

YOUTH JUSTICE BOARD INITIATIVES IN REDUCING OFFENDING

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In my first lecture I hope I gave a picture of the system a little bit in England and changes we have had. Today I am concentrating on the role that the Youth Justice Board plays in my country. The Youth Justice Board you will remember was set up by the Crime and Disorder Act, so it has only been going for about just over two years. And I am going to say a little bit about the work of the Youth Justice Board and particular initiatives that have been undertaken to try to reduce youth crime.

What is the Youth Justice Board? Well, in law it is an executive, non-departmental public body. Now that is not very clear, I think. But it means it is set up by the government, but is not part of the government, it does not belong to a government department. But it is one step removed from the government, I don't know if you have these kind of bodies in your countries, but in England we have a number. An example of another body like this would be the parole board in our country. It is set up by the government but it is not run by the government. It has some independence. And it reports to a minister that is set up by the Home Office. In England the government department is called the Home Office, which is, I guess, like the Ministry of Justice, and the minister is called the Home Secretary. We have

funny words in England for describing these things. Each government department has a chief civil servant, and that is called the permanent secretary, and I know sometimes when this is translated by interpreters they translate it as "eternal typist" for permanent secretary. But secretary means two things in English, someone who types but also someone who is at the very top. So we have the home secretary, who I do not think does typing.

It is set up by the Home Office, and the Board consists of 12 members, one chairman, a man called Lord Warner, who is in the House of Lords, which is the second chamber in our parliament, and there are eleven other members, and I am one of these members. And they have been selected, so I applied to become a member, there was an advertisement in the newspapers, anybody could apply, because we have special rules for appointments to bodies like this to prevent the government simply appointing their friends, otherwise they would just put their friends on these. I think probably they are mostly the government's friends anyway.

My background is in non-governmental organizations looking at the government policy and research. There is on the Board a chief constable of policing, a police officer, there is a magistrate, there is someone who has been a chief probation officer, someone who has been a director of social services, there is a doctor, a psychiatrist who is an expert on adolescent mental health. There is only one person who is a member of the Board

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who has not previously worked in the youth justice system and he is a man who was formerly an editor of a newspaper, the editor of the Times newspaper, and I think he was appointed because he knows about the media and public relations, and this is very important, to be able to communicate the efforts that are being made by the Youth Justice Board and by government and by youth offending teams to try to improve public confidence, because I think I said before public confidence in the system is rather low, so we need to raise that. So there are 12 members but there is also an executive staff, there is a chief executive of the Board and a staff of almost 100 staff who are involved in doing the work of the Board.

It has a number of roles which are laid down in statute, in the law. It has a role of advising the home secretary, advising the government about the youth justice system and how well it is doing in meeting its objective of preventing offending by young people, and it also has a specific role in advising about standards, and we will talk a little bit later in this lecture. In England we have a system of national standards for supervision of offenders, and these are introduced and revised every so often, and the Youth Justice Board has a role in advising what the standards should be. It has a role in monitoring the operation of the youth justice system. The youth courts, how they are working, the youth offending teams, how they are working, and also the secure accommodation estates, the detention facilities. And it has a role thirdly in developing best practice, in identifying and disseminating what works in dealing with young offenders, so undertaking and funding research, and then funding programmes and projects which try to put the research into action. So it is not simply about doing

the research and saying, well, this is what works, it is about developing programmes on the ground to try to prevent offending.

There are two more important roles that the Board has taken on. The first is to do with the funding of youth offending teams. Most of the funds that pay for the members of the youth offending teams come from local services. So you will remember I said the youth offending teams comprise of a police officer, a social worker, a probation officer, somebody from health, somebody from education, and there is a manager of the team at the local level. Now the funds that pay for, the money that pays for these people comes from these agencies from their local budgets. But the Youth Justice Board does have some additional funds that it gives out to youth offending teams to top up that money, and that enables the Youth Justice Board to exercise some control, because we can say, you can have this money provided that you spend it on this. Because this is a system which, although it is centrally directed by the Youth Justice Board, it is locally implemented. One of the dangers with that system is that the local agencies do what they want to do, they don't do what we want to do. So, having some funding allows some leverage, some ability to control and target the work of the offending teams particularly, and I will talk about how we do that later. Also this role in funding the secure estates, the detention facilities, the Youth Justice Board is responsible for all, now, of the facilities, we have taken over the budgets that were previously held by the prison service and by other parts of the system, and we administer that.

So, in summary, the Youth Justice Board provides a leadership role in the youth justice system. Before the Youth

Justice Board was created there was no real focus, or leadership within the youth justice system, and this was one of the weaknesses that was identified by the audit commission, by the auditors that looked at the system five years ago, they said, this is not really a system at all, it is lots of local people doing things, and it needs something in the center, to drive it, and this is what the Youth Justice Board is trying to do.

I will just say a little bit about the vision that the Youth Justice Board has, what it is trying to achieve. We think, at the Youth Justice Board, that it is important that young people are treated fairly whatever their background in the system, this is an important priority. You may say that should go without saying, that I should not need to say that, of course the justice system should be fair. But we do have a particular problem in the United Kingdom, in England and Wales, this is a disproportionate use of custodial detention for people from racial minorities. I don't know how many of you have been to England and know about the composition of the population, but about 5% of the general population in Britain is made up of racial minorities from Afro-Caribbean, South Asia mainly, some from the Far East, but the Afro-Caribbean and Asian subcontinent are the main racial minorities in the U.K., but they are over-represented in the criminal justice system, particularly amongst young people. And that is a problem, there has been some research in the past that has suggested that the system discriminates against people of color, in our system, which is very bad, and we are trying to ensure that everything is done to remove any discrimination of that kind.

