



HeadsUp Forum

[www.HeadsUp.org.uk](http://www.HeadsUp.org.uk)

## Hanging Tough - Are we Tough Enough?

(February 26<sup>th</sup> - March 16<sup>th</sup> 2007)

An online platform providing young people with a secure and structured space to discuss their perspectives on law and order.

**Law and Order issues have played an important part in British politics for centuries** and this remains the case today. Political parties and the media have identified law and order as one of the key pillars of any General Election campaign so it is not surprising that this debate was so well received by all participants.

**Students in the Law and Order debate** explained their own opinions and explored all sides of the argument. They demonstrated a collective knowledge of a wide range of sometimes complicated law-related issues. The debate gained parliamentary expertise from a range of legislators taking part online - these included:

- **Liam Byrne MP** - Minister of State at the Home Office
- **Gerry Sutcliffe MP\*** - Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office
- **Nick Clegg MP** - Shadow Home Secretary
- **Cathy Jamieson MSP\*** - Minister for Justice, Scottish Parliament
- **Richard Benyon MP** - Member of the Home Affairs Select Committee
- **Mark Isherwood AM** - Conservative Spokesperson for Social Justice and for Equal Opportunities and Children, Welsh Assembly
- **Jeremy Purvis MSP** - Member of the Justice 2 Committee, Scottish Parliament
- **Lord Dholakia\*** - Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats and Spokesperson for Home Affairs
- **Lord Phillips\*** - Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for the Home Office

\* These decision-makers provided a statement of support before the debate began and will be asked to respond to this report.

**From a youth participation perspective**, senior Ministers, MPs, Peers, AMs and MSPs from all political parties continue to see HeadsUp as a must. Participants continue to benefit as the HeadsUp team provide short, one-to-one online training sessions to all participating decision-makers.

**The focus of this debate** was divided into four manageable sections for participating students - does prison work?, will ID cards work effectively?, does the criminal justice system protect victims enough?, and what are the causes of crime?

**Comments were posted in the Forum both in and out of school hours.** This is a particularly welcome development as it underlines how keen young people are to use this resource, giving up some of their spare time to keep on top of the debate as it develops. Students could visit the Forum as often as they liked during the three weeks that the Law and Order Debate ran.

---

**The main HeadsUp objective** is not only to enable peer-to-peer deliberation on hot political issues, policies or events but also to provide students with a means of informing themselves about the topic. In keeping with the youth participation agenda, a summary report outlining key findings and quotes is disseminated to interested parties, particularly legislators and government, enabling young people's voices to be heard by key decision-makers.

**This Law and Order debate**, like all previous HeadsUp debates, was supported by structured, student-centred background notes that included an explanation of the key areas surrounding the current law and order legalisation, an overview of the key issues being debated, a comprehensive glossary and summaries of arguments for and against specific issues, such as ID cards.

---

**Students aged between 11 and 18 from secondary schools right across the UK** took part in this Law and Order debate. HeadsUp continues to attract new schools, teachers, and young people to register to take part in the debates. The participants made multiple visits over the three-week duration of the debate and there were 256 posts in total.

**This summary report gives an account of the debate** that took place and includes key posts from students. Conclusions from the debate are to be found at the end of the report. Special care has been taken to ensure that the report is non-partisan and representative of the views expressed by the participants.

**We would all like to convey our thanks** and appreciation to the legislators who gave up their time to participate in this debate. We would also like to extend an invitation to interested parties, particularly legislators and government, and interested NGOs, academics and journalists to respond to the findings.

**Responses and requests** for further information should be directed to:

**Barry Griffiths**  
HeadsUp Manager  
Hansard Society  
40 - 43 Chancery Lane  
London  
WC2A 1JA  
020 7438 1214  
[b.g.griffiths@hansard.lse.ac.uk](mailto:b.g.griffiths@hansard.lse.ac.uk)

---

## Hanging Tough - Are we Tough Enough?

*Forum Summary*

# Does prison work? What are the alternatives?

It is widely acknowledged that prisons are overcrowded but do they work, especially when you consider the fact that a large proportion of prisoners are reoffending? Moderators asked participants to think of possible alternatives. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this particular discussion space proved to be the most popular in the entire Forum. After considering the pros and cons of prisons, the majority of young people decided that they were sceptical, to varying degrees, about the value and effectiveness of prisons.

