

External article

Are Our Prisons Giving Good Value for Our Money?

You read all sorts of things in the news, prisoners being let out too soon, lots of reoffending, soft options, not enough room. Prisons full of drugs, we have all seen it.

You may be of the opinion that they should be locked up and throw away the key.

Just stop and think a minute. Is this really an option? If indeed we did this we would have enormous prisons and growing each year, the cost would be astronomical financially and apart from keeping them out of society is this the right option

Undoubtedly there are some prisoners who should indeed never see freedom again, and they should be segregated from society for ever. Lord Ramsbottom a Prisons Chief Inspector was quoted as saying prisoners can be catagorised as the good, the bad and the sad. There is a good argument to say the bad should stay forever inside, but what about the other two?

Who are the good? These are people who have for domestic reasons, been caught up in the legal system. People who have been under the influence of drink, drugs or both and committed a crime. They could be changed, and the prison service is working very hard to change their perception of values and life relationships. They undergo numerous quite long courses to help them change their perceptions of themselves and their relationship to society. They have to demonstrate they understand the changes required and can deliver these changes. They demonstrate they have reduced their risk to society. They are given education courses to improve literacy and numeracy skills, and often trained to work in a trade or vocation, so that when leaving the system they have skills they can use to better themselves and start to be a contributor to society. Whilst we hear figures of 60% reoffending, this particular category show a lot less percentage of returning to jail and can again contribute to society

Who are the sad? Unfortunately there are around 40% of the prison population who have mental health issues and who in a more caring society would not be in prison to start with. If we dealt with our mental health issues as just that, not a criminal offence, we would see them being cared for within a metal health community and given the proper care and attention they deserve, whilst separating them from society for our and their safety.

How do I know all this? I am a volunteer member of an Independent Monitoring Board at a prison local to me. I wanted to see for myself what it was all about. Are our prisons, full, do they care, do they have a responsible attitude to protecting the public, how do they deal with all these issues? I found out for myself. I spend around 4/5 days per month to being involved. If you feel you want to know more, or want to see if you could become involved, why not contact your local prison ask for the IMB (Independent Monitoring Board) office and they will have someone speak with you. The prison staff do an excellent job under very trying conditions, they need support, society needs help, can you do your bit? We monitor fairness and respect for people in custody,

554 words
48 lines
August 2008