

“Court in the Act”

**The Youth Court; The Children, Young Persons, and their Families Act 1989;
And topical issues arising for NZ Youth Justice practitioners**

*A newsletter co-ordinated by the Principal Youth Court Judge for the
Youth Justice community.*

*Contributions, feedback and letters to the Editor are not only acceptable, but are
encouraged.*

Special Edition: “34 Steps to Reducing Prison Populations”

Youth Court Website: <http://www.courts.govt.nz/youth/>
(Now includes a database of all relevant Youth Court cases)

No.23, July 2006

*“The first half of our lives is ruined by our parents and the second half by our
children”*

(Clarence Darrow – quoted at the Boys in Schools Conference, Massey University - May 2006)

In this Issue ...

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hyperlink access]*

[34 Steps to Reducing Prison Population](#)

Occasionally I read something that is so compelling and so useful, that I want to share it with everybody involved in the Youth Justice sector.

A recent example of what I think is an outstanding piece of work is “34 Steps to Reducing Prison Populations” by Kaye McLaren. It particularly emphasises the need for earlier intervention (0 – 5 age group) – which is something all of us in the Youth Justice field have been emphasising for some time. But the article also contains 15 suggestions for working with teenagers, which I know you will all find very useful.

So, this is a special edition of *Court in the Act*, which deals with one single issue/article. I hope you find it as interesting and as helpful as I have.

Andrew Becroft

Why Publish “Court in the Act”?

Principal Youth Court Judge A J Becroft

NEWSPAPERS often focus on the negative side of youth justice. Serious crimes and violence make for good copy but as “Court in the Act” readers know, this is only a tiny part of the story. “Court in the Act” is designed to tell the whole story about youth justice and inform this youth justice community.

As there is no other national youth justice publication dealing with current issues, relevant cases, and important overseas developments, I will continue to produce “Court In The Act” – but simply as a foretaste of a more organised and regular publication to come. Until the arrival of a new publication, my office will act as a “clearing house” for all matters of interest regarding youth justice. I am happy to send out any items of national interest that people want to send me.

We have also collated a significant database of those receiving “Court In The Act”. If you

know of others who should be on the list
please contact my PA, Lavina Monteiro, ph.
(04) 914 3446.

34 Steps to Reducing Prison Populations

by Kaye McLaren (author of 'Reducing Re-offending: What Works Now', "Tough is Not Enough: Getting Smart about Youth Offending" and Ministry of Justice e-flash newsletters on 'What Works" and "What doesn't Work" to reduce youth offending. Currently developing YOSEC – Youth Offending Services Effectiveness Checklist – to assess how closely youth and child offending services adhere with what research says is effective in reducing offending.)

Kaye has also just been appointed as a member of the Youth Justice Independent Advisory Group (IAG), along with Laverne King, a youth advocate from Manukau. The IAG, which is chaired by the Principal Youth Court Judge, meets regularly in Wellington and provides advice and feedback to Government Ministers and Government Departments.

Introduction

As I make clear in the body of this paper, the path to prison starts at conception. Genetic inheritance, parent characteristics, pre-/perinatal care and family living standards all play a part in starting off the trajectory that ends in costly custodial sentences. Thus the main goal in reducing prison populations is to reduce the numbers coming through from each previous stage. This involves identifying the groups at high risk of either having children who end up in prison, or ending up in prison themselves, and providing the most effective prevention or treatment possible at the earliest stage possible. The aim at each successive stage is to raise the barriers to children/young people proceeding on to the next stage. This should cumulatively reduce the total numbers moving through to the youth and adult justice systems. There is a need to reduce prison populations right now, and I also look at ways of doing this in the last section. But in the final analysis, prison numbers are high not only because of sentencing policies but also because of the numbers of children and young people who get over the barriers at each stage of development, and go through to ever more serious offending and sanctions. Simply trying to reduce current prison populations without also trying to reduce 'flow through' from earlier ages is like emptying the bucket without turning off the tap – it won't be long until it's full again.

The following suggestions are based on over a decade of looking at research on 'what works' to reduce offending, what puts children and young people at risk of offending, and what leads to positive outcomes for young people, rather than on my personal opinion, along with professional experience or the expert opinion of others in some cases.. I spent ten years working in the Department of Corrections, starting in Penal Division and then in the Policy team, and have spent a significant amount of the past seven years working around the youth justice system. This means that my reading of the research is informed by a practical knowledge of how things actually work in the real world.

Brief summary of steps

Pre-School Age

1. Identify the children most likely to go on to offend as early as possible.
2. Keep good data on at-risk parents and babies, so we know who needs the help most, and can follow outcomes for them later.
3. Focus interventions on these highly at-risk families and babies, including parents who are actively involved in crime.
4. For school age girls who have babies, provide schools that allow them to continue their studies and gain qualifications while providing childcare and teaching parenting skills.
5. Do a stock take of services if needed, assessing adherence with 'what works' research.

Primary/Intermediate School Age

6. Provide effective programmes for kids and families through primary and intermediate school age.
7. Identify high-risk young kids in the education system and instead of expelling them keep them at school.
8. To carry out steps 6/ and 7/ it is necessary to have good, accurate ways of identifying risk of offending in children.
9. Assess the likely effectiveness of services in reducing child offending, link this information to funding systems and carry out a stock take of services nationally.

Adolescence (13-20)

10. Identify the kids with the higher risk of offending. Good tools are needed to do this. Staff who deal with young people need to be trained in using risk assessment tools.
11. Avoid residential services or sanctions wherever possible.

12. In line with 11. make sure Child, Youth and Family residential services are providing effective programmes to young people who go there.
13. Link residential services in CYF and other residences to a plan for treatment and support in the community.
14. Identify lower risk kids and divert them.
15. Do everything possible to keep kids in high school as for as long as possible.
16. As part of this, make high school as relevant and interesting as possible to higher risk young people.
17. Pick out the girls most likely to have sex at a young age, drop out and fall pregnant, and provide career counselling and educational support to keep them in school.
18. Encourage more coordination among services, through Youth Offending Teams and by setting up a Department of Youth Justice.
19. Improve data collection and analysis on offending by young people.
20. Assess and treat the problems that actually lead to offending, including via Family Group Conferences and plans.
21. Provide more specialist training for youth justice staff via a national training centre.
22. Spend more on treatment services, particularly non-residential services.
23. Carry out a stock take of youth justice programmes.
24. Make sure that funding of services is linked to likely impact on crime.

