Community Foundation

Vital Signs North East: Justice

Justice

How charitable funding can help reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and support the communities and individuals it affects

www.communityfoundation.org.uk/vitalsigns

Newcastle Building Society

About this Vital Signs report

Vital Signs is a Community Foundation resource presenting information about a range of issues affecting our area. It draws on statistics, published research, local expertise and knowledge gathered through funding across the region to 'take the pulse' of communities and inform a better philanthropic response to their needs. We see it as the start of a conversation and would love to hear your views about the ambitions of local communities and what more philanthropy and charitable funding could do to meet them.

This is our eighth Vital Signs North East 2024 report. It examines the problem of crime and anti-social behaviour in our region, and how philanthropy helps ensure that the root causes of crime are tackled, victims are supported, and offending is reduced.

Vital Signs will explore ten themes during 2024:

Economy – How can philanthropy help build a strong regional economy where everyone benefits from increased prosperity?

Education – What opportunities can charitable funding create for people to learn, develop skills and achieve their potential?

Health – How can charitable funders improve the overall health of our region, and reduce differences in health outcomes between richer and poorer people?

Homes – Can philanthropists help ensure that there are decent, secure homes for everyone who needs them?

Environment – What support can philanthropy provide to help communities look after the environment and ensure the region rises to the challenge of climate change?

Access – How can philanthropists help people overcome the barriers they face in getting access to opportunities and services?

Community – What can charitable giving contribute to the task of ensuring our communities are strong, welcoming and able to cope with the challenges of uncertain times?

Culture – How can philanthropy help foster the North East's unique culture, from iconic theatres, museums and concert halls to diverse community arts, heritage and sports groups?

Justice – How can charitable funding help reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and support the communities and individuals it affects?

Living standards – How should philanthropic funds support those faced with a decline in living standards due to economic pressures and rising costs?

In addition to reporting on each of these themes we will produce a brief printed summary of our findings.

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"If you allow young folk to be abominably brought up and their characters corrupted little by little, from childhood; and if then you punish them as grown-ups for committing the crimes to which their training has consistently inclined them, what else is this, I ask, but first making thieves and then punishing them for it?"

Thomas More, 1516

A note on terminology

In this report we use the following geographic terms:

"The North East" or "The North East region": this refers to the North East English region which will soon cover the Tees Valley Combined Authority and new North East Combined Authority

Tees Valley: this refers to the area covered by the Tees Valley Combined Authority comprising Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees

The North East sub-region: this refers to the area to be covered by the new North East Combined Authority comprising Northumberland, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Gateshead, Sunderland and County Durham.

Executive summary

In this Vital Signs report we examine levels of crime and anti-social behaviour; their impact on quality of life in our communities; what can be done both for victims and those who wish to address their offending and, crucially, the potential contribution of philanthropy to making things better.

Levels of crime and anti-social behaviour are falling across the UK. But, despite this, the fitness for purpose of our criminal justice system, and levels of public confidence in it, give cause for concern. High profile cases of misconduct – particularly but not exclusively in the Metropolitan Police – have dented public confidence in policing. There are major challenges in relation to the level, recruitment and retention of staff in policing, probation, the Crown Prosecution and Prison Services. Levels of certain offences ranging from knife crime and the victimisation of women to shoplifting are still rising, despite the progress achieved elsewhere. A backlog of criminal cases is proving slow to clear, causing undue suffering to both victims and defendants. Our prisons are overcrowded and cannot offer sufficient opportunities for rehabilitation, whilst reoffending rates remaining unacceptably high. And, most importantly, there is a need to address disparities in progress on reducing crime and anti-social behaviour between regions like the South East and North East, and our more affluent and deprived neighbourhoods.

Big problems like these are mainly for our new government to address, working in partnership with those who administer the criminal justice system at a local level and informed by civil society organisations and community members with direct experience of the issues. There is a solid record of past achievement across much of our region that can be built on. But from our analysis one thing seems clear: in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour prevention is far preferable to cure. And it is perhaps here that philanthropy can make a significant contribution.

Want to know more?

You can download all our Vital Signs reports as they are produced via our website at **www.communityfoundation.org.uk/vitalsigns**

The Community Foundation believes charitable funding can have a significant impact in three key areas.

1

Getting ahead of the problem for example by helping to provide positive alternatives to young people at risk of becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour, and by supporting vulnerable individuals and funding the work of civil society organisations in areas ranging from family mediation and conflict resolution to promoting online safety and community-building.

2

Supporting the victims of crime through specialist civil society organisations working with those affected by hate crime or sexual and domestic violence, and generalist agencies within communities that can provide low-level informal support and help resolve local issues.

