



Police Headquarters
Ladgate Lane
Middlesbrough
TS8 9EH

Chair: Cllr Dave McLuckie Tel: 01642 301467
Chief Executive: Mr J McCarthy BA(Hons), IPFA Tel: 01642 301623
Chief Constable: Mr S Price QPM BSc(Hons) MSt(Cantab) Fax: 01642 301495
Tel: 01642 301215

TITLE: YOUNG OFFENDERS CONSULTATION RESULTS

AUTHOR: SARAH WILSON, CONSULTATION & PERFORMANCE OFFICER

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 22nd December 2008 and 23rd March 2009 Cleveland Police Authority and Middlesbrough Local Authority undertook two consultation sessions with young offenders at HMP and YOI Castington in Morpeth.
- 1.2 Castington is a juvenile and young offender establishment accommodating 15 to 21 year old males. Although situated in Northumberland it houses offenders from the Cleveland area.
- 1.3 The aim of the consultation was to look at the backgrounds of the offenders, their reasons for offending and methods of preventing re-offending.
- 1.4 The IML equipment was used to ask the offenders a series of anonymous questions. The following report outlines the results of the consultation sessions.

2 RESULTS

Offender Background

- 2.1 18 offenders took part in the consultation sessions overall. Of these, 3 were from Redcar and Cleveland, 14 were from Middlesbrough and 1 was from outside the Cleveland area. They were aged between 15 and 20, with the majority (74%) being 18 and over.
- 2.2 The offenders were asked how old they were the first time they went to prison. Answers ranged from 14 and under to 20. Answers from the first session indicated that for most of the participants this was their first time in prison, but the older offenders who took part in the second session had experienced prison from a much younger age, suggesting that they were repeat offenders.

- 2.3 Only two of the offenders had lived in care.
- 2.4 Half the offenders stated that they had a doctor when not in prison.
- 2.5 Those offenders who had a doctor did not visit them particularly regularly, with most stating that their last appointment had been between 6 months and a year before coming to prison.

Family Contact

- 2.6 Most of the offenders stated that they had regular contact with their families – 5 had daily contact, 6 had weekly contact and 5 had contact 2 to 3 times a month. One offender stated that he had yearly contact with his family and one that he never had contact.
- 2.7 Almost all the offenders felt that contact with families could be improved, with the most popular methods for achieving this being better public transport and a video link facility, each with 24% of the votes registered. Other options were, 'more support from Youth Offending Service' (21%), and 'change prison visiting times' (21%). For Redcar and Cleveland offenders visiting times and public transport were the only factors mentioned.

Experience of Crime

- 2.8 Only two of the offenders stated that they had been victims of crime. For these offenders being a victim themselves had influenced their own decision to commit crime.

Alcohol Use

- 2.9 26% of the offenders stated that they did not drink alcohol, and 11% that they only drank occasionally. All the rest drank regularly, with 36% stating that they drank weekly, 16% daily and 11% that they were addicted to alcohol. The underage offenders all stated that they drank alcohol. The offenders from Redcar and Cleveland all drank regularly.
- 2.10 61% of the offenders stated that it was fairly easy to obtain help for alcohol use in Castington and 22% that it was very easy. However, 17% stated that it wasn't easy.
- 2.11 61% stated that they were fully aware of what support was available for alcohol related issues.
- 2.12 Of the two offenders who were addicted to alcohol, one stated that it was very easy to obtain help for alcohol use and that he was fully aware of what support was available, but the other offender was not aware of all the support available and only found it fairly easy to obtain support.

- 2.13 The offenders were asked how interested they were in attending a group which looks into alcohol use to help reduce or stop drinking. Half the offenders were interested (17% very interested, 27% interested, 6% interested if offered). The other half were either not interested at all (28%) or didn't mind either way (22%). All those from Redcar and Cleveland were interested. Only one of the offenders who was addicted to alcohol was interested.
- 2.14 Offenders were asked in what format they would most like to receive support for alcohol use. Results were split quite evenly between group work (33%), one to one sessions (28%) and a mixture of both (39%).

