# Rehabilitation revolution - the next steps

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Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen.

**Introduction**

There's sometimes a view that politics is shaped in ivory towers, by people who never spend any time in the real world.

The truth is very different.

Our politics and our policies are so often shaped by the people we meet who have, for different reasons, found themselves at the sharp end of life in Britain.

Nowhere do we find that experience so readily available and so authoritative than among the group of organisations that are part of the Centre for Social Justice. So it is a particular pleasure to come and make this speech before this audience today. And like many of you here I am looking forward to the publication of your second report on Breakthrough Britain – which I know will be as influential as the last.

You may remember a few weeks ago the publication of the latest crime figures. They continue to confound the expectations of some experts who believe that crime rises at times of austerity. And I was asked the question by many – why do you think crime is coming down so fast.

It’s easy to come up with the simple explanations, like the fact that it's much harder to steal a car today than it was thirty years ago, and that the colour tele is no longer the thieves magnet it was a couple of decades ago.

I think there's another reason too.

Everywhere you go in Britain today you find private and voluntary organisations engaged with Government on motivating and mentoring young people from the most deprived backgrounds – helping steer them away from a life that can lead to antisocial behaviour and possibly crime. That is the work that lies at the heart of what the CSJ does, and I strongly believe it is making a real difference.

In shaping my ideas over the last few years, I have had many conversations with those people right on the front line. I remember sitting in a classroom with a very troubled young man in Liverpool and thinking, at heart, he’s a good kid. If only he had a stable home, then things could be very different for him.

That's why we need a multi-faceted approach to criminal justice.

Yes, of course we need to be tough on crime. We need to make the system more accountable – that's why Policing and Crime Commissioners have been elected to ensure the police deal with issues that really matter to their communities. And yes, we absolutely have to punish people properly when they have broken the law.

But we also can't ignore the sheer complexity of the problem.

Broken homes, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol misuse, generational worklessness, violent and abusive relationships, childhoods spent in care, mental illness, educational failure … All elements that are so very common in the backgrounds of so many of our offenders.
This is why our education and welfare reforms are **so** important.
But they are only a part of what needs to be done.
I think two of those real world conversations that I have had in the last few weeks have really brought home to me how our current system is letting down both victims and offenders alike.
The first was with the family of a young man, tragically stabbed to death in a street fight that was not of his making, by an offender out on licence.
How is it they asked, that a man out of prison could be free to roam the streets on a Saturday night with friends carrying knives? How could this brutal crime been allowed to happen?
Listening to them I was in no doubt that the system had let them down in the worst possible way.

A couple of weeks ago I was also sitting in a rehab centre in Stoke on Trent, run by a local charity.
The comments of one of the men there particularly struck home. He was in his thirties, and had passed again and again through the criminal justice system. He said to me simply – 'when I came out of prison I wanted to get my life back together, but I just didn't know how'.
That's the tragedy. Nearly half of prisoners themselves say they will need help to find a job when they leave prison. Over a third say they will need help to find somewhere to live when they are let out.
When all we do is just take those people, release them onto the streets with £46 in their pockets and no other support, why are we surprised that they reoffend again quickly?
Whether you are the hardest of hardliners on crime, or the most liberal observer, every single one of us has a vested interest in an enlightened approach to reducing reoffending.
We can't just keep recycling people round and round the system.
It's the view I have built up through all of those conversations over many years since I became an MP that have shaped the five priorities that I have given the Ministry of Justice for the remainder of this Parliament.

- We need a revolution in the way we handle offenders and work to prevent them from reoffending
- We need big changes too to the way we deal with children who are offenders, with a much greater focus on education in a secure environment
- We have to focus on making the prison system cheaper not smaller. I don’t want someone who should be in prison on the streets because there is no space available
- We need to reshape our legal aid system so it commands public confidence
- And I want a real drive for a criminal justice and court system that works effectively and puts victims first.

This is what transforming justice looks like.