Adult Justice System

25. Identify the highest risk kids when they first enter the adult system.
26. Provide effective services in probation.
27. Provide effective services in prison, with priority given to younger people.
28. Train prison officers to be agents of change.
29. Send people to prison only when absolutely necessary and for as short a time as is absolutely necessary, while protecting public safety.
30. Provide services early in sentences as well as later on.

31. Make realistic plans to support and maintain people in the community after they leave prison.
32. Provide programmes in the community that teach parenting skills and support parents who are on sentences, to reduce the risk of intergenerational crime.

Across all ages

33. Introduce computerised decision support programmes at each age-level to help staff make more consistent and evidence-based decisions about dispositions and treatment
34. Target offending by Maori in effective ways.

Full version of steps

Pre-School Age

1. **Identify the children most likely to go on to offend as early as possible.** Realistically, this means identifying the families most at risk of bringing up such children – from the birth of the child or before. There are a number of well-known risk factors that can be used to identify such families and children (for instance, see Moffit and Caspi, 2001; Fergusson and Lynskey, 1996, 1998). Individuals who experience the most disadvantaged situations as children are most likely to offend, are most likely to commit the most serious offences, and are most likely to keep offending after others ‘mature out’ in their twenties. English researcher Michael Rutter (2001) points out that New Zealand research by Fergusson and Lynskey (1996) shows that the 20% of young people with 19 or more early disadvantages in the Christchurch longitudinal study showed a 100 fold increase in offending compared to the 50% with a family adversity score of 6 or less. With odds like this it is worth identifying as young as possible.
2. **Identify at-risk parents and babies, so we know who needs the help most, and keep good records, so we can follow up outcomes for them later.** Identifying who is at risk is essential for achieving good outcomes, as the families with the most risk factors are most likely to have children who offend early, at a high rate, seriously, and for a long time. A simple questionnaire based on risk factor research could be used at hospitals at the time women give birth, as most of the risk factors would be apparent then. Given that some

high-risk mothers (e.g. young, still at school) may not give birth in hospitals, some further work would be needed to identify this group. Information from this questionnaire could then be entered into a national computerised register that allowed support services in each region to know who the highest risk families were and give them priority for aid. This would mean that at-risk families would be getting help before markers such as neglect and abuse were needed to signal there was a problem. I understand that the Ministry of Social Development currently does some work in identifying and supporting such mothers through its Family Start programme. Keeping good, computerised records on families would also mean that outcomes of treatment could more easily be tracked. Ideally this data could feed into the Pipeline data system that the Ministry of Justice is currently constructing to predict future prison populations, as the supply of people in prison starts being formed at conception.

3. **Focus interventions on these highly at-risk families and babies, including parents actively involved in crime.** Research is clear that interventions such as home visiting by trained nurses, parenting skills training and intensive pre-school education can reduce risk factors for offending, and reduce later offending rates (see McLaren, K 2003, *Reconnecting Young People*, www.msdc.govt for examples of effective programmes in this area). The kind of disadvantages identified by New Zealand research as increasing the risk of later crime, which could be addressed by programmes and services, include lack of parental disciplinary skills, family conflict, mental health problems in the mother, single parenting, income, education, employment, peer rejection of the child, fighting and hyperactivity (Moffitt and Caspi, 2001). While there might be some false positives identified by the screening above in Step 2, there is no indication that intensive support of families is actually harmful, and the resources saved at later stages (especially for costly custodial sanctions) would most likely outweigh the cost of intervening with children who would not have actually offended. Given that New Zealand research shows that families with multiple adversities are also at high risk of having children who have other significant and costly problems (such as mental illness, substance abuse, sexually risky behaviour and academic failure) such intervention is unlikely to ever be totally wasted. But allocating services to families who are less at risk is more likely to be a waste of time and money. Services that incorporate cultural activities and use staff from the same culture as the client are recommended, as long as these services and staff accord with 'what works', and client preferences are taken into account so that clients are not alienated by unwanted cultural content.

4. **For school age girls who have babies, provide schools that allow them to continue their studies** and gain qualifications while providing childcare and teaching parenting skills. Mothers with more education, qualifications, employment and parenting skills are less at risk for raising children who become involved in offending. From anecdotal evidence of Susan Baragwanath's work with He Huarahi Tamariki in Porirua, it appears that young mothers who have left school to have their babies respond well to the offer of academic education combined with parenting education and childcare.

- 5. Do a stock take of services if needed, assessing adherence with ‘what works’ research, and linking funding to quality of services.** This is covered in more depth in step 23, but may well be relevant to the early childhood area too. Treasury stresses the need for funding social service programmes on the basis of evidence about what is effective in a given area. Unfortunately mechanisms for assessing how closely programmes match what the research says is effective tend to be lacking across the social service sector, although they may exist in the preschool area – I am not sufficiently familiar with it to know. One way of doing this is to develop a checklist based on the evidence, or statement of the elements of best practice, against which programmes can be checked. This checklist can then be used to help make funding decisions, as well as to help programme providers know where and how to improve the quality of their services. This can be taken one step further and used in a stock take. A basic stock take would involve finding out what programmes are being funded, and some basic details about them (such as amount of funding, target group, number of staff and their qualifications, number of children/families seen, and change techniques used). But this would still not give a conclusive indication of whether money was being spent effectively. An evidence-based checklist could be used further to assess the adherence of programmes to ‘what works’ to reduce risk factors for offending. When this information was matched against how many high risk families there are in each region or city (based on the data gathered in step 2) it would be clear where new programmes and development of existing programmes were needed, and where there were excess services. Without this kind of information it is difficult to know whether current resources for preventing offending are sufficient, or are being used as effectively and efficiently as they could be.

Primary/Intermediate School Age

The previous steps raise the barrier for proceeding from a disadvantaged baby or toddler to child offending. There is likely to be a reasonably high false negative rate from identifying this early, but the savings in later intervention costs would probably compensate for the cost of treatment that might have been unnecessary. The next stage is to prevent children who become involved in offending from continuing into adolescence, when the huge risk factor of antisocial peer influence comes into play.

- 6. Provide effective programmes for kids and families through primary and intermediate school age.** These programmes are best to target both kids and parents as both individual and family factors are very important at this age. They can be based in the community or school. To be effective they need to target the most at-risk kids (although classroom wide intervention appears effective), involve parents, target known offending-related needs, and do so in an active, intensive way. They also need to teach new skills that address the skill deficits associated with offending, particularly parenting skills (setting limits, effective discipline, affection, positive communication) and child social skills

(including problem solving, self-control and goal setting). (I can give specific examples of such programmes if that would be useful, as well as lists of specific risk factors and offending-related needs for children and families, if these are wanted.) Services that incorporate cultural activities and use staff from the same culture as the client are recommended, as long as these services and staff accord with ‘what works’, and client preferences are taken into account so that clients are not alienated by unwanted cultural content.

