8.1).
2. As a result of abolishing NOMS and establishing a network of CPRTs, HMPS will be changed. The majority of HMPS staff will be employed by CPRTs. A scaled-down HMPS will maintain management and responsibility for high security establishments.
3. We believe that the most effective rehabilitation of released prisoners should be rooted in the local community. So CPRTs will cover a local geographical area and have a local board of management with both executive and non-executive directors and an independent chairman.
4. A CPRT should maintain a clear and localised link between imprisonment and rehabilitation. It will join up the custodial and community services in its area and be the decision making body on how to provide these services. No longer will the provision of custodial, probationary and rehabilitation services be dictated from a national or regional centre as now happens with NOMS.
5. A CPRT should work closely with local agencies in its area such as the Local Authorities; NHS trusts; Housing Associations; local employers and businesses; voluntary, community, and charitable organisations and the media. CPRTs will be required to publish annual performance reports with emphasis on prison security and prisoner re-offending.
6. We reject the Titans prison building project. Instead we recommend that all or part of the present government's £2.3 billion new build prison budget should be re-invested in much smaller community prisons



and local Community Supervised Homes for Offenders (CSHOs) (section 3.7.2).

7. A CPRT will have the power to commission new build prisons. It will, through its Commissioning Sub-Committee, ensure there is strong involvement in these new build establishments from the private sector and voluntary and community sector organisations and with trained volunteers.

8. We recommend a radical and innovative new design for prisons. These new Mitson Academy Model Prisons

(named after Stuart Mitson, a former prison governor and a member of our working group) have the rehabilitation of prisoners as their primary objective. Mitson Academy Prisons will have the additional advantages of being some 15 per cent cheaper in construction and energy consumption costs. They will deliver up to 20 per cent more regime hours of purposeful activity learning and training for their prisoners. This is described in detail in section 2.8.2.2.

9. We recommend new local parole boards, to be known as Community Supervision and Release Boards (CSRBs). They will take over from prison governors' responsibilities in CPRT areas for the present executive release initiatives. Instead of early release decisions being made by prison managements behind closed doors they will be made by accountable CSRBs which are knowledgeable about local rehabilitative and resettlement conditions (section 2.8.3.1).
10. We recommend that CPRTs should make use of the hitherto unused powers created by Section 34 of the Offender Management Act. These powers would allow, under stringent conditions, selected prisoners to be transferred to residential community based drug or alcohol centres, or training centres as *part of their custodial sentences* (section 2.8.3.3).
11. We make several recommendations for improving the training, management and leadership of prison officers. We also recommend improvements in the training of prison governors. We believe that managerial appointments in NOMS, and subsequently CPRTs, should be opened up to a wider field of outside applicants (section 2.8.4).

MORE RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

12. We recommend a major expansion of the role of VCS groups in the rehabilitation of prisoners. We call for an urgent sea change of attitudes within NOMS, to be cemented in time by our proposed CPRTs, so that many more VCS organisations and their trained volunteers are encouraged and commissioned to work with prisoners and ex-prisoners on their rehabilitation into the community (section 2.8.5).
13. We recommend creating within the MOJ an office headed by a new National Commissioner of Voluntary and Community Groups. His or her principal activity will be to increase the role of VCS groups by holding CPRTs to account for their commissioning levels, improve volunteer training, and to publicise opportunities for volunteers. The role of the National Commissioner is described in section 2.8.5.
14. We recommend the encouragement and expansion of prison volunteers from faith-based groups drawn from all faiths. We note that this is already the largest single source of prison volunteers (over 20,000) and cite examples of best practice among outstanding groups and community chaplaincies. The potential for increasing this pool of volunteers and improving their training is considerable (section 2.8.6).

EASING THE OVERCROWDING CRISIS

15. We make several recommendations designed to ease the severe prison overcrowding crisis. They include reinvesting all or part of the Titan's budget in smaller local prisons and Community Supervised Homes for Offenders (CSHOs) run by CPRTs. We recommend that certain categories of offenders should be considered particularly suitable for serving part of their sentences in CSHOs, among them women prisoners, elderly and disabled prisoners, prisoners with mental health disorders, Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) prisoners and ex-Service prisoners (section 3.7.2).
16. We recommend devising more effective and more disciplined community sentences. Increasing the visibility and scope of these sentences to include reparation by the offender to the community as well as the punishment of the offender in the community would increase both judicial and public confidence in such non-custodial penalties. This would also reduce the number of less serious offenders being sent to prison (section 3.7.3).
17. We recommend that a greater proportion of foreign national prisoners should be transferred to their own countries, under agreements signed with the foreign governments concerned, so that they serve their sentences in their own domestic prisons rather than in UK jails (section 3.7.4).

IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH CARE

18. We recommend that much greater attention and recognition should be paid to prisoners with mental health disorders. In particular we identify the need for earlier diversion and assessment of those whose mental conditions should never cause them to be 'dumped' in prison as a last resort. We make several recommendations such as better training of prison staff, better screening, and the involvement of CPRTs in ensuring early diversion of many mentally unwell prisoners away from prison to more appropriate facilities, including our recommended CSHOs (section 4.1.7).

TACKLING THE PRISON DRUGS TRADE AND TREATING ADDICTION

19. We make a number of important recommendations for reducing the flow of drugs into prisons and for a radical overhaul of prison drug treatment and rehabilitation programmes. Without these reforms (which should also prioritise alcohol abuse programmes) there will be no meaningful reduction in the rates of re-offending. Our recommendations include: a review of current drug testing methods which are easily evaded and fundamentally flawed; introducing compulsory drug testing on arrival in prison; installing new and strict anti-smuggling techniques; an analysis and review of the efficacy of many existing unevaluated intervention programmes; redressing the overall treatment balance to focus on abstinence instead of maintenance; piloting dedicated drugs judges to devise and oversee drug treatment plans and breaches of prison discipline; and improving the communication and coordination with community drug teams to develop effective support after release from prison (section 4.2.6).

GIVING HIGHER PRIORITY TO THE REHABILITATION OF PRISONERS WITH ALCOHOL ABUSE PROBLEMS

20. We recommend that alcohol abuse as a cause of re-offending should be put on the same level of priority as drug abuse and drug treatment by HMPS/NOMS and by the new CPRTs. We make appropriate policy recommendations in detail for achieving this objective (section 4.3.4).

BETTER SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILIES OF PRISONERS

21. We recommend that significantly more must be done to equip, support and empower families to play their important role in the rehabilitation of prisoners. We make appropriate policy recommendations which include improving information disclosure and sharing on a prisoner's reception into custody; modernising visit booking procedures; increasing the number of onsite visitor centres run by voluntary organisations; and providing more family and relationship education. We also emphasise the excellence of best practice in this area by VCS groups (section 5.9).

REFORMING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRISONER PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

22. We recommend there should be a continuing expansion of prison education and skills training. We make a number of detailed proposals including the encouragement of peer learning; the establishment of more effective performance and achievement targets; the expansion of the POLARIS IT system; improved teacher training; and the recognition of the need for more prisoners to be helped with their learning and communication difficulties including through the use of speech and language therapists (SLTs). We believe it should be compulsory for illiterate and sub literate prisoners to learn basic reading and writing skills while in custody. We emphasise the importance of continuity of education and training on release from prison (section 6.1.5).
23. We have been impressed by the role that the arts (fine arts, drama and music in particular) can play in prisoner rehabilitation. We therefore recommend an expansion of the contribution made by voluntary groups to prisoner development in this field. We give several examples of exceptional practice which deserve greater recognition and more thorough evaluation (section 6.2).
24. We make several recommendations directed towards improving work for prisoners. We also recognise some excellent good practice in certain prisons usually involving partnerships between prison workshops and private sector companies. We make a number of specific recommendations which, on the basis of evidence given to our Review, we believe would double the number of 'real work' employment opportunities for prisoners in workshops to 20,000. We also make recommendations which we believe would raise the number of ROTL prisoners going out to work into actual or community day jobs to 2,000. All this would amount to a major change and improvement in the culture of prison work (section 6.3.3).

A NEW RECOGNITION AND ROLE FOR VICTIMS

25. We make a number of recommendations that would give victims a more important role in the criminal justice system and prisoners a proper awareness of the damage they do to the victims of their crimes. These recommendations include introducing Victim Impact Classes (VICs) as pioneered in some US states; compulsory financial reparations by prisoners to victims; and a major expansion of Restorative Justice (RJ) conferencing. We regard RJ as a well tested but surprisingly under-utilised method of prisoner rehabilitation. We recommend the creation of a national RJ agency and a new Act of Parliament, the Restorative Justice Act, to provide a legislative framework for RJ expansion (section 7.5.5).

STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR OFFENDERS LEAVING PRISON

26. We make a number of recommendations to help prisoners re-enter society and lead law abiding lives. To close or at least narrow what is called the 'prisoner finance gap' in the weeks after release we recommend making the