The second point is about opportunity. The philosophy of the Youth Justice Board is that young people should be

given opportunities to contribute, and that if we do give genuine opportunities to young people, that is the best way of keeping them out of trouble. And it is in a way what distinguished the youth system from the adult system. We treat young people differently because they are younger, they have not yet reached their full potential, and if we can give them the right opportunities that is an important part of helping them develop into law-abiding adults. Having said that, there is a second part of the vision, which is that we think it should be a matter of shame for young people if they appear in the youth court. This concept of shame, I'm sure Pam Philips will talk about this in the context of restorative justice, but I think on the Youth Justice Board we feel it is important that young should feel some shame if they are caught, if they get into trouble, and are brought to court. And I think some young people have not really felt much shame. They have shrugged their shoulders and said, so what, it doesn't really matter.

We need a system, thirdly, that respects the rights of victims, and the rights and responsibilities of young people and their parents when they get into the criminal justice system, and finally, a system in which people are proud to work. I think it is fair to say that the youth justice system has not particularly had a high status in our society, so it is not a kind of work that necessarily has attracted the best people, people haven't said when they're at school, yes, I really want to work in the youth justice system, that is what I want to be when I grow up. So there is an effort to try and raise the status, to raise the way in which people think about this work, because it is important to society as a whole that people who are engaged in trying to help young people to grow up as good citizens, that is a very important

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role in society, and we are trying to make the system one in which people are proud to work. And also, we are trying to ensure that people who work in the youth justice system see the need for working in partnerships with other parts of the social policy system. Because, and this is a theme that I will refer to, I think on the Youth Justice Board, we think that the youth justice system on its own will not achieve the prevention of offending, even with the multidisciplinary team, it is about other parts of social policy giving a higher priority to young offenders than they have in the past.

Just the aims of the Youth Justice Board, these echo very much the aims of the system I talked about on Tuesday. Reducing crime by young people, we want to see fewer young people getting into trouble in the first place, we want to see fewer offences committed by young offenders when they do commit crime, and we want to see a reduction in the seriousness of crime by young people. And a reduction of frequency. So it is a reduction all the way along the line. We want to reduce the need to use the youth courts, and the number of young people who acquire a conviction in the youth court. We want to reduce if we can the use of penal institutions, and we want to improve regimes, activities that go on in secure facilities, the detention centers.

How are we going to achieve this? Well, I talked about the philosophy on Tuesday of early intervention in the lives of young people, so I won't about that again. What I want to talk more about is how in a practical way we will do this. First of all, we need to ensure that the local services are strong, and do work at a high quality with young people. As I mentioned, youth offending teams are local. What the law requires, it requires each area to have a youth offending team, and above the

youth offending team there is what is called a steering group, a youth justice steering group in every local area. And on that steering group should be the chief officers of all of the agencies which are involved, so the chief of police, the chief probation officer, the chief of social services, somebody senior in the health department, and they will meet every three months or six months to discuss youth justice issues in their area. And we think it's very important that those steering groups have the senior people, there is a great danger that the chief probation officer will say, "oh, I'm too busy to go to this meeting on youth crime", and send somebody more junior to him/her, but we like the people to be involved in the steering group who are as senior as possible, and our recommendation is that it should be chaired by the chief executive of the city or the chief executive of the area. Now of course the chief executive is a very busy person, and he may say, "I have no proper time, you may be very concerned about youth crime but I have lots of other issues in my city that I have to worry about." But from the Youth Justice Board point of view we try to get senior representation in the steering group because that ensures proper local investment in the local youth offending teams.

One consequence of that is that we think it is important to intervene strongly where local agencies are failing, where the quality and standards of services for young offenders are not good. We think we need to intervene strongly. Now you may say what does "intervene strongly" mean? And I think I will talk a little about this later, but I think our philosophy is, what we say in English, carrot and stick. I don't know if that makes sense, I think it is if you are dealing with a donkey or a horse, you offer them a carrot to try and get them to

do something, and if that doesn't work you hit them with a stick. So it is a combination of encouragement and resources and help and support, but also saying if you do not do this we will take some more severe action. And one way of doing this, which is quite popular in some areas of public services, is to publish a league table, a table of performance by different agencies. They have introduced this with schools in my country, by examination results, so schools that are doing very well are top of the league table, and everybody can say, oh, that is a good school, that is the head teacher, that is very good, those are the tops of them, they say, well that is not very good. And that is kind of a shaming process, I suppose. It is not very popular with the schools. We have not done this yet with youth offending teams, but it is one of the possibilities that we would say, if we need to do that we would produce a table which is comparing the performance of different youth offending teams.

Finally, about achieving the aims, it is important to coordinate approaches across government, because obviously there are other government ministries and departments who are doing work in very closely related areas, particularly education, but also the department of health, which is responsible for welfare and social services. We have had a programme of devolution of power in my country, so in Wales, which is part of England and Wales, there is a separate assembly now which has responsibility for social services and public services in Wales. So part of the role of the Youth Justice Board is to be a champion within government, although we are not part of government, to try to get these other government departments to keep young offenders and youth crime as a priority. So those are the main ways in which we try to achieve them.

What I want to talk about now are the specific initiatives that we have undertaken over the last two or three years in the Youth Justice Board. And the first things I will talk about are the specific projects and programmes that we have set up in local areas. Before I give specific examples I just want to mention three or four things that are common to these different programmes, in terms of how we have administered, how we have run these programmes. The first is that generally-speaking, the funding that we give is for three years only initially, and local agencies, youth offending teams have to bid for the money. So the Youth Justice Board sets aside some money and says, we are going to make 15 million pounds available for these kinds of programmes and then invites local agencies to say what sort of programme they want to set up, and effectively there is a competition, because we have a limited amount of money, we cannot fund every area for every project. So we held a kind of competition and judged the best projects. We will sometimes require what we call matched funding, so we will require local agencies to put some funds in alongside the central funding. So, for example, the first funding initiative we ran was for bail support and supervision programmes for young people awaiting trial. Special projects to try and ensure that they did not commit crimes while they were on bail and that they appeared in court when they were supposed to and so on. And we gave 90% in the first year of the funding, 60% in the second year, 30% in the third year, and then the central funding stopped. Because the idea is that the local agencies assume responsibility for funding the programmes after the central money finishes. This is quite common in funding as in development and things like this. So sometimes we would require local money. We would always require commitment

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from the local agencies to fund the programmes after three years, provided that they work. Obviously if the projects are not very successful then the local agencies might say, we do not want to waste our money on this.

