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The logo for The Centre for Social Justice, featuring the text "THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE" in white, uppercase letters on a dark red background.

PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE
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Four in five young prisoners reoffend after completing their sentences, warns Iain Duncan Smith

New inquiry aims to make rehabilitation a reality

Former Conservative Party leader Iain Duncan Smith is drawing up plans to cut spectacular rates of reoffending among young troublemakers.

Nearly four in five teenagers leaving custody go on to commit a further crime, according to the latest figures.

And 69 per cent of those completing community sentences also reoffend.

Now Mr Duncan Smith has asked his think-tank, the Centre for Social Justice, to draw up plans to break this cycle of crime.

Mr Duncan Smith said: "The trouble is that our youth prisons have become colleges of crime. Many young lawbreakers come out even worse than when they went in.

"We have got to find new ways of getting them back on the straight and narrow. And that is what I have asked my team at the CSJ to do."

According to an preliminary research drawn up for Mr Duncan Smith, the youth custody services, which has some 3000 inmates at any one time, is plagued by a host of problems.

* It is unsafe: 30 children have died in custody in the last 20 years; in 2007 there were more than 1000 incidents of self-harm among children aged 15-17.

* Education provision is weak. Around 40 per cent of inmates at Young Offenders Institutions fail to get the recommended 25 hours of schooling a week.

* Mental health problems go untreated. The vast majority of young prisoners have at least one mental health disorder. But only half of them receive proper psychiatric care.

The preliminary research commissioned by Mr Duncan Smith says that youth crime is linked to family break-up and poor education.

“The current youth justice system fails properly to rehabilitate young offenders so that they can go on to lead law-abiding and positive lives...Once a sentence is complete many of these young people turn back to crime and end up back in the system as adults.

“The cost to society of such failure is staggering.”

Mr Duncan Smith will give more details of his inquiry at a special event to be attended by youth crime experts on Monday.(Feb 8).

For media inquiries, please contact Nick Wood of Media Intelligence Partners Ltd on 07889 617003 or 0203 008 8146 or Alistair Thompson on 07970 162225 or 0203 008 8145.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Centre for Social Justice is an independent think tank established, by Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP in 2004, to seek effective solutions to the poverty that blights parts of Britain.

In July 2007 the group published Breakthrough Britain. Ending the Costs of Social Breakdown. The paper presented over 190 policy proposals aimed at ending the growing social divide in Britain.

Subsequent reports have put forward proposals for reform of the police, prisons, social housing, the asylum system and family law. Other reports have dealt with street gangs and early intervention to help families with young children.

Mike Royal - Chairman of the Youth Justice Commission

Mike is the National Director of The Lighthouse Group, a charity working with young people excluded from school across the UK. Mike has considerable experience in youth work delivered by the faith sector and has worked as an adviser to statutory agencies on gang related issues. In addition to holding a first class degree in Urban Studies and a Masters in applied theology, he has considerable experience of policy formulation and was part of the CSJ Education Failure Working Group.