- Social Fund more accountable and allowing prisoners to apply for certain benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Housing Benefit (HB) from prison three weeks before their release date (section 8.6.1).
27. We recommend the establishment of new volunteer mentoring schemes for young short sentence prisoners. To promote this we propose that the MOJ should launch a £20 million kick start fund designed to encourage CPRTs to establish local voluntary mentoring schemes targeting specifically 18–25 year old prisoners serving twelve months or less. At present this group receives no post release support from the probation service. We believe that such a fund, which could provide each probation area with around £400,000 to spend on pump-priming voluntary schemes, would prove highly cost effective in reducing re-offending among this group of young released prisoners (section 8.6.2).
 28. We make several recommendations based-on improving the community resettlement arrangements for released prisoners particularly in the fields of housing and employment. These include developing consistency in the way local authorities support released prisoners and better resourcing of effective resettlement organisations to work with prisoners before and after their release (sections 8.6.3, 8.6.4 and 8.6.5).
 29. We believe that there are at least five categories of prisoner who would respond well to improved arrangements for their rehabilitation within the community. At certain stages in their sentences selected prisoners from these categories should be moved from jail to Community Supervised Homes for Offenders (CSHOs) or to training centres. The five categories are: women prisoners; older and disabled prisoners; prisoners suffering from mental health disorders; prisoners working in the community under ROTL day release schemes; and ex-service prisoners.
 30. We make detailed recommendations for new rehabilitation arrangements for all these categories of prisoner and highlight the significant public expenditure savings that would be made if these policies were implemented (section 8.6.6).
 31. We pay special attention to the estimated 7,000 ex-service personnel in prison. We recommend that a pilot scheme based on the successful rehabilitation techniques used at the Military Corrective Training Centre (MCTC) in Colchester be initiated for some of these prisoners at MCTC itself and on selected sites within some CPRT areas (section 8.6.6.5).
 32. We recommend that at least one CPRT should, as a pilot scheme, commission, and evaluate an Intermediate Training Centre (ITC), a new model for the rehabilitation of prisoners described in section 8.6.7.
 33. We recommend that private sector employers who hire long and medium sentence prisoners after their release from jail should receive a £5,000 credit against their Employers National Insurance Contributions (NIC). This would encourage more employers to offer jobs to ex-prisoners (section 8.6.8).
 34. We recommend a radical reform of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This 35 year old legislation should be replaced by new legislation titled *The Second Chance Act*. This should incorporate the most important features of the United States Second Chance Act passed by Congress in 2007. It should also incorporate the main recommendations of the *Breaking the Circle* report – a constructive Home Office review of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 which has never been implemented (section 8.6.9).



OUTLINING A NEW PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT

35. In our final chapter, *A New Programme for Government*, we put forward a strategic programme of prison reform for an incoming government. This programme would amount to the first ever holistic approach to the two big crises of overcrowding and re-offending. Such a strategy will revolve around a devolution of powers of NOMS and HMPS to CPRTs. Delivering this will be the political equivalent of devolving the powers of the NHS to local NHS Trusts and hospitals.
36. We recommend three major pieces of new legislation (section 9.3):
 - (a) The Community Prison and Rehabilitation Trust Act
 - (b) The Second Chance Act (a radical reform of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974)
 - (c) The Restorative Justice Act
37. We recommend that an incoming government should order the MOJ to cooperate with Her Majesty's Treasury on a joint action plan designed to review costs, reduce waste, update the annual costs of re-offending (last calculated at £11 billion a year in 2002) and introduce a system of financial incentives and rewards for CPRTs who reduce re-offending and so save public expenditure (section 9.4).
38. There are precedents for such arrangements between individual government departments and the Treasury, notably the MOD's Defence Costs Review of 1994. We conservatively estimate that over the period of a Parliament re-offending rates in CPRT areas could fall by at least 10 per cent generating a saving of over £1.2 billion a year, with the added and greater reward of making local communities safer.

Conclusion

Although the strategic policy proposals in this Review break new ground, they have frequently emerged from best practices which are already working well in isolated examples at prisons in Britain and overseas. This highlights a strange paradox. Throughout the prison world there are talented governors, exceptional prison officers, committed managers, dedicated volunteers and outstanding probation staff. Individually their work with offenders is often of the highest quality. Yet collectively the prison system as a whole is a failure. This is largely because there is no overall policy strategy. Our Review tackles the specific areas of detail where reform is needed to make a new strategy work. In a phrase this strategy is directed to the objective of 'joined up rehabilitation'. It aims to provide the missing link between the rehabilitation of offenders during their imprisonment and the continuation of their rehabilitation in the community after their release. Creating that vital link is the way forward for reducing re-offending, for making prisons less overcrowded and more purposeful, and for improving the safety of ordinary people in their communities.

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About the Centre for Social Justice

The Centre for Social Justice aims to put social justice at the heart of British politics.

Our policy development is rooted in the wisdom of those working to tackle Britain's deepest social problems and the experience of those whose lives are affected. Our working groups are non-partisan, comprising prominent academics, practitioners and policy makers who have expertise in the relevant fields. We consult nationally and internationally, especially with charities and social enterprises who are the champions of the welfare society.

We are not a typical Westminster 'think-tank'. In addition to policy development, we foster an alliance of poverty fighting organisations that reverse social breakdown and transform communities.

We believe that the surest way the Government can reverse social breakdown and poverty is to enable individuals, communities and voluntary groups to help themselves.

The CSJ was founded by Iain Duncan Smith in 2004, as the fulfilment of a pledge he made to Janice Dobbie, a mother whose son had recently died from a drug overdose after he was released from prison.

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