One student attempted to define the purpose of the institution:

*The purpose of Prison should be to protect the public. If someone is unsafe to be out, they should stay in prison however long it takes. If they are likely to be harmless, there is no point keeping them in prison for the formality of punishment. If the prisons are full, to me, the answer is very obviously Build More Prisons.*

Picking up directly on this participant's comment was Richard Benyon MP, a member of the Home Affairs Select Committee, who also favoured building more prisons and he explained to HeadsUp users his reasons why:

*For me the case for building more prisons is that apart from ending the early release of prisoners (or not sending criminals to prison at all) due to overcrowding, if the prison populations are stabilised it is so much easier to rehabilitate inmates.*

A batch of participants started to unpack the problems with prisons and all agreed that they were not working well and offered their opinions on the subject. One highlighted a recent survey as proof that prison is not a deterrent, another felt that prisons were too soft on criminals, another identified weak sentencing as a big issue and finally a student came up with a possible solution - namely moving reoffenders to prisons far away from their homes:

*I believe that prison isn't working well. according to a recent survey 80% reoffend, this is proof that prison isn't working as a deterrent. Plus the fact that the prison's are full means that the prisoners cannot be reformed.*

*I think that prisons at the moment are not working because the police are being too soft on the prisoners and so people who have offended go out into the world but as they have no money or hardly any possessions, they offend again to be able to go into prison for food and shelter. So what I think should happen is that people who have offended terribly such as murder or road accidents or hit and run, they should be tagged so that the police can track when and where people were at any time.*

*Why are dangerous criminals being put away for 'life' when in fact they can be out after eight years? Obviously prison's don't work, and stronger punishments are*

*needed. Perhaps the people should be genuinely put in prison -I know it's a novelty - but for their actual life!!*

*If people are being put in prison over and over again, I feel that they should be sent to a prison far away from their home such as if they live in England, they should be sent to a prison in say Scotland so that they are further away from the places where they are used to, to make them feel more scared from further away.*

The Shadow Home Secretary, Nick Clegg MP, used his expertise to offer a solution to the current prisons crisis. He strongly believed that the nature of prison needs to change and should be a stepping stone where prisoners can build up the training required to get a job when they leave:

*they are a vital way of preventing dangerous individuals from roaming our streets, but we also need to make them a route out of crime. That's why we need to provide meaningful training and employment to prisoners so that they have a career to enter once they leave prison.*

Interestingly, Jeremy Purvis MSP concurred and underlined the value of community sentencing as a solution to the current prison overcrowding situation:

*I would prefer there to be tougher community based sentences, longer but with real focus on training, education and reducing the chance of the offender committing another crime.*

Scrutiny in this Law and Order debate turned to the image which prisons portray. However, these young people summed up how confusing the topic of prisons can be as they held completely opposing views regarding the perception of the institution. Some believed that prisons were very dangerous places and called for them to be cleaned up, whilst others felt they were too soft and needed a much tougher image to deter people from committing crime in the first place:

*One of the major problems with prisons is that they are almost if not more dangerous than the outside world, with horrific stories of drug addiction and violence ruminating from these establishments. So, firstly the government needs to start cleaning up these places.*

*police and prisons should be a harsh scary place where no one wants to go, not a housing for the homeless and free food and luxury to the poor.*

The focus of deliberations shifted slightly and several astute students came up with innovative solutions to the complex prisons crisis. One student signposted Russia as an example of a country with similar concerns about their criminal justice system which has managed to cut reoffending rates by making prisons such a frightening prospect. However another young person made a compelling case for making better use of prisoners' spare time, including working on the roads or similar labour-intensive projects:

*...in Russia, despite many things being wrong with the justice system, one thing which is falling is the rates of reoffending. This is because the people are so scared of what prison and the police are like that they see no use in offending once let alone twice as it is just plain dangerous. If there was a very scary prison and police force, most people wouldn't dare reoffend. I did agree with this article but I'd never been to Russia, anyone got any insight?*

*I think that if the inmates of a prison were put to work on either the roads or other projects which involve hard labour of one type or another, then it is entirely possible that, even if we can't improve the reoffending and crime rates, we can at least make use of the people who have been causing so much trouble. A bit like community service but harsher. Have them, as Octom said, in places with few luxuries doing this work and surely it would save money, make use of criminals- without their express permission and also give them harsher punishments that would improve the lives of people so like the ones they were causing trouble for? Wouldn't this be some sort of useful ironic justice?*

Yet another school of thought was in two minds about our current prison system. This participant summed up the situation, pointing out that it works for some criminals but not for others - in addition, they called for reoffenders to receive further, more stringent punishment:

*I think prison works for some people but not for others. This is because some people go to prison, come out and never go back in ever again. So it works for them. But some people go in, come out and then go straight back in again. People who go into prison more than once should be given some extra punishment.*

Finally in this prisons' discussion thread, moderators asked young people to consider the death penalty as a solution to the UK prisons crisis. Critics of the death penalty have argued that it is the 'bluntest of blunt instruments', removing the individual's humanity and with it any chance of rehabilitation and their giving something back to society.

Perhaps as expected, students were not afraid to offer a whole host of opinions in relation to the controversial topic of the death penalty - both in favour and against.. A handful were in favour of bringing back the death penalty. These participants called for the death penalty to be used only in extreme criminal cases such as for a murderer or a paedophile:

*I also believe that we should re introduce the death penalty, this will probably evoke quite a reaction from some people but, if someone committed murder, they should face what they did to the victim. It should not be humane, as they have killed someone, they have taken away their victim's right to live, they should then forfeit all their rights, to right what they have wronged.*

*I think that there should be other harsher punishment, I agree with the death penalty as long as it is done correctly, and used in only extreme cases such as pedophiles, and murderers and Repetitive re-offenders where there is no doubt that the defendant is guilty.*

In contrast, this young person was against the death penalty, but highlighted a recent survey which claims the majority of the public support it. The participant ends by saying that this is something that the Government should consider, given the widespread public backing:

*I think the Death Penalty is wrong, and also that it doesn't work at all. However, apparently 80% of people in the UK are in favour of the death penalty in some cases. Since we're a democracy and all, shouldn't the government be considering it? Can anyone explain why they're not?*

## Hanging Tough - Are we Tough Enough?

*Forum Summary*

# Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime? What are the causes of crime?

In this discussion space, we wanted to ask young people for their thoughts on the causes of crime. This particular issue seems to have been at the centre of political jousting for years and we wanted to know what students thought could be done to tackle this massive problem.

Several passionate participants were clear that one of the biggest influences in steering young people away from crime came from having strong family values. Importantly, key words such as respect and authority kept being used in all these comments:

*Although many critics named his policy 'hug a hoody' i think David Cameron may have a point and all commentators whether they are left, right or centre should accept that crime should be tackled by strong family values.*

*I think that education starts at home, so it is the parents' responsibilities to teach their children to respect authority. If their parent does not respect authority how on earth would the child respect authority, and that includes a teacher? A teacher cannot teach to student respect authority, if the student does not respect them. No matter how good a teacher may be, teaching to respect authority lies with the parents. If you cannot respect authority such as parents, how can you respect any sort of authority outside the house.*

*So called "Family Values" seem more relevant today than ever. The role and image of the child has changed significantly over the last few years and we are seen as a bunch of loafing, idle binge drinkers/drug takers with no respect for society. To a certain extent, this can be solved by punishing offenders, but a far more effective method would be to get at the cause of the problem; the environment in which a child grows up. At a young age children take their parents lead. This is natural. Therefore, children should grow up in an environment that teaches them to respect authority; be it a parent, teacher or the Law.*