I mentioned the intensive supervision programmes, and I'll say a bit more about those. We are funding, we are giving the whole of the money for those programmes, but we are saying to agencies that if they prove successful then they must continue after three years to fund those. They have to fund them if it works, so we need to know whether these projects work, so we are insisting on all of the projects that there is some independent evaluation of the impact of the project, each project has to have an evaluator, so it might be a local university. Our bail support and supervision programme is funding 170 projects, we at the Youth Justice Board have an evaluator to see whether that programme overall is having the impact that we wanted.

Finally, we have always provided technical assistance to these projects by, what we call national supporters. So we have a contract with an organization, maybe a university, or an NGO, or a private consultancy company, and the idea that they are expert organizations, they help to ensure that the projects that we are paying for start on time, work with the right children, that the money is not used for other things to try and keep these projects on course, because sometimes if in the center you give money out, they say, thank you very much, and they go and spend it on something else, which is not really what you want them to do. So we have the evaluators, but we also have national supporters, and the national supporters also do provide some technical help for programmes that

require some specific input like some of the restorative justice programmes, or some of the cognitive behavioral programmes when there is some clear work to train the staff to do things in the right way, that is the role the national supporters play. In combination the money on the evaluation and the national support is about 10% of each programme which is spent on this, which we think might be quite high. If you have a block of money for an initiative, we say about 10% could be spent on making sure the project works and measuring it. I think that is about right, because you are trying to get the best use of the money for these initiatives.

The first sort of project I am talking about are prevention projects. Although we are called the Youth Justice Board, we are interested in preventing young people from getting into crime in the first place as well. And I thought it was an interesting discussion yesterday in the report of group 1, Mr. Kitada talked about the fact that it is important for the deliberations to concentrate on the role that the police and probation and prosecutors and prisons and so on play with prevention. But I think it is interesting in my country we have something called the Youth Justice Board, but it is very much interested in prevention and some of the projects that we fund are designed to work with children who have not yet been in trouble at all. So youth inclusion, we have funded 70 projects across England and Wales, and the idea is that they identify 50 children age 13 to 16 who are most at risk of getting into trouble. These projects are all in high-crime areas. When I said we had a competition for funds, and we invited people to apply, sometimes we only invite certain neighborhoods to apply, targeted initiatives on high-crime areas, and youth inclusion is just in the

worst areas. So basically the projects involve a coordinator who identifies these 50 children, this is the ideal model, and the way they identify is by talking to the police, by talking to social services about youngsters with family problems, talk to education about children who are not doing well at school, and often these will be the same children who show up on the lists of these agencies. In lots of areas, everybody will know that it is these children who are the ones who are very much at risk, often they will have brothers who are already in the system, although not always, and that is one interesting question from the criminological research, why sometimes in families you have some children who get into trouble and others who do not. But, the idea then with these 50 children is to set up an individual programme for them which tries to make sure that they do go to school, that they are getting the best out of education, that they have some constructed activities in the evenings, if necessary they have family counseling and help and so on. So it is trying to nurture, trying to help those children that have been identified.

The second kind of project, called Splash, that grew out of the youth inclusion project, programme, though there are now 150 Splash projects, and these are only in operation during the school holidays, because it is quite well known that when children are not at school, in our country there are three school terms, so now children will finish school in about, well about the same time you're finishing here I think, and then they will start at school again in September. So that is a long period, from the middle of July until early September, and they will be at high risk of being bored, nothing to do, they get involved in vandalism or theft, so if you can provide activities that these children will actually

attend, that is sensible targeted crime prevention. They have funded 150 of these programmes in summer holidays and spring holidays.

Third, we have a small initiative called Positive Futures, which is a programme which uses sport to engage the participation of young people, particularly football, soccer, which is very popular in the U.K., but also other kinds of recreational activities including art and music and drama, but it is mainly sport, and the idea is that you can sometimes engage, and get youngsters involved by organizing them through football and so on, and then you can do other work with them. So football is the gateway, soccer is the gateway to doing work. So those are the three specific prevention initiatives that are underway. Unfortunately, I know you are going to ask me, do they work, and I have to say, I don't know yet, because it is too early to tell. Although there have been some studies of the crime rates in areas which had the school holiday schemes which did show big falls in some kinds of crimes, but it is very difficult to be absolutely sure that it is the impact of this scheme. One of the problems for evaluators is that there are a number of different initiatives going on, we had our new government in 1997, and they are doing a lot, they had been out of government for 18, 19 years, and when they came to power they wanted to change everything, so they have put money into doing regeneration of communities, improving schools, more police, so when you go to an area and say, well is this project making a difference, it is difficult to tease out, to say it is this and that has made the reduction in burglary or the reduction in car crime or the reduction in vandalism. So it is a hard job for evaluators, but at least the crime in the areas is going down, and that is good. We need now to find out which of

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the things that are being done are responsible for that. Which is really the point I want to make about broader prevention efforts.

There are important initiatives going on in England. For example, the government made a very bold commitment to end child poverty in the U.K., and what we mean in the U.K. by child poverty is families who have less than half average earnings, that is the kind of definition. And they want to reduce and ultimately end that. So there are a number of initiatives designed to end family poverty, and they are starting to work, and I think if these sort of policies are successful then they will probably do more to reduce crime in the long-term than anything you do through the youth justice system. There are some specific programmes to improve the early education of children. We have a scheme called Sure Start, it is based on the American programme called High Scope that was a programme under the head start initiatives in the 1960s in the United States in which children from poor families were given enriched educational experiences in their early days at school. And we have introduced this. So we have a lot of different kinds of things going on in the prevention side, so I don't want you to think that it is just the Youth Justice Board that is engaged in this, it is much broader.