7. **Identify high-risk young kids in the education system and instead of expelling them, keep them at school.** This means making sure they and their families get services that reduce their offending risk and mean the children can stay at school. The Ministry of Education currently provides some excellent specialist services for these children – extending these services is likely to pay rich dividends by keeping children in school and reducing the cost of dealing with offending at a later age. Training teachers in effective behaviour management techniques, or basing programmes in very high risk classrooms may also be useful, although this may be expecting too much of teachers. Attending school and doing well are strong protective factors against offending. Leaving school creates more risk factors through unsupervised time and greater access to antisocial peers who are also not at school.
8. To carry out steps 6. and 7. it is necessary to **have good, accurate ways of identifying children at risk of offending.** There are a number of such tools (one that is used in New Zealand already is EARL). It is important that they reflect known risk factors, and have been validated and found reliable by research. Police are currently using a risk assessment tool (ARNI) which is a positive development - I’m not sure whether Child, Youth and Family are. ARNI needs to be revised as it currently does not include enough of the known risk factors to be accurate, and it also needs to be validated by research. Standard use of such tools is essential to make sure the most at-risk children do not come through the system and prevent children who are not highly at risk of offending from receiving scarce services. It would be best if the same tools were used across different agencies. Feeding this information into the Pipeline system would give a fuller picture of the number of potential inmates coming down the line.
9. **Assess the likely effectiveness of services in reducing child offending, link this information to funding systems and carry out a stock take of services nationally.** The purpose of doing this would be to make sure that the most effective services get the most funding, and to know where in the country extra services or further development of services is needed. (Systems to do this may already be in place – I do not know enough about the child offending system to know this.) More detail on this step can be found in steps 5, 23 and 24. The Correctional Programme Assessment Inventory (CPAI) Youth Version has been developed for this purpose of assessing programme adherence with research on ‘what works’, but I am not sure it extends to children. YOSEC (Youth Offending Services Effectiveness Checklist) is currently in development with myself as project manager and is designed to cover children. Or a

purpose-built tool to assess programme adherence with ‘what works’ research could be developed. Some modification to YOSEC might be needed to add more detail about school-based programmes if it were to be used in the educational sector. Once such a tool has been identified or developed it can be used to help make funding decisions so that the programmes most in line with known best practice can be funded as a priority. It would also help existing programmes to assess themselves and work out where they might need to carry out development to become more in line with what the research shows is effective. If a national stock take of preventing/reducing offending programmes was carried out for this age group it would be possible to track the availability of high quality services against known ‘hot spots’ of high risk children and families. This would aid Government in knowing where more funding and development was needed, or where there were more services than were actually needed. The end result should be more effective and efficient services, and less offending.

Adolescence (13-20)

These previous steps make it more likely that children stop offending while they are still children, rather than moving into adolescent offending. It is at this stage, after puberty (usually taken as being 13 years onward) that research shows that influence by friends and acquaintances involved in offending becomes the most powerful of all risk factors. Individual and family factors remain important, but peers come into play in a way that is not evident in childhood. In addition, involvement in offending that starts after age 13 is not as limited as once thought. Recent research shows that more ‘adolescent limited’ offenders were still offending up to age 26 than had previously been predicted (Moffitt, Caspi, Harrington and Milne, 2002). While in their teens this group offends at rates as high as those of teens who started offending as children, although they tend to commit less serious offences than the group that started in childhood (Moffitt et al, 2002). All these represent considerable cost and risk to the community, so identifying and effectively treating adolescents at this stage is crucial. While this is still late compared to preschool or primary school age, each young person who can be stopped means less cost down the road for more expensive services, of which prison is the most expensive.

10. **Identify the kids with the higher risk of offending.** Research shows that these young people are not only more likely to offend, but do better in treatment services than lower risk kids. There is a misapprehension that targeting ‘at-risk’ teenagers who have only just started offending or have committed relatively minor offences will head them off before they become more serious, chronic offenders. But in fact this group does not necessarily go down this road unless they are assessed as being of medium to high risk of offending. This is especially true if they are diverted and kept away from higher risk kids to avoid contamination. Kids who already have a history of offending, who started before age 12, and who may have committed some quite serious crimes, are the ones most likely to keep offending and go on to prison. This is the group that needs to be identified and treated as a priority. Those who started offending after puberty but are offending at high rates or seriously are also a

priority for treatment. Again, **good tools are needed to do this.** As mentioned, Police use ARNI, which is a good start but needs to be revised to incorporate more recent research on risk factors. The Risk Screen for Young Offenders (RYSO) is a risk assessment tool that was developed by the Department of Corrections. I understand that has been validated in a recent evaluation of the Reducing Youth Offending Programme although I have not personally seen this research. A Canadian tool with good research backing is the Youth Levels of Supervision/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) which assesses both risk and need. The Department of Corrections is currently evaluating the predictive validity (the degree to which scores on a risk tool predict later offending) for four tools including RYSO, and it will be interesting to see what those results show. I am not up to date with what tool CYF use, but research has made it clear that professional judgement is not enough – assessment needs to be based on proven risk factors to be accurate. It would be most effective if the same risk assessment tool was used across all agencies. **Staff who deal with young people need to be trained in using risk assessment tools.** While programmes and services continue to focus on adolescents who are not highly likely to go on to prison, they miss a chance to reduce prison populations.

11. **Avoid residential services or sanctions wherever possible.** Influence towards offending by peers who are involved in crime becomes the biggest risk factor in adolescence, peaking around 14 to 17 in New Zealand. Unless residential services are very tightly structured, with good staff plans to reduce antisocial influence and high hours of effective programming, grouping such teens together can increase the risk of offending. In addition, kids go back to the same problems at home that they left behind in many cases. This does not mean that effective programmes cannot take place in residential settings – the research is clear that they can and do. It just means they have to work much harder than programmes in the community to offset peer influence. It is cheaper and less likely to increase risk of offending to deal with young people in the community. I would suspect that behaviour changes that take place in the community are more likely to be lasting because the young person learns them in the place where they live, and is so cued in to use new skills by continuing to see around them the sights that they associate with learning the new skills. General principles of psychology would suggest this is so, but I have not seen any research specifically comparing the length of impact of treatment on residential versus non-residential treatment.