3

Helping offenders to make a fresh start. Reoffending rates in our region are far too high. This can be tackled by helping civil society organisations to enable those leaving the criminal justice system to move on to a more positive future. This is a good thing in itself, but it also prevents more people from becoming the victims of repeat offences.

A note on how crime and anti-social behaviour levels and trends are measured

There are two major measures used by government and both are referred to in this report. Neither is perfect, and at times they can present markedly different pictures of the situation we are in. They are:

Police recorded crime figures: these provide a reliable measure of lower-volume offences that are more likely to be reported to, and well-recorded by, the police. These include more serious violent offences and burglary, for example. They also cover all types of crime, and all categories of victim (e.g. companies and public bodies as well as individuals). However they are considered to be a less reliable indicator of long-term trends than the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) largely because they may simply reflect more or less effective policing, and not all crime is reported or recorded.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW): around 50,000 households take part in the survey each year with quarterly reporting of the results. It covers a range of crimes and related experiences whether or not they were reported to the Police. But it does not include all crimes – just those involving individual victims aged over 16 who are normally resident here. Crimes against tourists, commercial or public bodies for example, and 'victimless crimes' like drugs possession, are not covered. The CSEW is nevertheless considered the best measure of trends over time, because it is unaffected by levels of reporting to the police (only 4 in 10 crimes are currently reported) or changes in how they record incidents. Normally dependable, its findings for 2022 and 2023 may be less robust than in previous years due to pandemic disruption.

Both these sources also cover anti-social behaviour (ASB). Here the situation is further complicated by problems with defining what does or does not constitute anti-social behaviour.

Justice in the North East, and how philanthropy can help

Nationally overall levels of crime are falling.[i] The same may be true of anti-social behaviour. Police recorded incidents are falling again after a pandemic spike, and although self-reported measures tell a more ambiguous story it is not incompatible with an improving or at least stable trend.[ii] Nevertheless it is clear that all is not well with our criminal justice system. There is widespread concern about police misconduct and an associated increase in negative attitudes towards the police;[iii] we face problems with underfunding and the level, recruitment and retention of staff in areas like policing, probation, the Crown Prosecution and Prison Services;[iv] there are worrying upward trends in areas like knife-crime and shoplifting; our prisons are overcrowded and unable to address the need for rehabilitation; reoffending rates remain too high[v] and there is a massive backlog of criminal cases particularly for more serious offences like rape that add to the burden on victims of crime.[vi] Civil society organisations, whilst active and effective in this space, are struggling with increased demand and a difficult funding environment.[vii] And last, but not least, the disparity in levels of crime and anti-social behaviour experienced by affluent and deprived communities is widening at both the regional and neighbourhood level.

The riots of Summer 2024

It is too early to offer an in-depth analysis of the violent disorder that hit parts of the North East, and the wider UK, just as this report was being finalised. However, our first priority must be to help those individuals and communities who were targeted, terrorised and attacked and to support community organisations working to ensure that recent events are not allowed to create further division within our communities.

The Community Foundation has added its name to a North East Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector statement on the riots that can be **read here**.

Our newly elected government must address these issues, and hopefully it will do so with input from both professionals within the criminal justice system and local people who understand how national trends affect individuals and neighbourhoods. In the field of policing and community safety – which will obviously be an immediate concern of local residents – the role of elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) working in ever closer collaboration with local Community Safety Partnerships will remain crucial.[viii] Our region has three, newly elected in May 2024: **Susan Dungworth** (succeeding Kim McGuinness) in Northumbria; **Joy Allen** (re-elected) in Durham and **Matthew Storey** (succeeding Steve Turner) in Cleveland. Their Police and Crime Plans are likely to change in the immediate future. But as one might expect those they have inherited, along with our region's Community Safety Partnership Plans, contain much to address concerns about policing, violent, sexual and acquisitive crime (including retail crime), reoffending and support for victims as well as a welcome focus on engaging civil society and communities in planning services, preventing and addressing crime and anti-social behaviour. It remains to be seen how this agenda will develop in a very different local and national political context.

Levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in the North East

In our table of indicators on page 27, we give some figures for North East crime and anti-social behaviour. In looking at these figures it is worth bearing in mind the issues identified above concerning how crime and anti-social behaviour levels and trends are measured. Nevertheless, the picture is not an encouraging one, and there can be little doubt that the region faces significant challenges.

The data shows higher than national average rates of recorded crime overall. In relation to some types of offence (e.g. violence against the person, sexual offences) rates are not following the national downward trajectory.

In other cases they are either rising faster (e.g. robbery and theft, crimes involving the use of knives) or falling more slowly (e.g. public order offences, fraud and computer misuse). In some areas we are in line with national upward trends (e.g. possession of weapons) and there is marginally better news in relation to criminal damage and arson where levels are falling in line with the national trend.