Top of the list is that revolution in rehabilitation – a process of rapid change to the way we deal with offenders that will be at the heart of the work that we do between now and the election.
That revolution will be built around the principle of payment by results. What payment by results does is open up the provision of post-prison services to a whole host of new participants in a way that forces anyone who wants to be involved to be excellent at what they do. I want the state to pay for results and not just for a service.
It's the only way to get the best outcome for both the taxpayer and crucially the people we are trying to help. It means that we only pay for what works. And 'what works' means that those leaving prison don't simply fall back into crime and reoffending.

In his recent speech here, the Prime Minister signalled our ambition to see payment by results spread right across rehabilitation by the end of 2015. And I will shortly publish a paper setting out the details of our plans. I will invite all of those who believe they have a role to play to come forward with their ideas. And in particular I want to capture the skills of the specialist organisations, many in the voluntary sector, who have so much to offer.

My vision is very simple.

When someone leaves prison, I want them already to have a mentor in place to help them get their lives back together. I want them to be met at the prison gate, to have a place to live sorted out, and above all someone who know where they are, what they are doing, and can be a wise friend to prevent them from reoffending. And also to have training or rehab lined up – because this Government is determined to do more to address the root causes of offending: to get drug and alcohol users into recovery, and to address mental health needs.

Often it will be the former offender gone straight who is best placed to steer the young prisoner back onto the straight and narrow – the former gang member best placed to prevent younger members from rushing straight back to rejoin the gang on the streets. There are some really good examples out there of organisations making good use of the old lags in stopping the new ones. We need more of that for the future.

The probation service does important work with difficult individuals – and I want to use that expertise as we transform our approach to rehabilitation. The public sector will, of course, continue to have a significant role in the reformed system, particularly in working with serious offenders and in guarding our society against harm. But it's time to make sure we use all of the expertise that is out there to help drive the improvements we need.

It's the only way to give us a fighting chance to stop those offenders from coming back to prison all over again.

Alongside that revolution in the rehabilitation of adult offenders is a second big challenge.

We currently spend £245 million a year on the detention of about 1,800 young people. That's about £100,000 per place, but in some cases up to £200,000 - five times the cost of sending children to private school. Because seventy per cent of them reoffend and come back all over again.

An accountant would call that a bad return on investment. I'd call it a travesty.

These are often deeply troubled children, who have grown up in the most difficult and challenging of circumstances. All too often they can't even read or write, and many have been out of school for years. We need to detain them, but we also need to educate them.

And it makes no sense to have them under our control and not to make a real effort to send them on with better skills a better chance of getting a job, and ultimately having a better life.

So I have begun a review of our youth custody estate, with a view to building a much stronger educational heart to what we do with those young people. I will want to listen to organisations that know how to teach problem teenagers and not just to those who know how to detain them. People in the education world, not just the security world.

And I will bring forward a strategy for change in the near future.

But all of this does not mean a softer approach on prisons. I do believe that prison works, but it just does not work well enough. I have no doubt that one of the reasons for the lower crime levels in recent years is the fact that more people are in prison.

Every police force will tell you that their burglary rates fall when their serial burglars are behind bars. That's just common sense, and it's why I don't want the courts to hold back from sending the right people to prison.

Our prisons are not immune from the cost pressures that the entire public sector faces, though.

We have to save money as much as any other part of Government. And we have to do so in the short term, and not the long term.
So we have a simple choice.
We either have fewer people in our prisons. Or we can bring down the cost of each prison place.
It will be no surprise which option I have chosen.
I want us to strain every sinew to make our prison system more cost effective, to bring those costs down.
And that's what we will be doing.
It's what this month's announcement on prisons, and who can most efficiently run them, was all about.
We didn't take back the Wolds prison from G4S because of what happened at the Olympics. We did so because having looked at their bid, it made more sense to merge it with a group of neighbouring public sector prisons, with shared facilities, shared leadership and reduced costs.
But saving money does not have to mean less work in prison and less training for offenders. We will continue to increase the hours prisoners spend in work and training. And if anyone does not believe that possible, they just need to visit some of our newer prisons to see how better facilities can be delivered at a much lower cost.
I have one other message on prisons. Both Jeremy Wright, the prisons minister, and I are very aware of the concerns about the regime inside our prisons. Prison is not meant to be a comfortable place, full of perks and undeserved privileges.
And those offenders who smuggle mobile phones into prisons and take pictures of themselves and their fellow inmates purporting to be having an easy time should take heed – they will face serious disciplinary consequences.
This is why Jeremy is reviewing the prison regime, and we will make changes where we need to.