12. In line with 11. **make sure Child, Youth and Family residential services are providing effective programmes to young people who go there.** Experience of residential sanctions is a risk factor for offending. Antisocial peer pressure is also the biggest risk factor for offending at this developmental stage. This means that housing young people with experience of offending in one place is a risky business, and strong staff control and intensive programming are needed to offset this. Regular staff training, auditing and evaluation of CYF residences is needed to keep services strong. Evaluating these services using the CPAI Youth version or YOSEC would be valuable, as part of ensuring that the services that are delivered are in line with what

research says ‘works’. The young people who attend CYF residences are the ‘kids most likely to’ in terms of future prison sentences. To a large extent these residences act as gatekeepers for future prison populations, so making sure intervention at this stage is effective and intensive is crucial to reducing prison populations.

13. **Link residential services in CYF and other residences to a plan for treatment and support in the community** to make sure any gains made during residential treatment aren’t lost in the stress of returning to real world temptations and pressures. Adolescents leave residential treatment to go back to all the same problems, which means the dice is loaded for them to fail. One of the weaknesses of most residential treatment is that the focus in terms of staff contact and money spent is on the residential component. The community segment tends to be a poor cousin, if it happens at all. One organisation providing a good model for this is Youth Horizons, which has workers in home communities whose job it is to set up services and support for returning youth while they are in residences.
14. **Identify lower risk kids and divert them**, while providing a low level of effective services where needed. DON’T mix them with higher risk kids in group activities of any kind, for however short a period. They will be influenced, and not in a good way. One mentoring programme in Hawaii provided a very low level of group activities where mentored youth mixed with each other. One year after the programme the higher risk kids had offended less, and the lower risk kids had offended more than before the programme. This illustrates the risk that seemingly harmless and fun group activities hold for these kids. By far the best approach is to divert them, provide services to the family and/or young person alone where needed, and involve them in positive activities (e.g. after school activities at school) or anything where they will meet and be influenced by law abiding young people.
15. **Do everything possible to keep kids in high school as for as long as possible** – not only attending but learning and getting qualifications. Overseas research shows that girls who drop out are more likely to become pregnant, and thus mothers at high risk of having children who become involved at offending, because of their young age, low educational attainments and lack of parenting skills. New Zealand research shows that high risk boys who stay in school are less likely to offend than those who drop out. Staying in school is a key protective factor.
16. As part of this, **make high school as relevant and interesting as possible to young people**, particularly those who are less academically inclined. Provide training and education that is directly linked to jobs.
17. **Pick out the girls most likely to have sex at a young age, drop out and fall pregnant**, and provide career counselling and educational support to keep

them in school and focused on a positive future. These are the potential high-risk mothers, and often they're the girls who've had the most disadvantaged childhoods. Anything that helps keep these girls at school and interested in a career rather than opting for early motherhood is worth doing. Quantum Opportunity Program provides some positive ideas of ways of doing this, as does the I Have a Dream programme (see McLaren, K 2003, Reconnecting Young People, www.msdc.govt for more information on these programmes). Another strategy is to transfer such girls to all girl schools where possible, as New Zealand research shows that single sex schools are protective against powerful peer influence by delinquent lads on girls who mature early, particularly those with a childhood history of antisocial conduct.

18. **Encourage more coordination among services, through Youth Offending Teams and by setting up a Department of Youth Justice.** Anecdotal evidence from youth justice staff (Police, Courts, CYF) suggests that in areas where services for offending youth work more closely together fewer young people come to notice. The ultimate form of coordination would be to have a dedicated Department of Youth Justice, and this is a course I personally favour. At present the youth justice system is very fragmented, which means it is more difficult to coordinate and easier to duplicate services. It is also difficult to collect and analyse data across the system for the purposes of planning and evaluation (see 19). This all adds up to wasted resources and opportunities for change. One thing I noticed in ten years working at Corrections was that having a centralised Department meant that it was easier to put through large systemic changes. The Ministry of Justice does an excellent job of coordinating the work of agencies that work with antisocial young people and monitoring the Youth Justice Strategy, but their efforts are hampered separate agency policy agendas. In addition, it appears that the larger agencies may not place as high an emphasis on preventing youth offending as on the work which makes up the bulk of their role. Youth justice staff in various agencies are dedicated and knowledgeable, but need more resources and support. At present it appears that insufficient staff and resources are available to make a substantial impact on youth offending. (News of the recent \$10million increase in funding for youth offending services in CYF is very welcome for this reason.) As youth justice agencies are the final gatekeepers before adult sanctions, including the top tariff of prison, their role is crucial. Focusing resources and management in one agency could well mean a more coordinated, better resourced approach to reducing youth offending, with consequently more effective gate keeping.

19. **Improve data collection and analysis on offending by young people.** There are three reasons for doing this. The first is that it is difficult to know what resources are needed to deal with youth offending – and where – unless good data about arrests, cautions, court appearances, sentences etc are available that show the extent of the problem. The second is that it is difficult to predict what levels of offending might occur in future, and what resources might be required without data to build predictions on. The Pipeline project, which is developing a means of predicting prison populations, could well be extended to youth offending. However, this system is only as good as the data that underpins it. At present the lack of reliability of youth offending data and the

difficulty in obtaining it means that any prediction system would probably be full of holes. The new Police system for recording arrests etc should help greatly here. However, a system wide means of collecting and collating data is needed. The third reason is that it is important to know what impact sentences and services are having on offending. At present, because of the fragmented way in which data is stored, it is difficult to quickly and easily tell what impact various parts of the youth justice system, or youth justice programmes, are having on offending. A better data collection system would address this.