Nick Clegg MP identified the causes of crime as he saw them and made particular reference to a community scheme he'd seen working in action, tackling crime amongst young people:

*There is no simple answer to dealing with the causes of crime. If legislation and rhetoric alone worked, then Britain would be crime free. What I have found from visiting communities across the country is that it is often those who are working at a grassroots level who can offer the best solutions to tackling crime. I recently visited Peckham, where I met a woman called Decima Francis. Decima ran an amazing scheme called "From Boyhood to Manhood" which took disaffected youngsters off the streets and empowered them with responsibility. It was amazing to see the success rate of this scheme, and the positive affect it had on the community as a whole.*

*Solving the causes of crime is not about demonising people, or even patronising them. It is about having the courage to engage with people, and offering people avenues out of crime.*

The majority of young people seemed to agree that crime often occurred due to a whole host of competing influences and factors including poverty, lack of education, peer pressure, an ineffective criminal justice system or perhaps even revenge:

*there may be other reasons to commit crime than money such as peer pressure, vengence maybe some people see it as a way to rebel or even an addiction or maybe simply because they dont like to pay for things or conforming to set rules i personally dont see any of these as good reasons to commit crimes i dont think there are any good reasons to commit crimes but these must be taken into consideration*

*I think that the causes of crime is partly due to poor education and up-bringing, but I also think it's because people especially young teen-agers think they can get away with it, and even if they don't the punishment will not be that bad, and that's if they get a punishment and not a warning. A small fine or a few hours community service is not a big enough threat to stop people committing crimes. With bigger crimes where prison is likely it's still not enough of a punishment, if the defendand pleas guilty then there sentence is automatically halved then with good behaviour the sentence is shortened even more. The legal system is not harsh enough to prevent people from committing crimes. To tackle these then punishments need to change and become harsher making people not want to committee criminal offences so easily.*

*The causes of crime are child poverty, neglect, poor education and a lack of community cohesion...*

There seemed to be some disagreement amongst HeadsUp users about how much of an influence a lack of education might have on a young person. Some participants questioned whether giving someone an education helps reduce the crime rate:

*lack of education dosnt make it a certanty that someone is anymore likely to commit a crime than someone with a good education this is just another stereotype that is widely accepted as truth*

The focus of the debate should be on tackling the causes as well as symptoms of crime, according to Mark Isherwood AM, who believed that society and communities should nurture these young people rather than leaving them to their own devices:

*fighting youth crime is a social responsibility not just a state responsibility...people are responsible for their own actions - but society has a responsibility too.*

One young person summed up the feelings of many in calling for tougher sentences for criminals, perhaps incorporating community service so they can work for their crimes:

*I believe that crime is a terrible thing but i also believe the punishment should be dealt with better and more civerly than just simply the criminal being put to jail. They could give them something worse than that to deal with. Even commmunity service that could work no-one enjoys that or what i have heard in the past is people saying "do to them what they did to others." This basically means for example if a man was to kill someone that man should get killed, these and others suggestions would most definitely i am sure reduce the number of crimes committed.*

During the Forum, moderators picked up on a story that Tony Blair wanted to lower to 17 the age at which young people can receive long prison sentences for possessing a gun. We asked participants for their response to this decision. Some believed this was a good move applauding the Government, whilst others went further by asking why should we stop at 17:

*I think that this makes perfect sense. At 17, you are practically a legal adult anyway. Why should a 20 year old who possesses a gun feel any less obligated to use it than a 21 year old? Is this a problem with older legislation not being updated to tackle the problems of society today? It's probably more likely that younger people have greater access to firearms today than they had, say, ten years ago. You only need to look at the ages of the victims of the shootings in South London to work that out.*

*Why stop at seventeen? If my son/daughter was shot I wouldn't care what age they were as long as they knew what they were doing. You are aware of what you are doing from a very young age, and guns and their dangers are also learnt about very early, this is a step in the right direction, but not enough. The other thing that is decidedly lacking are the adverts, perhaps a media campaign on the dangers of guns would be a good idea?*



## Hanging Tough - Are we Tough Enough?

*Forum Summary*

# Will ID cards help in the fight against crime and terrorism? Are they sufficiently secure?

This question was certainly controversial. Participants were asked if ID cards will help in the fight against terrorism and whether they are a secure means of containing a range of personal information.