Reasons for Offending

- 2.15 Offenders were asked what the single major factor was in them committing their first offence. The most popular choices were money (33%) and alcohol (17%). Family and alcohol were the key factors for Redcar and Cleveland offenders. The offenders who chose alcohol either drank weekly or daily. The full results are shown in Table 2.1 below:

Table 2.1 What was the major factor in your first offence?

Reason	%
Money	33%
Alcohol	17%
Friends	11%
Family	11%
Drugs	11%
Boredom	11%
Other	6%

- 2.16 Offenders were next asked to select all the reasons why they had committed offences. The most popular choices were boredom/something to do (27%) and for the thrill/buzz (19%). Alcohol, influence of friends/peers and for the thrill/buzz were the key factors mentioned by Redcar and Cleveland offenders. The full results are shown in Table 2.2 below:

Table 2.2 Why have you committed offences?

Reason	% of votes
Boredom/something to do	27%
For the thrill/buzz	19%
Result of being drunk	16%
To get money for drugs	16%
Result of being on drugs	10%
Nowhere to go/nothing to do	6%
Influence of friends/peers	6%

Preventing Re-offending

- 2.17 The offenders were asked what would stop them re-offending in the future. By far the most popular choice was a job, with 38% of the votes registered. Worryingly 19% of the votes registered stated that they wanted to re-offend, but this could have been bravado to get a reaction rather than a truthful response.
- 2.18 Those who had committed offences as a result of being drunk or on drugs stated that alcohol and drugs support, together with a job and access to training would help to stop them re-offending. Those who had committed offences to get money for drugs stated that a job, together with drugs support and face to face contact with victims would be beneficial. Table 2.3 below shows the full results of this question.

Table 2.3 What would stop you re-offending in the future?

Reason	% of votes
A job	38%
Nothing – I WANT to re-offend	19%
Support for alcohol problems	11%
Support for drug problems	8%
Access to training	8%
Somewhere to live	5%
Face to face contact with victims	5%
Help with debt	3%
Support for health problems	3%

Youth Offending Service and Probation

- 2.19 The final series of questions focussed on offender expectations regarding the Youth Offending and Probation Services.
- 2.20 When asked what they expected from YOS and Probation the offenders' most popular responses were 'to make arrangements for my release', with 28% of the votes registered and 'to include me in the planning of my release', with 27%.
- 2.21 When asked what they expected from YOS and Probation when they were released, by far the most popular offender response was 'support me to get a job or back into school/training' with 34% of the votes registered. Being picked up and taken home was also a top priority, with 18%.
- 2.22 The final question asked offenders to rate the level of support which they receive from YOS and Probation. 33% felt that they received less support than they should, 22% about the right amount of support and 6% too much support. 39% stated that they didn't know.

3 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 18 male young offenders took part in the consultation sessions, 3 from Redcar and Cleveland, 14 from Middlesbrough and 1 from outside the Cleveland area.
- 3.2 Only half the offenders had a doctor when not in prison, and most of those that did have a doctor did not see them regularly.
- 3.3 Most of the offenders had regular contact with their families, although it was felt that this could be improved, principally by better public transport and a video link facility. For Redcar and Cleveland offenders visiting times were also a key issue.
- 3.4 Only two of the offenders had been victims of crime themselves, but for these offenders being a victim had influenced their own decision to commit crime.
- 3.5 Nearly two thirds (63%) of the offenders drank regularly when not in prison, and all of the underage offenders stated that they drank. It was felt that it was relatively easy to obtain help for alcohol use in Castington and 61% of the offenders stated that they were fully aware of what support was available.
- 3.6 Half the offenders stated that they would be interested in receiving help for alcohol use.
- 3.7 The major factors behind offenders committing their first offence were money and alcohol. When asked to list all reasons behind committing offences other key factors were boredom/something to do and for the thrill/buzz.
- 3.8 Getting a job was seen as by far the most effective method to prevent re-offending.
- 3.9 Whilst in prison offenders expected YOS and Probation to help with making arrangements for their release. It was very important to the offenders that they were included in the planning of their release.
- 3.10 The key action needed from YOS and Probation upon release from prison was support to get a job or back into training.