20. **Assess and treat the problems that actually lead to offending, including via Family Group Conferences and plans.** Research on ‘what works’ to reduce youth offending makes it clear that only some of the many problems that antisocial young people experience are causally related to offending, and thus important to treat in terms of reducing offending. Thus, to make a difference it is important to know which young people have these problems and direct the bulk of treatment resources to addressing them. This requires good assessment of such problems (or criminogenic needs, to use the full glory of the jargon), as well as effective treatment strategies. Some popular targets of programmes, such as substance abuse and fear of punishment, have been shown by research not to be associated with offending for the adolescent age group. Reducing substance abuse, while an important health focus, does not appear to result in reduced offending for the teen population. Increasing the fear of official punishment (e.g. of arrest) has been linked with a slight increase in offending. Things like increasing the ability to stop and think before acting, or learning to manage anger, appear to pay a much greater dividend when targeted in youth. These findings illustrate the importance of basing treatment on assessment of problems that research shows are actually linked with offending. This is important in youth justice programmes, both residential and non-residential, but also in Family Group Conferences. While whanau and victim views must be taken into account in FGC plans, the paramount concern must be reducing offending and thus protecting potential victims. FGC plans developed without taking assessment of offending-related problems into account may be sufficient to help young people with a relatively low risk of offending. But there must be some doubt whether this would be the case for higher risk youth. Building in assessment of risk of offending and of offending-related needs/problems to FGCs could well improve their effectiveness. Coordinators could then provide this information to whanau and victims, along with advice on what types of approach and intensity of services might be the most useful for whichever problems the young person has. These could then underpin the plan, along with the ideas that people at the FGC suggest. Training FGC coordinators in risk/needs assessment would also be useful, so that they are better able to advise whanau and victims. Services and plans that incorporate cultural activities and use staff from the same culture as the client are recommended, as long as these FGC plans, services and staff accord with ‘what works’, and client preferences are taken into account so that clients are not alienated by unwanted cultural content.

21. **Provide more specialist training for youth justice staff via a national training centre.** One of the things that has become clear during the ten consultation meetings I have held for YOSEC round the country is that there is a dearth of specialist youth justice training available. This is specifically in: cognitive behavioural techniques (CBT) as they apply to the offending area; youth development; and staff skills and behaviour identified by research as effective in reducing offending. (These include use of discipline and authority, ways of relating to young people, modelling and reinforcement). There is some CBT training available in New Zealand, but service providers lack information about where it is available. As far as I am aware none or next to none of this training specifically relates to youth offending. I would see youth justice work as being of the same importance as medical services in terms of the impact on society (i.e. preventing injury, trauma, death, unnecessary public spending). If we put as little effort into training health professionals as we do into training youth justice staff we would have a woefully inadequate medical system. At present it appears that professional development outside Government agencies is almost left to chance. The implications of lack of training are major in terms of lost potential to decrease offending and stop youth from moving into the adult system, and the consequent costs to the state and to victims. Funding and developing a national centre for youth justice staff training has the potential to lift the game of youth justice staff both in Government employ and in community organisations to a huge degree. Such a centre could also provide training in such essential skills as assessment of risk of offending and offending-related needs, and many other aspects of effective practice. At present many youth justice practitioners are very strong in ability to form rapport with clients, and in enthusiasm for their work, but relatively weak in skills and knowledge specific to changing offending behaviour. Some kind of NZQA recognised qualification system for youth justice workers would also be useful (this may also exist). Training would need to include knowledge of bicultural methods of programme provision, as it is starting to appear that combining effective approaches with Maori cultural components is more effective for Maori and no less effective for non-Maori than mono-cultural approaches.
22. **Spend more on treatment services, particularly non-residential services.** In the absence of the kinds of systemic changes of the type listed above, simply throwing more money at treatment services is unlikely to make a huge difference. However, some (I am not sure how many because a national stock take has not been carried out – see 23 below) youth justice programmes are less effective than they might be because of insufficient funding. Assessment of services for their adherence with ‘what works’ research is essential to make sure the best, or most promising, services get the most funding. Extra funding can also be tagged to making improvements in areas identified as not in line with ‘what works’. But once it is clear which programmes are most worth funding, and what improvements need to be made in them, extra funding would be useful. There may also be some programmes (again I am not sure how many) that are not reaching benchmarks for effective practice in large part because of lack of funding. One thing that has become clear in the course of my consultation for the YOSEC project is that some programmes are finding it

hard to attract and retain good staff because of the low salaries for youth justice workers, the high hours, and the insecurity of funding, leading to insecurity of employment. Higher staff salaries may well attract (and keep) more qualified or skilled staff. Lack of secure funding is in some part due to short funding cycles, and one way round this is to fund programmes for three or five years. Police have already introduced longer funding cycles for providers, which will hopefully increase staff tenure and programme quality. In some cases staff meetings in community programmes are entirely focused on how the programme can garner enough money to stay afloat for the next few months rather than having the luxury of discussing client needs and how they might best be met. A number of providers have told me they cannot afford to provide staff with training in effective techniques or independent, expert supervision – both essential to good practice. Clearly this is not a state of affairs that is brimming with potential to bring about positive changes in offending and head young people off from their rush towards harsher, adult sentences.

23. **Carry out a stock take of youth justice programmes.** This is a project that has been discussed recently and is about to proceed on a limited national basis, and a more detailed basis in one high-crime area. It is desperately needed in order to know the number, spread and quality of youth justice programmes. At present this is an unknown factor, which makes planning services a daunting task. We know where the crime hotspots are but not how many services are available in those spots, or how good they are. This is the equivalent of knowing where all the accidents and illnesses are happening in the country, but not how many doctors and hospital beds are available to treat them, or whether they have the training and medicine/equipment needed to treat patients. At the most basic level a stock take would list all the programmes that aimed to reduce offending by young people, their whereabouts, staff numbers, annual funding, funding sources, and the general nature and aims of the programme. At a more sophisticated level it would run the programmes through the short version of YOSEC or the CPAI (bearing in mind that the CPAI takes a day to complete and requires trained staff to administer as compared to YOSEC which takes 2-3 hours and can be self-administered). This is not an advertisement for YOSEC, but without some way of measuring the degree of adherence with best practice, it is impossible to judge the quality of existing programmes. Once this data was collected, it could be mapped onto a map of New Zealand, along with crime hot spots, indicating where the greatest need for services was and whether this was being met. The approach of doing the more in-depth stock take area by area is a sensible way to proceed, starting with the highest youth crime areas, and then working down through areas in descending order of intensity of local crime problems. A stock take would also make it clear where there were more services than needed. Doing a national stock take appears a daunting task but it is the only way of getting the information needed to plan and allocate services effectively and efficiently. It is also the only way of knowing the quality of services available. It may well be that 80% of the services currently funded are unlikely to have an impact on offending because they accord so little with know best practice, but we have no way of knowing this. Once the initial stock take is done it will take less effort to update information, and much of the needed data will already be available from various funders. I really think it is time to bite the bullet on this

task, or we will never know where the gaps in services and quality are. Putting the results of the stock take on a computerised national database is also recommended.

24. **Make sure that funding of services is linked to likely impact on crime.** At present a lot of money is given out without really knowing if the programmes it is being given to will make a difference. We know more about what works and who most needs it now than at any other time in history. Given this level of knowledge it is time to link funding to best practice. This means assessing services to see how close they come to best practice, as indicated by evidence about what reduces re-offending. There are a couple of ways of doing this – the Correctional Programme Assessment Inventory (Youth and Adult versions) developed in Canada, and YOSEC, developed in New Zealand with funding from various Government agencies. One benefit of using this kind of assessment as part of funding is that information on programme quality can be gathered that can be fed into the stock take process.