The fourth priority for change is in legal aid. We have already had to make changes for financial reasons and to target funding where it is needed most. I cannot promise that the legal aid system will be immune from further money pressures. But right now my focus is on confidence in the system.
Last week we published figures about the amount of money that Abu Hamza was able to receive in legal aid before his extradition. Most right minded people will have been shocked, but probably not surprised.
The truth is that the interests of justice will mean that society sometimes has to provide legal support to people many find repellent. That's justice and it is an essential part of a democratic nation.
But – whether in high profile cases, or elsewhere - legal aid must never become a vehicle for people to keep justice at bay or to make the taxpayer pick up the tab where people can afford to pay their legal costs themselves. It must be focused on those who most need it, and the interests of the taxpayer not lawyers.
I have asked for urgent work to be done to look at how we can ensure that we have a legal aid system that completely commands the public's confidence and where the decisions that we take are really in the interests of justice and not in conflict with it.
That's also why we yesterday announced that we are looking at changes to the system of judicial review, to crack down on hopeless cases which lead to unnecessary cost and delay.

My fifth area for change is about putting victims at the heart of the justice system.
All too often I hear of the huge frustrations of those who find themselves falling foul of criminal activity.
About a court system that takes too long, and where cases are managed in an all too often chaotic way – at least from the perspective of the victim.
Of a system that often seems to be more interested in the offender than in the victim.
Of a lack of information about what is going on.

All of this has to change.
My message to the family of that young man so tragically stabbed to death when minding his own business on a Saturday night is that we will take further steps to address the very real issue of knife crime.
But it's not just about sentencing. Actually sentences today have got tougher. Burglars today, for example, spend longer in jail than they did ten years ago.
It's also about making sure that victims feel the system works for them too.
That means a process in our courts that is quicker and less erratic, with fewer cases collapsing at the last minute, or being delayed and delayed.
Less than half of criminal trials go ahead as planned - meaning victim and witnesses expectations are too often raised and then dashed, to say nothing of the worry and stress this causes. A quarter of those who attended court to give evidence reported that themselves or their family were intimidated during the process. That cannot be right.
It means tougher action to deal with anti-social yobs who make their neighbours' lives a misery, and with offenders bullying their victims on social media sites. That is something I feel particularly strongly about and it has to be dealt with in the strongest possible way.
And it means using location monitoring technology to make sure that offenders banned from entering particular areas by courts aren't just free to wander the town centre on a Saturday night to commit crimes.
All of this has to be done against the background of budget pressures that we know are not going away any time soon.
So we have to be much smarter in the way we run public services.
In recent years almost every major private company has found new and more cost effective ways of doing things, and often has discovered that it can deliver a better service at the same time.
That is what we are now doing in the public sector too.
And it what we are now doing in the Ministry of Justice. The status quo is not an option.
I think we can deliver better rehabilitation of offenders, a smarter system of detaining and educating teenage offenders, a cheaper and better prison system, and a legal aid and criminal justice system that command public confidence – and at the same time bring costs down.
I think you all have an important part to play in helping us achieve that.
The Centre for Social Justice was set up to help lift parts of our society out of the rut into which they have sunk. Sorting out our justice system is a fundamentally important part of that.
And over the coming years my team and I will do everything we can to deliver the change that is so desperately needed. That is what Transforming Justice means. Ultimately the status quo will not be an option for us.

Chris Grayling