

## The bold 'rehabilitation revolution' is integral to reducing crime

Our largely dysfunctional and expensive criminal justice system – which picks up the pieces of poverty and social breakdown on a daily basis – is over-centralised, highly bureaucratic and in need of radical reform. In 2009 the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) published an evidence-led agenda for change to redress these failings.

In view of the pressing need for reform and our related body of work, the CSJ strongly welcomes the publication of the sentencing and rehabilitation Green Paper, *Breaking the Cycle*, as a positive start in delivering necessary reform. This Green Paper builds on many of the criminal justice recommendations contained in the CSJ's prison reform report *Locked Up Potential*. It also follows key elements of the sentencing agenda set out in *Order in the Courts*, our review of courts and sentencing. In setting a course for dealing with the root causes of crime, and more widely poverty, the new Government has also embraced the CSJ's agenda for social reform as set out in a number of publications, including *Breakthrough Britain*.

Of particular importance is the Green Paper's broad recognition that prisons must once again become places of purpose – particularly in relation to work – as well as the delivery of justice and punishment. This understanding has been dangerously ignored for too long.

Rightly, two central aspirations of the Green Paper relate to confronting the addiction which fuels so much crime, and finding more effective and appropriate ways of responding to offenders with mental health problems. We also wholeheartedly support plans to expand the role of voluntary sector and private providers in rehabilitative offender management.

As the CSJ has long argued, confronting addiction and pursuing recovery in many more cases is essential to tackling reoffending and protecting the public in the long term. And as both our aforementioned criminal justice reviews have outlined, helping the many offenders with mental health problems to enter secure treatment, as well as face the consequences of their actions is vital to preventing the crimes of tomorrow.

Unlocking more of the skill, passion and expertise of those in the charity sector will begin the process of life change in the lives of those in the revolving door prison system. We welcome the intention to utilise these organisations in new ways. And we hope the new Government will be less suspicious of faith-based organisations, many of whom are pioneering excellent rehabilitation within the system.

In terms of youth justice, we are encouraged by the direction of travel outlined in the Green Paper; in particular, we welcome the move towards localism and increased discretion for youth justice professionals. We are also encouraged by the appetite for a greater use of restorative justice. However, we feel that the paper has failed to raise some important issues. One such example concerns the Youth Offending Team model, which the paper claims to be working well; yet over 70 hours of evidence hearings have told us that the contrary is true in many areas and that changes are deeply needed. Our own youth justice review, to be published next year, will set out an agenda for reform.

Although the Green Paper outlines many innovative and necessary steps to reform, there are several broad points of caution. The CSJ considers it vital that the Government moves into a system of payment by results carefully, and works closely with providers during this consultation period to ensure the avoidance of possible perverse incentives and unintended consequences which can operate within such a system. The Government must also be careful to avoid the marginalisation of smaller grass roots charities in any payment by results model. Unless safeguards are put in place,

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there is a danger the innovation of very small providers could be squeezed out by the dominance of more well established providers.

In view of the public expenditure cuts, the CSJ has concerns that without widespread access to the private finance, the full aspiration of utilising the voluntary and private providers could be unrealised.

We also call on the Government to respond to the need for greater honesty and transparency in sentencing, which is mentioned in the Green Paper but in no particular committed detail.

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For further information about the CSJ's criminal justice policy work please contact CSJ Policy Group Manager Christian Guy via 020 7340 9650 or [christian.guy@centreforsocialjustice.org.uk](mailto:christian.guy@centreforsocialjustice.org.uk)