Adult Justice System

The above strategies put up more barriers to kids moving through into the adult system. It's still late compared to childhood or preschool years, but there is a saving for each adolescent who does not make it through to the adult system. For those who do, it's still not too late to prevent them re-offending, and economically worth doing given the enormous cost of imprisonment. The under-20 age group is the prime target for preventing re-offending services because the higher risk ones have many years of offending ahead of them, including the most serious types of offending. They tend to keep coming back to prison, thus using up enormous amounts of taxpayer money. This does not only apply to the 'early onset' offenders. Recent research shows that even significant numbers of the 'adolescent-limited' types of offenders, previously thought to 'age out' after 20, tend to keep re-offending for longer into their twenties than expected.

25. **Identify the highest risk kids when they first enter the adult system.** The Department of Corrections already does this in a very efficient and accurate way, largely possible due to its centralised management. As mentioned, they are currently assessing different methods of assessing risk of offending in young people to identify the most effective tool (personal communication, Wilson, 2006).
26. **Provide effective services in probation.** This is where young people will often be sent by weary judges trying to give them a last chance before prison. So probation stands as the very last gate keeper before the king tariff of imprisonment. Again, the principles are: assess risk of offending, assess offending-related problems and strengths, give the most intensive services to the highest risk young people, and train staff well. The Department of Corrections does all these things well –it simply needs to ensure that this age group receives priority for services in the community. Providing to services to

individuals rather than groups of antisocial individuals who can adversely influence each other is recommended to avoid the antisocial peer influence so powerful in this age group. Services that incorporate cultural activities and use staff from the same culture as the client are recommended, as long as these services and staff accord with ‘what works’, and client preferences are taken into account so that clients are not alienated by unwanted cultural content.

27. Provide effective services in prison, with priority given to younger people.

This already happens to a large degree, possibly to a greater degree than in earlier stages of the system. Corrections have put a lot of resource into developing and evaluating reducing re-offending programmes, and achieve some world class standards. The level of knowledge about risk, offending-related needs and effective treatment is very high in Corrections, and there are methods in place for disseminating this knowledge throughout the Department and encouraging staff to use effective techniques. Again, the primary focus of prison-based services needs to be higher risk young people, if the prison population is to reduce long-term. As many inmates are in prison on return visits, providing effective services to young inmates that will reduce or prevent further prison sentences over the next five to 20 years of their lives has significant potential to reduce the prison population. This includes providing services in specialist units where peer influence can be in the direction of positive rather than criminal behaviour. However, the emphasis needs to be on aggressively providing treatment to younger inmates rather than waiting for inmates to become motivated and ‘ready to change’. Many young people will not be highly motivated to change, but will be at high risk of future offending. Thus, basing eligibility on risk rather than motivation to change is important. Motivation can be increased by using techniques such as motivational interviewing, and also by leveraging inmates into programmes by using incentives such as day parole, privileges and long-term parole. A further issue is that two of the very effective specialist services that the Department of Corrections is providing (for sexual offending against children and violent offending) are making a significant impact on the target offence type, but not on other types of offending. In one case the non-target type of offending in fact increased relative to the untreated group. This is not an argument for stopping these services – they are extremely high quality and very valuable. I would suggest however looking at ways of targeting other types of offending as well as specialist offence types. It may be that other services provided by Corrections in fact led to a reduction in non-targeted offending, but this needs to be carefully monitored and addressed. Services that incorporate cultural activities and use staff from the same culture as the client are recommended, as long as these services and staff accord with ‘what works’, and client preferences are taken into account so that clients are not alienated by unwanted cultural content.

28. Train prison officers to be agents of change. This may already be happening. If not, prison officers could be the secret weapon of the prison system. They probably have more contact with inmates than most programme staff. Training them in the principles of effective correctional staff practice established by Dowden and Andrews (2004) would mean that another layer of

anti-criminal influence came into play in the prison environment. In simple terms it would mean that prison officers were actively and consciously modelling prosocial and anticriminal behaviour, as well as key skills such as problem solving and social perspective taking. They could also be trained to encourage and respond positively to these attitudes and behaviours when they see them in inmates. Training in these skills could be added into basic prison officer training, and courses provided to upskill those who have already done their basic training.

29. **Send people to prison only when absolutely necessary and for as short a time as is absolutely necessary, while protecting public safety.** This falls into the realm of sentencing policy. Apart from any increased offending, simply sending people to prison for longer sentences, and increasing compulsory non-parole periods, will lead to an increase in prison populations. The factor of antisocial peer influence, the chief risk factor for adolescent offending, comes strongly into play in prison settings where the prime role models are other offenders, often more experienced and higher risk. Therefore dealing with young people (and in fact adult offenders) in the community where this would not compromise public safety is highly recommended. Public safety on release could be protected by greater use of home detention and electronic surveillance, something the Department of Corrections is currently looking into. Including assessment of risk of future violent offending in pre-sentence reports might be useful in this instance to help judges decide whether a custodial sentence is more required to protect the public. I am not sure whether this kind of assessment is already being used, or how effective it is however.

30. **Provide services early in sentences as well as later on.** It is Department of Corrections policy to provide reducing re-offending services relatively late in prison sentences, when people are nearing release. Providing these services earlier in sentences would mean that inmates had more time to practice these skills before release, 'over-learning' being one of the cornerstones of effective behaviour change. It would also mean there was a greater pool of inmates in prisons with these skills and attitudes, who could model them to other inmates. This could potentially counteract the powerful effect of antisocial peer modelling and make prisons less schools for crime than is currently the case. The effect of this would be more powerful if prison officers were also trained in these skills and attitudes, meaning that more of the people in prison were singing from the same song sheet.