On prevention, we do have under the Crime and Disorder Act a requirement, separate from the youth justice changes, a requirement that the police and local government produce every three years a crime prevention plan, a crime reduction plan based on an audit, a measurement of crime problems and consultation with the local community. This is done at a very local level, so it would be at the city level here, Fuchu City would have to have a

prevention plan, it would be the responsibility of the chief of police and the mayor to produce that, and there would be other agencies who would need to be involved, probation and health, who would need to be, a strategy drawn up and consultation with members of the community to produce that.

I want to turn now to intervention projects, and by intervention projects I mean projects that are designed for children who are in the youth justice system. These are for youngsters who, they may have received a final warning, they may be under a court order, under supervision of some kind. And the Youth Justice Board has funded projects in these areas, more than 400 projects all together. Restorative justice, education training and employment, parenting, drugs and alcohol, cognitive behavioral, bail support and supervision and mentoring. I'm going to talk about the mentoring projects in my final lecture which is about community involvement in youth justice. But I want to say a little bit about each of the other projects because I said that all of them have been evaluated. Well, fortunately a few weeks ago the evaluators have produced interim preliminary reports after the first year or so of operation. So we do have some data, we do have some findings from these. But I would say, although we did use these national supporters, these technical assistance people, what is true across all of these projects, is that they have been quite slow to start. And I think, maybe this is something that is specific to the U.K., there are not a lot of skills out in agencies, skills for people to get projects up and running, get them working quickly are not there. And that is partly because for several years we had a government that did not really invest a lot in that. We had a conservative government that was more about

reducing public expenditure. So people in agencies were more used to cutting services. So now a government comes and says, well actually we want to provide you with some money to set up programmes, people say, well thank you very much, but they do not necessarily know how to do this very well, and it takes time to recruit staff, and we are lucky in the United Kingdom we have low unemployment, and so the recruitment of staff has not always been straight-forward for these projects.

Restorative justice, the Youth Justice Board funded 46 projects which have so far produced two and half thousand interventions. So two and a half thousand young people have been worked with under these projects. The evaluators say that 70% of these have been successful. And by successful they mean that the intervention has had a successful conclusion. But the interventions have varied enormously. For the most part they have been relatively minor, modest interventions, so the offender has maybe apologized to the victim, or maybe has undertaken some work for the community, unpaid work for the community, and that has been successfully completed. In only 7% of cases has there been direct victim-offender contact. I think, for us, it is partly a problem to do with the speed through the system, which has made it difficult for victims to be fully involved in these projects. And so people running the projects have said, we have not got the time to do this, so we will just get this boy to do 12 hours work cleaning the canal or clearing up rubbish or doing some kind of payback type work, which is okay, it is good, but I think the promise of restorative justice should be higher than 7%, that is too low I think for us to be comfortable.

We have funded 40 education, training and employment projects, and they are very varied, some are courses which train people in skills, some are school inclusions, so there will be some support given to a young person to help them to stay in the school, through mentoring or something, some provide career advice, helping youngsters to pursue a career through college and training. Others are courses which involve elements of physical activity, taking youngsters on courses to try and improve their character through challenging activities in the outdoors. About 1,700 participants. One disappointing finding from the evaluators, up to 50% of the young people drop out from these schemes, which I thought was high, but you will remember at the halfway house yesterday, when we were hearing about the scheme for teaching boys to be chefs in Chinese restaurants there were dropout rates of about this, I think two out of the six so far had succeeded all the way. Because we are talking about difficult young people we are not going to have 100% success, so within that 50% dropout some of the programmes were more successful and some of them were less successful, and the importance of the evaluation is to be able to identify the factors or the characteristics of the successful programmes. It seems to me that the programmes that are most successful are the ones that provide the highest intensity of contact, which is not surprising, it is what you would expect. If you just say to a boy, come once a week and talk to me about what job you want to do, that is one part of intervention. If you say, right, you are going to come everyday, and we're going to do this, we're going to get your literacy levels better, and then we're going to talk about this, if you can engage the youngster like that, that is much more likely to turn

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around the motivation in their life. So I think intensity is important.

Parenting, we have funded 42 schemes. Almost all are women attending, rather than fathers. The research found that three quarters of sessions were attended by parents. The impact is not yet known, though the evaluators say that a lot of the women that went said that they found it very helpful, which is good. What we don't know is whether it made any difference when they went home, and in their families, and in the way they related to their children, whether that changed, and indeed even if that changed, we don't know whether that had an impact on how their children behave. So there are a lot of ifs, but it is quite encouraging. It is disappointing that so few fathers appeared to have been involved in these courses, but I think the reality is that a lot of young offenders do not live with their fathers, there are a lot more in single parent households, and in fact that has, I will say a little bit about some data we have from the asset assessment profile, the assessment tool that we have developed has given us some data about children who are going through the youth justice system, and I think 30 or 40 percent of them do not live with a father or any kind of male person in their house and that may be an important part of their delinquency. And it is obviously part of the rationale for mentoring programmes, to try to fix up young people with role models, particularly boys with men who can act as a good role model for them.

The drugs and cognitive behavioral programmes have been particularly slow at starting, and have not had many referrals. By referrals I mean not many children have been sent to these projects, and we don't know quite why that is. And there have also been methodology

problems, what I mean by that is the projects have not been very clear about what exactly it is they are trying to do. There is an issue with drugs projects, because I think I said the other day that use of cannabis and marijuana is fairly wide-spread amongst our population and a lot of young people do not really see it as a problem. It is against the law, but it is not the most serious. Obviously it is serious if it involves graduation to other drugs, but what exactly you do with children who have got this problem, it is not entirely clear. So these projects have, of all the projects these are the ones that have struggled the most.