The vast majority of participants were opposed to the concept of ID cards for a variety of reasons, including cost, human rights issues and concern of identity theft. This type of comment was typical of the sceptical views held about ID cards:

*ID cards seem to go against what thinking has always been on keeping our details secure. Isn't the idea currently that you have one ID with picture and one with address? When you go to the bank, you have to take two different pieces of identification. Surely having all the information in one place makes it less secure? I don't think ID cards can help prevent crime at all.*

Nick Clegg MP entered the Forum to detail why he thinks that ID cards are a waste of money and points to recent acts of terrorism which wouldn't have been prevented using ID cards:

*There is no proof that ID cards will help fight crime or terrorism. The Madrid train bombers were all carrying ID cards, the London 7/7 bombers would all have been eligible for ID cards. Errors in the security of the Government's ID card system have already been found, and this has worrying implications for the future security of our personal information. I believe that the money the Government plans to waste on ID cards would be far better spent putting more police on the beat.*

Participating young people identified several flaws in the ID card scheme. For example, one disputed the fact that an ID card will help protect them from crime and another raised the concept of trust in the Government, pointing to perceived NHS database failures:

*How will having a plastic card in your wallet protect you from crime? How is it going to deter crime? Public money could be better spent on eradicating poverty - the primary cause.*

*Why should I trust the Government with my personal details, since, as can be seen with the NHS, they are not very good with controlling a national database.*

After analysing all the options, one unhappy young person decided that ID cards are too great a leap into the unknown and specifically highlighted a concern that ID cards will contravene our human rights:

*I think that having ID card is infringing on our Human Rights. How long will it be before we have a 'Big Brother is watching you state.' ID Cards will just be the*

*beginning next the government will be able to know our whereabouts and there will be no such thing as privacy anymore.*

Backing up this opinion was Richard Benyon MP who outlined some of his concerns about ID cards. He highlighted the cost of the initiative, suggesting possible alternative uses for the money, such as:

*improving intelligence and putting more police on the streets.*

In slight contrast to Richard Benyon's views, one student called for a better use of public money. For example, perhaps it should be put towards combating ID theft:

*Surely there are better uses for the hypothetical money going into ID cards than the uses you listed? For example eliminating ID theft, or introducing a more subtle way of taking out ID criminals, for example setting up ID theft research teams. As there is more and more ID theft these days, surely that means more and more ways of hacking ID? In this case, there should be a select team of researchers who eradicate these machines/software, thus making today's society safer against ID theft.*

Another young participant agreed with concerns as to cost, but could see some positive outcomes, especially relating to the biometric data which could assist paramedics and doctors:

*Although the proposed cost of ID cards is rather large, there are certain situations where they could prove useful. The bio metric data would be of great use to hospitals and paramedics, the id card would be used like a medical bracelet, giving the hospital the patient's blood type etc.*

One astute HeadsUp youngster used the Forum to pinpoint the problems with ID cards, and suggest testing of the software and processes - similar to the *Chip & Pin* trials. The participant called for some similar user-testing for ID cards:

*I think that making the ID cards compulsory to start with is a mistake. Remember when Chip&Pin was introduced? That was voluntary, to a certain degree, until Valentines Day 06. How did the criminals hack the cards back then? Simple, they bought a simple card reader (like the ones on the tills at Sainsburys), purchased some simple software off of eBay, and were able to turn chip and pin off the card. Anyway, my point is that even though Chip&Pin still isn't secure, the major pitfalls in the plan were exposed during the voluntary period. Why are there (to my knowledge) no trials taking place? Because the system is too expensive to implement on a small scale or to be scrapped when it is useless. What happens then, if it doesn't work?*

However, not every young person in this Law and Order Debate felt that ID cards were a complete waste of time. A handful were supportive of some parts of the process but voiced doubts about other elements.