31. **Make realistic plans to support and maintain people in the community after they leave prison.** Again, fixing people up and sending them out to face the same old problems at home is setting them up to fail. What is needed is a realistic plan for support after release, a will to provide it and more resources for these services. By their very nature prisons tend to attract resources to the buildings and custodial staff, and very little attention is given to generalising new skills to the community and making sure new learning is not overwhelmed by stress and temptation after release. Community services after release are definitely the less sexy aspect of corrections. There are two mechanisms for

achieving a better level of community support. The first is involving whanau and partners in prison programmes, or running these programmes for them in the community. This means that whanau and partners understand the new attitudes and skills the inmate is using and can support these after release. Such support has been found in a meta-analysis of relapse prevention studies to be associated with lower rates of offending. The second is maintaining specialist staff in the community whose job it is to make plans for release and set up support services in advance, then to make sure these services are working once the person is released. Probation officers are the obvious people to provide these services, but they are already fully extended. What is needed is dedicated probation staff whose sole role is to keep in touch with inmates and the community, and to make sure services are ready on release. Youth Horizons is already using this model with good success, and the Tupiq programme for Inuit in Canada also uses this model successfully with prison inmates leaving child sex offending treatment (www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/reports/). This programme encourages contact with the community liaison officer by phone during the sentence, and develops a comprehensive plan for community support before release. I understand that the Department of Corrections is introducing Reintegration Workers whose role this may be. Research on the effectiveness of this strategy should be available in the next couple of years.

32. **Provide programmes in the community that teach parenting skills and support parents who are on sentences, to reduce the risk of intergenerational crime.** This takes us back to the beginning of the circle again. Parents who are on sentences of various kinds often fall into the category of parents most likely to have children who offend. This is not only because parental offending history is a risk factor for child offending, but also because of other factors that tend to go hand in hand with offending, such as low education, low work skills/qualifications, unstable accommodation, having received a poor standard of parenting themselves, being on a benefit etc. In the longest term view, helping people on sentences become better parents and supporting them in their parenting reduces the likelihood that their children will start on the long process that ends in prison.

Across all stages

33. **Introduce computerised decision support programmes at each age-level to help staff make more consistent and evidence-based decisions about dispositions and treatment.** So far in this paper I have talked about a number of systems for identifying, assessing, treating and monitoring children and young people who are at risk of offending, and their families. The implementation of all of these systems is reliant on the understanding of management of various concerned agencies about their importance, necessary resources being available, and commitment of management and Government to making them available. Even when all these things are in place it is possible that introduction of such systems may be somewhat ad hoc and that they may be inconsistently used. Staff training is a key to using such systems well, but staff change and expertise takes time to build up. In addition, decision making

about what is needed for each individual can be a complex process where many variables have to be taken into account, especially for high risk young people with many needs. One technology that might streamline the process for assessment and treatment planning is known as ‘decision support programmes’. These are just starting to be used in medical decision making in a limited way, from my understanding. This is a way of ‘joining up the dots’ of all the information gathered on a person, and being guided through a decision process of what to provide, based on what is actually available. Risk and needs assessment information on each client would be entered into a shared youth justice computer system (by city or region, whatever worked best). These could then automatically be linked with other information available on the client, or in fact this information could automatically be inserted into the relevant question areas. The computer system could also provide information on what services the client had previously received and how effective they were. The decision support programme would analyse the risk and needs data and provide a risk rating, level of priority for treatment, level of intensity of treatment required, and dangerousness rating. It could also give a list of offending-related needs in order of priority for treatment. Drawing on a database of effective treatments, based on up-to-date research on ‘what works’, the computer programme would recommend a treatment programme suited to that specific client. It could then draw on computerised information from stock takes of programmes and quality assessment and indicate what existing services most closely matched the treatment plan and where they were available. The staff member could exercise professional override in making final decisions about what to recommend for the client. The beauty of this system is that it allows for variation in training, skill and knowledge levels among staff using it, making much more consistent decision-making possible across a range of programmes and agencies. It also allows relatively easy access to a range of high quality assessment and planning tools, and makes it possible for the same tools to be used across the sector at each age group. While such a system seems visionary now, it is starting to be developed in the medical field (particularly in hospitals where it is easier to collect such centralised data) and seems transferable to the preventing/reducing offending field. It may be feasible to introduce it at a particular residence or prison, or in a particular courtroom (there seems potential for such a system to be useful for the judiciary, although of course judicial independence and override would have to apply).

34. **Target offending by Maori in effective ways:** The factors addressed in this step have also been addressed in other steps when they were relevant. New Zealand research from the Dunedin longitudinal study has found that when factors such as family adversity and characteristics are taken into account, ethnicity does not significantly predict involvement in offending (Fergusson, Horwood and Lynskey, 1993). Although this finding needs to be replicated with a larger sample, it suggests that identifying target groups for preventing/reducing offending services by number of disadvantages or risk factors is a more efficient way to proceed than simply focusing on Maori. However, as a result of complex socio-economic factors Maori are highly likely to appear in high risk groups at higher rates than other ethnic groups. Research suggests some ways of responding to the risk of offending by Maori

are more effective than others. Qualitative research makes it clear that many adolescent and adult Maori involved in offending have a high desire for tikanga Maori content in services (Te Puni Kokiri, 2000, Wehipeihana, Porima and Spier, 2003). It appears that this content, along with Maori staff skilled and knowledgeable in te reo and tikanga, increases the likelihood of Maori clients engaging and being motivated to take part and change although more rigorous investigation of this is needed. However, consultation with programme experts including Maori as part of the development of YOSEC revealed that pushing cultural content on Maori clients in an insensitive way can sometimes lead to alienation and less engagement, particularly in the community setting and particularly with Maori who are disconnected from their culture (this is not confined to urban Maori, interestingly). So some care needs to be taken in using tikanga Maori with Maori clients. One approach that appears successful is to start on offending-related needs as a first step, then return to cultural matters once rapport has been built up. This has been used effectively by Maatua Whangai in Hamilton. Other experts consulted reported that once immediate needs are addressed, interest by Maori clients in things Maori tended to increase, possibly in part as a function of rapport and ease with staff. Another approach that appears to work in the field (based on expert opinion) is to ask clients what protocols they would like to use, who they would like to speak first, what language they want to use etc. Residential programmes appeared more likely to report that bicultural activities were included for all participants and that this tended to work well. It was clear though that the quality of staff and activities affect whether clients are bored or alienated, or alternately engaged and motivated, by cultural elements.

In terms of overall effective practice, rigorous and replicated international and New Zealand research indicates that general effective practice works across cultures. (A spreadsheet detailing this research and references can be provided on request.) Likewise, risk factors and offending-related needs appear to be similar across Maori and other cultures in New Zealand (Wilson, 2005, unpublished). But research by the Department of Corrections on adult sex offenders against children found that when tikanga Maori was added to the Western psychological programme earlier found effective with Maori, the impact on offending by Maori was significantly better, and that on offending by non-Maori no worse (Nathan, Wilson and Hillman, 2003). While this needs to be replicated, it suggests that incorporating cultural content into programmes attended by both Maori and non-Maori can have a positive impact on offending – in other words, that cultural content is part of ‘what works’. Although this finding was with adults it may have implications for all kinds of programmes and services. For this reason I recommend in this paper bicultural services except when this would alienate clients.