The bail support and supervision programmes, which is the largest single group, they have seemed to have been quite successful because there has been a fall in the number of children remanded into custody by the courts, and that is almost certainly because there are now in every area just about these schemes to provide support, so the court can say, instead of having to choose whether to give someone bail, conditional release or remand to an institution, they have a middle way, they can say you have bail, but you are under the supervision of this project, some of the projects have surveillance with the electronic bracelets, some of them just have very intensive surveillance by project workers. But the fall in custodial remands could be to do with the reduction in delay, I talked about speeding up the system. Well if you speed the system up, which we have, that reduces the time that young people are on remand, so the population comes down that way. So if you do want to reduce the number of people in institutions, one good way of doing it is to speed things up, because you just have less time to do it, rather than create projects. So we are still working out why it is that the

numbers have come down, and what role specifically these projects have had.

The estimate is that 3% of young offenders commit 25% of the crimes that are committed by this age group. There are very high reconviction rates from custody, so there was a need for a targeted programme providing surveillance so that the public were confident but also providing intensive supervision because these are often very damaged children with a lot of problems. So for entry into the intensive supervision and surveillance programme, you have to have committed at least four crimes, you have to have had four convictions to qualify, and your most recent one has to be a serious one, so it is really trying target those youngsters who would be going into the institutions, to try and prevent the kind of net widening, the kind of, what happens sometimes when you create an alternative, you don't replace the prison, you supplement the community. This is trying to say, prison is not working for these boys, and it is mostly boys, let's try and do something different. And they are just starting, the first ones are starting on the first of July, so we will have some results by next year as to how well these are going.

I have talked about the projects and the programmes that the Youth Justice Board has created and funded. I want to turn now to some other measures that the Board has introduced, what I have called practice tools, things that are supposed to help people who are actually doing the work with young offenders face-to-face, to do that more effectively. And I want to talk first about the assessment tool, ASSET. It is 12 pages of basic assessment form, and then 4 pages additional for high-risk juveniles, where there has been an identification of a risk of violence. And then 3 pages at the end that the young

person themselves complete. When we developed this, this ASSET was developed by Oxford University, and when they produced the first draft it was 30 pages long and all of the members of the youth offending teams said, no way, we are not going to fill in 30 pages for every young person that comes into the system, so it is reduced.

It has three roles, there are three purposes for this assessment. First of all, it is an opportunity when a child, when a young person first comes into the system, first commits an offence for an initial assessment of the needs that they have, and the risks that they provide. The second use or purpose is to track progress through the system. Obviously most young offenders may have one or two crimes and then they stop offending, but there are some who continue. Now we hope that all of these changes will mean that number will be reduced, but there are obviously some young people who continue to commit crimes, and what this form provides is an opportunity to see how their needs and risks change over time, and whether the interventions, whether the programmes, whether the case work, has any impact. And thirdly, it provides a source of data, of information about young people coming through the system. So every form is sent to the Youth Justice Board, not with the names, it is anonymous data without names, but the Youth Justice Board wants to collect the data, the information to build up a picture of the needs and risks presented by young offenders in order to argue for more resources with other parts of government. If, for example, there has been some research on 500 ASSET forms completed in 40 youth offending team areas and it found, for example, only 40% of the young people had been living with their father. So 60% had not been living with their father, that was the statistic I

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was trying to remember before. 15% had no school place, and emotional and mental health create frequent problems. Well, when we build up the picture about the school problem, we can take this to the Ministry of Education and say, look, there is a very serious problem here, 15% of these children are not having any school place, we need to develop some more policy to deal with that. So three roles, initial assessment, progress through the system, and then building up a picture.

What the form does, it goes through different sections. It starts off with a section on the criminal and care history of the young person, and then covers their offending behavior, their living arrangements, their family and personal relationships, education, the kind of neighborhood they live in, the kind of lifestyle they have, their health, whether there is any substance misuse, what their perception of themselves is, and of other people, what their attitudes are, how they think and behave, what their motivation to change is like, what positive factors there are. Which I think is very important, because it is very easy in these exercises simply to list problems, problems, problems, problems. But I think, certainly I believe, that it is important to look as well at the strengths and competencies and potential that young people have. And again this a part of what is distinctive about the youth system, we are saying, these are young people, they have yet to fully develop so let's look at what could be developed and what is positive. We look at indicators of vulnerability, and indicators that the children might present a serious risk, because obviously this is an important way of trying to predict if there are some very serious, there are a small number of very dangerous young people, and it is perhaps a way of doing that.

Now under each of those sections there is a rating, a score, the person filling in the form is invited to make a score as to how likely, what is the impact that section has on their likely further offending. The idea at the end of the document, there is space to describe the planned interventions, and how those meet all of these problems. Because another of the problems with assessment in the past has been, you have a very detailed assessment, and then you don't actually do anything, you have not got the tools to be able to meet all of these needs. So there is a section to say how the planned programme of supervision, of intervention, whether it is mentoring or restorative justice, or parenting, how it is going to link into all of these problems. There is a shorter version of this asset which is done at the remand stage, and a shorter one as well is being developed for the final warning. I said that the final warning stage of proceedings is a lot of young people and it has to be done quickly, and people, practitioners have said that this is too much to do then, so we are producing a shorter version.

The evaluation which I mentioned that has been undertaken of ASSET has been quite encouraging. It found that it is used on 80% of young offenders when they first enter the system, and of those 80%, in nine out of ten cases the whole form is completed, which is good. And on the whole, practitioners have accepted this tool, and I say that because there are some people who are resistant to tools like this because they say, well, I am a professional social worker or probation officer, I do not need this list of boxes to tick, it is not a good way of doing it. There are some people who say that. Some professionals say they have been doing this for 20 years and they do not need this. But the idea is this is not a substitute for professional judgement, it

is an aid, an assistance to professional judgement, and if that message is given then people are more likely to embrace it.