The greatest asset of an ID card will be its ability to be used as a simple method for proving someone's age, according to this student:

*i think the idea of id cards is good as it is hard to prove your age before you get a driving licence but i dont see why they need to contain more than your name and birthdate and something to confirm their authenticity. As putting anymore details(which are un necessary anyway) would just encourage identity theft especially if the card becomes lost*

However, a fellow HeadsUp user argued that their main strength was the fact that a range of personal information could be stored in one place:

*I think ID cards as a centralized storage for ALL personal information is a neat idea. The card can store simple details such as eye colour, photographs and life threatening medical details. The rest of the information should be only available by looking it up on the central database.*

One young person went even further, by claiming that ID cards could help tackle illegal immigration and perhaps address terrorism as well:

*ID Cards could, potentially, solve or reduce the problem of Illegal Immigration...ID Cards are probably a very good tool for combating foreign terrorism. But I dont think that it would solve the problem entirely, and it certainly would very hard for any government to introduce them to the people of the UK. Privacy is also a major issue*

HeadsUp moderators asked participants for their reaction to a news story which claimed that children, aged 11 to 16, are to have their fingerprints taken and stored on a database. According to this young person, this scenario was simply unacceptable:

*I don't think this is right, it should be up to people whether they want their finger print taken or not. Was anyone here forced by their school into getting a connexions card? One day I was randomly told to queue up in the hall and then when I got to the front a man started asking me all of my details, without telling me what for. I was quite shocked by this. If I hadn't been so tired that day I would have said I didn't want one and seen what happened. Instead I gave slightly... questionable details to the man. He didn't ask anything and I received a card with those details on it.*

As the debate grew to a close, the Minister of State at the Home Office, Liam Byrne MP, posted a comment which highlighted for participants how ID cards will help in the fight against terrorism. Interestingly, most legislators make general points about issues but Liam Byrne responded to ideas from several participants in one post. He pointed to independent research which concluded that seven out of 10 people supported the initiative, whilst also responding to young people's ideas about illegal immigration and preventing such people working illegally:

*kiwi [a participant] points out some of the benefits of ID cards and wised [a participant] mentions the role they can play in tackling illegal immigration. Myself and other MPs are currently debating the UK Borders Bill in parliament and we are discussing the role ID cards will play. Levitica [a participant] is right to say that those employing illegal workers are also breaking other laws such as the minimum wage and health and safety regulations. So we are increasing penalties and enforcement of the rules which will protect all workers and honest employers. However, if we are going to do this we also need to provide employers the opportunity to effectively and securely check immigrants' identities, which is where ID cards come in.*

## Hanging Tough - Are we Tough Enough?

*Forum Summary*

# Does the criminal justice system protect victims enough?

In this discussion space, the criminal justice system was the subject of everyone's attention. HeadsUp moderators asked participants if there was an appropriate balance between the rights of victims and the rights of offenders. In addition, we asked young people whether they had been the victim of a crime and, if so, how they were treated afterwards.

A group of participants were not afraid to have their say on the potentially delicate topic of victim support. For most young people, the rights of victims did seem to be protected sufficiently, however they did express concern over the use of 'reasonable force':

*In general, victims are protected, but what I think is unfair is how, if a criminal was to break in to a persons house, that person would only be allowed to use 'reasonable force', and could end up being prosecuted if they hurt the criminal.*

Picking up on this comment, one student expressed concern for victims of crime when there is insufficient evidence to convict offenders and used the Forum to detail first-hand experience of what it's like to be a witness:

*I think the rights of people seems okay. I think it is unfortunate for victims when there is not enough evidence to convict the person who allegedly attacked them. For instance, in many cases a man who everyone thinks probably did rape a woman goes free. This is sad, but our only other choice would be to prosecute people on little/no evidence, and we can't start doing that. What worries me is people's attitude towards being witnesses. When I was little, we saw a man hit another with a hammer. My dad watched this and then got us to run away quickly before the police came. Another time I was asked by the police to identify a man I'd seen steal someone's bag, and my dad told me to pretend I didn't know which man it was.*

Continuing on the theme of victims, another astute participant identified the protection of victims as the main concern . In particular, the student sympathised with victims who are faced with the ordeal of being in the same court room as the offender. The criminal justice system was the subject of criticism for being too lenient, allowing criminals to serve short sentences in some cases:

*My argument is, should a victim have to stand in a court room filled with people assessing them, while their attacker (or otherwise) stands opposite? Surely victims should be protected from such ordeals? - but it still happens. What i do not agree with are criminals getting released earlier than they should; men and women who have raped, attacked and molested a child or even a member of their family. Our criminal justice system definately has something to answer for. While the victims are still living with their ordeal and remembering it every day of their lives, the convicted is living in place with hot food, television and games. Surely it should be the convicted suffering*

*for their crimes? - what does it say about our criminal justice system when the convicted would much rather be in prison than be in the outside world????*

The novel idea of compensating victims was raised by Nick Clegg MP as a potential way to improve the treatment and protection for victims in our criminal justice system:

*I believe one area where we could significantly improve the place of victims in the criminal justice system is in the area of compensation. My party is advocating the creation of a consolidated victim compensation fund which would provide quicker, faster compensation to the victims of crime. At the moment, victims have to wait an excessive amount of time for what are often paltry compensation payments.*

*Importantly, we are also proposing that prisoners who do paid work in prison will be expected to make a contribution (say 20 per cent) from their earnings into the fund so that there is an indirect link between the rehabilitative work of offenders and the compensation received by victims.*

Once more on the subject of courts, for one young person the situation was clear - we should be firmer and come down harder on people who break their parole:

*Courts are not harsh enough with parole violators. i think i should be a judge and take over from tony blair...*

Moderators moved the debate on by asking young people what they thought about David Cameron visiting the United Estates Wythenshawe in Manchester, which is a community group set up to give young people role models, a focus and to keep them out of trouble. We asked students if they could understand why the Conservative Party leader is supporting schemes such as this. One participant was full of praise for this innovative approach from a party leader:

*I think that Cameron is quite correct; the best way to alter the way in which people behave in society is to change things from the ground up. Real, lasting change will only be brought about by involving people at an early age. Schemes like the "United Estates of Wythenshawe" are definately a step in the right direction, and could well be a way to alter the way in which young people regard authority and the Law. Politicians need this kind of attitude. Legislation and "pulling levers in Whitehall" will definately not solve any major social issues. Legislation will focus on the punishment of individuals; it will not change the way that people think. Above all, young people need to be educated about what is right and wrong. By this, I dont necessarily mean in schools; parents and communities need to play a role as well. A level of social cohesion needs to be achieved, and a system of shared values and citizenship needs to be instilled in everyone who resides in this nation.*

However in contrast, another HeadsUp participant wasn't afraid to criticise David Cameron's approach claiming that he doesn't suggest any new ideas and makes some very simple and obvious statements:

*I think David Cameron comes across as a bit stupid in the video. He doesn't really put forward any ideas. He also accuses the government from working from the "top down". What else is the government going to do? It can't work from the bottom up - the government doesn't control the bottom. What's Cameron suggesting they do? Change people's brains? Tony Blair adopts all the UK's children and acts as everyone's Dad?*

In this criminal justice discussion thread, moderators asked young people whether they had heard about a new concept called restorative justice, which helps to build up a dialogue between the offender and the victim. We asked participants if they felt this idea has the right motives and some were unsure:

*The thing where criminals meet up with their victims seems a bit... weird. I guess I see how it could work for young people and people who have committed crimes out of need rather than malice.*

Finally, we wanted to assess whether participants believed the rights of offenders were as important as the rights of victims in the criminal justice system. To assist in their thinking, moderators asked students to consider the case of Tony Martin, who killed a 16-year-old burglar, Fred Barras, with a shotgun at his farmhouse in Norfolk in 1999.