35. **Monitor and modify public opinion about imprisonment as a sentence of choice:** overseas research, and that in New Zealand, has tended to find that the public hold contradictory views on how to best deal with offending, wanting both rehabilitation and punishment to occur (for a discussion of this see my 1992 paper Reducing Re-offending: What Works Now, www.corrections.govt.nz). When some members of the public call strongly for longer sentences or harsher prison conditions, it is easy for it to appear that this

is the majority opinion. But in fact research suggests that the public want both rehabilitation and punishment, not just harsher sentences. As perceived public demand is such a driver for the use of imprisonment, it is clear that knowing what the public think and communicating effectively about what the real views of the public are is important. As important is making sure the public knows the full pros and cons of the use of imprisonment, both in terms of public safety and costs to the taxpayer.

In terms of monitoring I would suggest a survey of New Zealanders about their attitudes to imprisonment and their awareness of the pros and cons of using it. I note that the Ministry of Justice has already commissioned a telephone survey, which looks very good. There is some useful information from that on the public's views on what can be done to reduce prison populations, and the support of the use of other forms of punishment than prison. It is also clear that for moderate property crimes the public is supportive of reasonable sentencing, even among those who favour prison. There are two other areas I think it would be useful to canvas in addition to this. They are public beliefs about what they want sentencing to achieve, and views on the cons of imprisonment. I would suggest asking what aims the public wants sentencing to achieve and giving a range of options to tick, including making offenders less likely to offend, punishment, restitution, public safety etc. If they are directed to tick whichever they agree with rather than forced to choose one, it will likely become clear that there are a variety of aims endorsed. I think it would also be useful to ask which of these aims they think the various sentences achieve. This may lead to some useful insights into public views which could be used as a the basis for effective communication with the public. For instance, if prison is seen as having a mainly punitive impact but not achieving the goal of reducing offending behaviour this would be a useful basis for a discussion about what actually leads to reduced offending. If public safety is endorsed for prison, it would be useful to point out that almost everyone gets out eventually and that reducing offending behaviour might be a better guard of public safety in the long term. The final area I think it would be useful to explore is costs of imprisonment, and what the public is prepared to pay. There are several potential ways of asking this. One is asking what increase in taxation the public would be prepared to stand in order to build new prisons, stated in terms of dollars per year per person. The second is what vital services such as health and education the public would agree to seeing reduced in order to build new prisons without increasing public spending. This may produce some interesting information. I note that a literature review has been commissioned on public attitudes to imprisonment. While this casts some interesting light on public attitudes, the concern here is that it is very difficult to draw conclusions about New Zealand attitudes based on overseas research. I think this is one area where specifically New Zealand research is vitally important, and a priority for Government to carry out in order to know what public attitudes about imprisonment really are.

The other side of this issue is communicating to the public some of the costs of the use of imprisonment, and the alternatives. I am not an expert on how to get this information across most effectively, but I would suggest that it would require a fairly concerted, high profile and comprehensive campaign. I think the key messages here are that there are alternatives to prison that do protect public safety, and that the costs of imprisonment are high for the average tax payer. This is where the survey material is so useful. If protecting public safety, reducing offending and punishment are all ticked as important aims of sentencing (which is highly likely) then

communication could emphasise how alternatives to imprisonment could address all of these. But I think that it is important to saturate the public with information on the reality of the over-enthusiastic use of imprisonment, which is that it is very costly in terms of increased taxes without necessarily creating any greater protection of public safety than other options. Not only this, but ensuring that politicians across parties know the facts about what the public thinks and wants, and about the costs of imprisonment and alternatives, I think would address another of the big factors that drives increasing use of prisons.

Conclusion

This has been by necessity a fairly brief overview. My area of least expertise is with regard to children, so there will be projects and initiatives here that I have overlooked, as well as strategies. I'm sure there are also many projects and initiatives I have overlooked with regard to the older age groups too, for which I apologise.

This paper is based on the simple premise that the younger the child is when they receive services, the less costly and more effective those services are likely to be. Savings are also greatest when risk is addressed early, because the greatest number of years of non-offending can be achieved (i.e. stopping a child at 5 who would otherwise have gone on offending to age 25 saves a great deal more than stopping him at age 20.) Each stage of services acts as gate keeper for the next stage, and stopping as many children or young people from moving on to the next stage of the justice system is the most effective way of reducing prison populations in the long run. While there are things that can be done to reduce prison populations right now, the key to reducing them long-term is to make sure the gate-keepers at each stage are as effective as possible at stopping children and young people continuing on the trajectory of risk. This means building the barriers at each stage as high as possible, through effective identification, assessment, treatment plans and monitoring.

To do this involves various systemic changes. Many of the things that need to happen are already happening and simply need to be done more efficiently or to be better funded. Some new things – such as a national youth justice training centre, a Department of Youth Justice and computerised supported decision making – could also make a difference. The key steps at every stage involve:

- Using effective ways of identifying children and young people most likely to offend, or their parents/care takers
- Giving priority for treatment to those with the highest risk level
- Providing effective treatment based on evidence of 'what works' including appropriate cultural content
- Building up protective factors such as schooling, prosocial friends and activities
- Using residential services as little as possible
- Training staff well

- Assessing and maintaining or building programme quality, and
- Funding the best services to the optimum degree.

I think we do currently know enough to make a real impact on future prison populations. But to do so involves some systemic change, and an increase in knowledge, services and funding across the child and youth offending spectrum, and this will take some time to achieve. The past thirty years have seen an explosion of knowledge about ‘what works’ to reduce offending. We have moved from the ‘nothing works’ years of the 1970’s and 80’s to the ‘some things work’ years of the noughties. There has been parallel explosion in knowledge about risk factors for offending. One of the problems that faces all the systems involved in preventing and reducing offending is getting this knowledge from the academics and researchers who have been accumulating it, to the practitioners out in the field who are charged with solving the problems. This paper attempts to apply some of the knowledge explosion to the problems in the real world, and look at how new understandings can be applied to solve old problems.

NB. Individual references, or a bibliography of all references, can be supplied if required. Spreadsheets analysing and summarising recent research can also be supplied in the areas of: effective treatment of offending for adolescents and children, risk factors for offending by adolescents and children, protective factors against offending for adolescents, offending-related needs for adolescents and children, and cultural factors in treatment of offending.