Two problem areas that the evaluation showed, first of all, the section about the risks posed by young people has not been filled in very well. Some of the professionals have misunderstood that and they have thought it was about risks to the child, not risks by the child. And the other thing is although the idea is that the ASSETs completed at the start of an intervention and at the end to see whether there has been any change, it is less well completed at the end. So that is an area we have to work on at the Youth Justice Board to get practitioners to fill this in at the end. One of the problems may be that youth offending teams do not like to fill it in at the end in case it shows that the work they have done has not been successful. There is one specific problem which has been mentioned to me, which is to do with drugs. If you start to work with a young offender, and you say to them, maybe I have not met you before, and I say to you, have you got any problem with drugs, they'll say no, no, no. I work with you, I get to know you, I visit your family, I talk to you about why you're in trouble. Three months later they trust me, I trust them, I'm filling the form in, and I say do you have a problem with drugs, they may say well, yes, actually I do. So it looks like they started with no drug problem, and finished with a drug problem, which is not good, so we need to find a way around that sort of thing. So we need to get people to do more work at the end of the measures.

Next after ASSET, I just want to mention that the Youth Justice Board has produced a lot of other guidance, a lot of documentation about various aspects of how to work in the youth justice system. There is a list in the full paper, and

again, if people would like copies they can let me know and I can arrange that when I get back to England. I want to mention just two or three of the pieces of guidance or tools that have been made available. We have done a lot of work about reducing delay because of the importance that's been attached to that. I do not think that will be particularly interesting to many of you because it is very specific to the system in our country. But we have, as well as ASSET, we are working on two specific assessment tools. One, to try and assess whether a case is suitable for restorative justice, whether the attitude of the young person, and the kind of crime, and the attitude of the victim make it the kind of case that should go for a restorative justice approach. And the second is an assessment tool for parents. Is this a parent who should go on a parenting programme, do they need help with their parenting skills or not, so it's a specific tool because the basic asset does not have a lot about parenting on it. We have as well, at the Youth Justice Board, produced a parenting video for use by projects that are working with parents. It is a 25, 30 minute video with scenes of conflicts within families that trigger discussion. So you play a little of the video, a child comes back late at night, and they are two hours past their curfew and there is a flaming row between the mother and the child, and then the video stops and you have a discussion with the parents about how to handle that. Or the mother finds some cannabis under the young person's bed, or some strong alcohol, how do they handle that situation. So very practical to try to help parents. I did some years ago, in fact, I myself went on a parenting course, I was not ordered by the courts, I was a volunteer because I wanted to see what this was like. It was very interesting, this was about five years ago, and we used

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another video, and it was a very good way of getting people to think about different ways of communication, because communication is the key I think.

The final piece of guidance that I want to mention has been the most difficult one to produce. And it sounds a very boring subject, and it is information sharing. And the reason it is difficult is that we have a data protection law in the U.K., which means that if someone has some information about an individual that they get in the course of their work they can't just give that information around to everybody else, that is a protection for individuals. I don't know if other countries have these laws or not. Although the Crime and Disorder Act tried to say that in cases of crimes, then it is okay to share information between agencies, it is still quite complicated and some agencies, some organizations do not like to share information so much about individuals. I give you an example, a social worker is visiting a boy, a social worker in the youth offending team, he has a boy under his supervision, and he finds out that the boy's older brother is involved in drugs, does he tell the police at the youth offending team, has he got to do that or not? These are difficult practice issues that have developed. There is also a question about information about the victims, how, whether that should be transferred amongst the different agencies. So it is a technical question, but it shows that the multi-disciplinary work, the work between agencies, is quite difficult in practice. There are some problem areas that need to be overcome, and the Youth Justice Board is trying to do that.

Finally on this, the Youth Justice Board had promoted training, there is a five-day basic training course which is aimed at youth offending team members

who have not previously experienced the youth justice system, so people from education and health who have been brought in to youth offending teams, because most of the social workers, and police, and probation officers already have some experience in this area from their own professional training. So it is more to get the new members of the youth offending teams involved. The Youth Justice Board has promoted training as well for ASSETs and some restorative justice training, and is currently working on the development of on-the-job training for unqualified staff. There is a recognition that there are a lot of people who are maybe not professionally qualified, who have a lot to offer young people working on these projects, and so on, but there is not currently a system for training them, and we are in the process of establishing something like that. One thing I should mention, the basic five-day training has been held both for youth offending team members and staff in detention facilities, they have done this jointly, and that may sound very sensible. That was a big step forward for us, because in the past, people who worked in detention, and people who worked in the community were in very separate kind of, separate lives, and separate training and separate everything, and we are really trying to bring them together on the basis that they are working with the same boys and girls, this new detention and training order is about a joint approach to planning, to treatment, to work. We have to get people to work together and do training together much more.

I want to say a little bit about setting performance targets, because, this sounds a rather boring subject, but it is, an important part of the function of the Youth Justice Board has been to raise performance, to raise the quality of the services available locally. The targets are

the things that it is saying it will do. For example, we are saying that by April next year, ASSET will be completed in all cases where a youngster gets a community sentence and a custodial sentence. That is the target, under a target to cross the range of the Board's interest.

I mentioned at the beginning that the Youth Justice Board had some ability to provide funding for youth offending teams. Most of the funding is local, but there is some central top up funding, and we can make that funding available on the condition that the local youth offending teams meet their targets. At the Youth Justice Board we can't go around completing ASSET forms, we need the people in the youth offending teams to do it. But we can say to them, we will give you some more funding if you need more people to do it, but you must meet these targets to do it. How will we know whether those targets are met? Well there are various ways in which we monitor the performance of the local services. Every year each youth offending team, or each area of the country has to produce a youth justice plan, which describes the arrangements for the steering group who is on the top level, and who is on the youth offending team, how many staff, from what agencies, what is the budget, what other services are available to young offenders, what are the numbers of young offenders going through the system, to make an analysis of whether the arrangements in a local area meet the need properly. And each year we grade the plans depending on how good they are. So grade 1 is a commended, excellent plan, so that's fine, down to grade 4 which is sorry, that is not good enough, try again. I think this year there were only three or four that were in grade 4 out of 154 or so, most of the youth justice plans are quite good. But that is