With this case in mind, we wanted young people to think about who the victim is and who the offender - Tony Martin or the burglar, Fred Barras? This particular discussion was passionately contested by all those involved and seemed to revolve around the contentious issue of what is 'reasonable force'. One participant decided that, after reading about the case, the killing of the burglar cannot be justified:

*Reasonable force is a difficult thing to prove, but this is one case when there is no doubt. Mr Martin shot dead one retreating 16 year old and injured another fleeing man. Furthermore, the jury where offered the chance to bring in a charge of manslaughter instead of murder. They decided on murder by a majority of 10 to 2. I don't think that the killing of Fred Barras was in anyway justified.*

Interestingly, in contrast to this stance another student was firmly of the opinion that people should be allowed to protect their property from burglars at all costs, even going so far as to call Tony Martin a hero:

*i am afraid i will have to totally disagree with you WISEED, the burglars brought the death and injury upon themselves when they decided to break into his house. i am totally for defending your property and i would have done the same thing time and time agian. in my eyes Tony Martin is a hero.*

Still on the subject of protecting property, this young person used the Forum to gather other opinions on the subject of 'minimum force' (also known as reasonable force) by posing a series of scenarios, each of which contained more force in order to protect property:

*At the current state of affairs you are allowed to use minimum force, but if you hear them creeping up the stairs you cannot set up an ambush. Should we be allowed to fight back? if, for instance, you woke to find someone stealing your TV would it be acceptable for you: Not to hit them at all, you don't want to damage another human? Try to wrestle them to the ground? Hit them with a cricket bat in the body to knock them on the floor? Hit them as hard as you could with a cricket bat to the head?*

Hanging Tough - Are we Tough Enough?

## Conclusions

- \* Prisons not working effectively and must toughen up
- \* Several contributing factors identified as causes of crime
  - \* ID cards won't help in the fight against terrorism
- \* Widespread support for increased protection of victims

The calibre of deliberations in this Law and Order debate was especially impressive, encompassing the ideas of 11-18 year olds plus a range of relevant legislators from across the UK.

Young people made four key conclusions in this Law and Order Debate...

Students were asked whether prisons were working and if there were any alternatives. The majority decided that they were not working effectively and needed to capture a 'fear factor' which would help dissuade people from committing crime.

When analysing the causes of crime, young people offered a whole host of contributing factors. People could turn to crime due to a lack of education, peer pressure, an ineffective criminal justice system or perhaps even revenge.

In answer to the controversial question asking whether ID cards could help tackle terrorism, the majority believed that they would not make a difference. Participants who were against ID cards substantiated their claims by underlining the cost of the initiative, human rights issues and concern about identity theft.

Responding to the question asking whether victims are protected enough, participants on the whole felt that more could be done to support them. Some sympathised with victims who are faced with the ordeal of being in the same court room as the offender whilst there was some heated debate about what amounted to 'reasonable force'.

The range of enthusiastic and relevant legislators taking part online during all three weeks gave the debate added momentum and a stamp of parliamentary approval from the young people's collective viewpoint. We are grateful to all the decision-makers who responded to young people's opinions in this Law and Order Debate.

*Hanging tough - Are we tough enough?* was a particularly topical issue for a HeadsUp Forum and therefore one that was welcomed by young people who participated, other NGOs and MPs from across the political spectrum. It provided a secure, structured but non-sanitised platform for young people to voice their perspectives on law and order.

HeadsUp tackles complex political problems but is not designed to make set recommendations. Like adults, young people have a range of perspectives on political events, issues and policies, and often favour different solutions. This resource was established not to give the 'definitive line'; rather it is about providing a

space for people to share their views, challenge those of others and, in turn, be challenged.

---