just them writing down what they want us to see, they may be making it up. So we have another way of monitoring, and that is through what are called quarterly returns. Every three months the youth offending teams have to send information to the Youth Justice Board about the numbers of young people going through the system in their area, and what happens to them, whether they get final warnings, if they get a final warning, if they get some measure, some intervention to try and help the youngster stay out of trouble, how many reports are written, how many supervision orders, how many detention and training orders and so on. Although people could make that up, there will be a way eventually of seeing whether that tallies with centrally-held information, so that is quite a good system, and it is a way of assessing whether some of these targets are being met. And thirdly, there is an element, or there will be an element of independent scrutiny of the system. The detention facilities are inspected by an independent inspector of prisons, an inspector of social services, the youth offending teams, the Youth Justice Board is at the moment finalizing the right way to do inspections of these services. So we haven't yet got in place a process of independent inspection of the youth offending teams but we will do it over the next few months.

When that process of inspection is in place, one of the things that the inspectors will look at is how well youth offending teams meet what are called national standards. We have had national standards for the supervision of offenders in the community since 1992 in England and Wales, and I think you have some from Singapore that have been distributed, and I haven't had a chance to read them but I suspect they are in some respects similar. In England they set out

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central expectations by government departments of how individual cases should be supervised by probation officers and social workers. So there are national standards, but this is not just for juveniles, they have been for initially for adults and juveniles, so they form a kind of benchmark against which you can inspect and assess performance. They were revised first in 1995, and when the Youth Justice Board came on the scene in 1998, you'll remember that has a statutory role of advising about standards.

They came into operation in April last year, although there are two caveats, there are two kinds of conditions. One, they are very demanding standards in terms of what they expect, and basically what they said are, expectation that members of the youth offending teams should do things within particular time scales. They should see an offender within a day of an order being made, there should be a minimum level of contact between a supervisor and somebody of an order, so that if a young offender does not comply with an order then they are given a warning and then maybe another warning, but if they fail to comply a third time then they are taken back to court for breach proceedings, that is the sort of level of specificity. And the youth offending teams said we do not have the resources now to be able to meet these standards. So the Youth Justice Court has a target, you will see that in the list of targets, that by 2004 they will be operating according to these standards. If they can get there quicker, great, but there is a recognition from the center of government that you can't just ask people to do more and more without building up the resources, the numbers of staff in youth offending teams and so on.

So what the standards cover are preventive work, work with young people following arrest, one of the functions in our country, if a young person is arrested, then they cannot be interviewed unless they are with a parent or an adult, some other adult that is called an "appropriate adult", and it is for the youth offending teams to provide appropriate adults if parents refuse to come, or cannot be found, there has to be a scheme by which another independent person can come and act as an appropriate adult. There is a standard on assessment which is obviously about using the ASSET tool, there is a standard on work with the victims of crime, pre-court interventions, court work and remands, court-ordered intervention, detention and training orders, and the supervision of grave offenders. So that is an important tool really for ensuring that the actual work between individual youth offending team members and individual young offenders is done effectively, and quickly, and intensively.

Finally, I want to just talk for ten or fifteen minutes about what we now call the secure estates, but I suppose what I mean is all of the places where people under 18 can be locked up in England and Wales. There are on any one day just under 3000 young people under 18 locked up on remand and under sentence. I mentioned on Tuesday, conditions in the prison establishments are very, or have been historically very poor. There was this report in 1996 that was a very serious criticism of these. Basically there are three kinds of institutions for young offenders, closed institutions.

First of all, what are called young offender institutions, which are run by the prison service, so they are basically prison establishments, 80% of under 18s who are locked up are locked up in young

offender institutions. There are 13 establishments now that take juveniles under 18. In some of these the whole institution is for under 18s, in others it is a part of an institution that is made over for under 18s and the other part usually takes 18 to 21 year olds, but there is no mixing, so it is a separate establishment effectively. These are quite large institutions, so the biggest one now takes about 350 boys living in units of about 40. So that's the prison part of the estate. I mentioned that conditions are poor. There is a programme of trying to improve things but it is a slow business improving, because there has been a lot of neglect of these establishments.

The second set of establishments are what are called local authority secure units. I suppose these are like children's homes, but they are locked children's homes. So they are very much smaller, and the regimes, the quality of life in a secure unit is very much better, very much higher, the staffing levels are very much better. They are run by social services departments of local authorities, so they are social workers who are running them rather than prison officers. But you will not be surprised that they are very much more expensive than prisons, maybe up to six times the cost to keep a child in a secure unit.

The third set of institutions are called secure training centers, and currently there are three, and they are run by private companies, and they provide about 150 places. I should have said the local authority secure units provide about 350 beds, 350 places. The secure training centers about 150. These secure training centers were very controversial because they represented a new ability for courts to send children as young as 12 directly to a secure establishment, and they were controversial because they were run by

private companies. Two are run by a company called Group 4, which is a security company. The third is run by another organization called Securicor, which is another security company, who run other adult prisons in the U.K. and in other countries, including I think South Africa, or they are going to, I think, run an establishment in South Africa, Group 4.

The idea that people should make profit out of locking up 12-year-olds was a controversial political idea. I have to say that they had a very sticky start, the first of these secure training centers had a lot of difficulties, when it first started there was a riot at the establishment, and a lot of staff left and they had a very hard time but they have worked quite hard to improve conditions and the latest reports by the inspectors show that they have made a lot of improvements. And although I used to be not in favor of private companies doing this work personally, I have visited recently one of these establishments and it is very good quality care of children, probably better in some respects than the local authority units. So the secure training centers and the local authority units take the younger children. We have an arrangement that children under 15 do not go to the prison establishments, and some of the children who are 15 and 16 who are particularly vulnerable would also go to these smaller local authority or secure training establishments.

One of the particular problems in our system is finding suitable accommodation for the girls who need to be locked up, and there are currently about 70 girls who are locked up in prison establishments and the Youth Justice Board has made a commitment to get those girls out of prison establishments and into either

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local authority units or secure training centers.

So what are we doing to improve the estate? Well the way the system now works is that the Youth Justice Board at the center basically has a contract with the prison service and the local authorities and the secure training center providers. And in that contract there are service level agreements, there are agreements about the level of service that is going to be provided, the outcomes, the outputs, what will have to happen. For these organizations to get the money from the Youth Justice Board, they have to ensure that children have 30 hours of education, that they are out of their cell for 12 hours at least every day, and so on and so forth. So there are sets of specifications that are put in place, and in order to check whether those things are actually done, the Youth Justice Board has monitors, actual people, there isn't one in every establishment, they cover a group of establishments, but they go and they check whether what is in the contract is being provided. So the specifications are quite thorough, they cover what an establishment must provide, they cover standards of health and hygiene, they require the provider to get engaged with the assessment process, and review the progress of youngsters, they specify how many visits are allowed, there must be a complaints procedure, there must be a suicide prevention system and so on. The biggest weakness, I think, is the education and training that is available in the prison service establishments is not of a very high quality. The prison service has failed so far to meet all of the elements in the contract, and they had to pay some money back to the Youth Justice Board because they failed to meet, so it is like a contractual relationship. The idea is that having this central quality is a way of

raising performance by making these requirements.

Obviously the Youth Justice Board is limited by the fact that there are only a certain number of locked establishments in the country. It is not really a market. We cannot easily say, well, if you do not perform to these standards we will not send the children here we will send them there, because there isn't a "there" to send them to. So we are in the process of commissioning some new establishments, some new secure training centers, which will in a way diversify the market and enable children to be sent to better quality establishments. So there is a programme of commissioning new establishments. Most of these, well in fact they are all being created through something called the private finance initiative. So a private company finances, designs, constructs and manages the new unit and then receives its money when it starts to take young people. They get paid on a per day or per week basis depending on the numbers of children that they have. But I think most of the contracts are designed that they borrow the money to build the place, and then recoup the cost through the cost that they charge the Youth Justice Board for looking after the children, that is the method that we have.

One of the other problems with the secure estates is that the establishments are not in the right places. So we have a lot of young offenders in London, which is in the capital, biggest city, but we do not have enough places. We have one rather bad establishment to the west of London, and there is really nothing else. So some children from London have to be based a long way from home. One of the targets that the Youth Justice Board has is to ensure that as many children as possible are places within 50 miles of home, so within 80 kilometers of home, which is

still quite a long way if you want to maintain contact with family, and schooling and all of that.

The third thing we're doing to try and improve the estates is to research and disseminate best practice. There are few effective programmes for changing the behavior of young offenders in custody. In the young offender institutions there are some programmes that have originally been developed for adults that are being used with juveniles. In the secure training centers and local authority units they tend to adopt what they call a whole system approach, or a positive parenting approach, in which the idea is to try and influence the young people on a day-to-day basis through every kind of interaction that the staff have. It is in psychology terms pro-social modeling. So the way in which I, as a member of staff, talk to you, as another member of staff, in front of the child, that should be how we want that child to be, to be relating to people. So you should be courteous, you should not shout, you should not lose your temper, you should be reasonable, you should negotiate. All of these things, if you go to a prison establishment that is not always how things are in our country. There is a lot of shouting, and so the idea is that throughout the whole system you are trying to model good behavior.

In addition, you need specific programmes, because some of these children have very serious problems with their anger management, they cannot control their temper, or they have problems with alcohol, drugs. So we are trying to introduce some new programmes, we are also about to produce some guidance on rewards and incentives for young people in these establishments to try and encourage good behavior, because there has been a problem, the introduction of the detention

and training order which I mentioned has removed the right of governors of prisons to add additional days, if a young person in a prison behaves very badly you used to be able to add time, say you get an extra week. It is possible for the period in custody to be extended but that is if you have failed to cooperate with the plan for preventing offending. So the idea is when you go into custody a plan is drawn up between the secure establishment and the youth offending team, and if the youngster does very well he can be released early, and if he does very badly on that then he can be required to stay longer. What has happened in some places is some boys who have been about to be released, because they have done well, they know they are going, they smash up their room the night before they go, and there is very little that can be done at that stage. So there is a programme of rewards and incentives. We already have in prison establishments a system of incentives and earned privileges, and basically there are three standards of, you have a basic regime when you first arrive, and if you behave well you can end up with a television in your cell, and the ability to wear your own clothes, and so on.

This sector, as I said, is inspected very thoroughly and it is very right that there is an independent inspection. If you are taking the liberty away from children or young people then it is essential that somebody is coming to check that this is okay. We have had historically very powerful inspectors of prisons who have had no hesitation in publishing in the newspapers their views about the quality of establishments. So if the Youth Justice Board does not deliver the changes then it will be obvious to everybody, so it is very important that these changes do take place. But it is a big challenge, because there is a lot of work to do.

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So finally, in conclusion, the Youth Justice Board is exercising this leadership role, both on community treatment and institutional treatment. What it is trying to bring about is a cultural change within the system. A cultural change to try and encourage more intervention with young people, better quality work, and better performance, so that people can actually measure whether what they are doing is successful. Now it is very early to know whether the Youth Justice Board has been successful. We have been successful in setting up, putting the pieces in place, but whether it is working, I don't know. But it is interesting that in the manifesto of the Labor party before the election which took place two weeks ago, there was a commitment to extend some of the ideas that have been put in place for juveniles to the next age group up, to the 18 to 21 year-olds, because the thinking is that just because somebody reaches 18, they do not overnight turn into a capable, developed, sensible person. They often have the same problems, the same needs, the same difficulties. The approach of the multidisciplinary team, it would perhaps be different disciplines that were involved, but that is seen to be a very promising one, not only for young offenders but for young adults and perhaps some adults as well.