Rates of domestic violence and hate crime remain above the national average, and within the robbery and theft figures there has been a sharp rise in shoplifting up 44% compared to 36% nationally. The psychological and financial pressures placed on individuals, families and communities as a result of the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis are likely to be a factor here. However, as with all crime statistics, caution is advisable – the figures could partly reflect changes in the policing of offences or the success of initiatives to encourage the reporting of crimes.

Under-reporting of crime is a major issue. A survey undertaken by Neighbourhood Watch[ix] found that 46% of respondents didn't report crimes they had experienced. And, perhaps surprisingly, the rate dropped for those in the older age groups. Tellingly, 55% of people did not report the crime because they did not believe anything would be done. The data in our table of indicators tends to reinforce this finding: fewer than half of respondents seem happy with the actions being taken to address crime and anti-social behaviour, and a substantial minority seem to have little or no trust in the police, courts or

judiciary. A similar state of affairs is uncovered in research from the British Retail Consortium: 61% of retailers felt the police response to retail crime they experienced was poor or very poor, and the perception that it would be pointless underpinned the decision by more than half of retailers not to report certain crimes.[x]

How prevalent is crime? In the 2023 Crime Survey for England and Wales, 12.5% of adults in our region reported being victims on one or more occasions. Just under half believed crime was increasing and one in 10 reported high levels of worry about crime. Such regional figures on crime and anti-social behaviour do not necessarily capture the whole local picture, as there are significant sub-regional variations. The recorded crime rate per 1000 population, for example, ranges widely from 170 in Middlesbrough to 76 in Northumberland, whilst the overall increase in regional crime is due to marked increases in some areas cancelling out falls in others. These variations in crime levels and trends can reflect both levels of offending and the focus, efficacy and recording practices of the region's police forces.

At a grassroots level, crime is concentrated in a relatively small number of neighbourhoods. The significance of deprivation in amplifying the risk of victimisation can be examined using the CSEW crime risk calculator. The table below covers two Newcastle upon Tyne postcodes at opposite ends of the deprivation spectrum. The figures suggest that the risk of victimisation in a more deprived area is generally higher, even if local circumstances can result in some unexpected deviations from this general rule:

Individual	Postcode in top 10% most deprived areas (NE2)	Postcode in top 10% least deprived areas (NE6)
Woman looking after family aged 25 in socially-rented accommodation	Risk of... Violence: 3.7% Robbery/theft: 2% Burglary: 5.7%	Risk of... Violence: 5.2% Robbery/theft: 1% Burglary: 0.1%
Unemployed man aged 40 living in a private-rented property	Risk of... Violence: 4.6% Robbery/theft: 1.2% Burglary: 4.1%	Risk of... Violence: 1.5% Robbery/theft: 0.1% Burglary: 2.5%
Employed woman aged 40 living in owner-occupied property	Risk of... Violence: 1.6% Robbery/theft: 1% Burglary: 3.2%	Risk of... Violence: 1% Robbery/theft: .5% Burglary: 1.8%
Retired man aged 60 living in socially-rented property	Risk of... Violence: .5% Robbery/theft: .5% Burglary: 2%	Risk of... Violence: .3% Robbery/theft: .3% Burglary: 1.2%

Anti-social behaviour is 'behaviour by a person which causes, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to persons not of the same household as the person' (Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003 and Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011). What is notable about this is the subjective element: it is easy to imagine that behaviour that might alarm or cause distress to one person will not trouble another. National government research has found that a significant number of people regarded common examples of anti-social behaviour as non-criminal, or even normal or typical.

To some extent this is to be expected. Whether it is anti-social for youths to congregate (17% considered this normal) or someone to be noisy (10%) is surely open to debate. However similar levels of acceptance in relation to out-of-control dogs (12%), sexual misbehaviour (6%) and intimidation (5%) are perhaps more consistent with a sense of weary resignation. Viewing different forms of anti-social behaviour as non-criminal or just part of life is more typical of deprived neighbourhoods than more affluent areas. This can lead to under-reporting of the problem, as can the fact that younger people under 35 who are more frequently exposed to certain behaviours (e.g. drunkenness or drug use) are less likely to report them as problematic than older residents. And in addition, of course, there is the influence of local perceptions of the value of reporting incidents (see above).

Low levels of interaction and trust in communities tend to amplify the sense that anti-social behaviour is a significant problem. They do so by heightening the unease that behaviours that may only be a minor nuisance – such as gatherings of youths or short periods of noisiness – can create. Building greater community cohesion encourages residents to act together to reduce persistent anti-social behaviour and give people the courage to report it to the authorities, but it may also reduce overly negative perceptions of normal behavioural variations in a community.[xi] Interestingly the Neighbourhood Watch survey reported that the North East had the highest level of interaction between neighbours of any region, with 82% talking to them more than weekly, which is hopefully a good basis to work from!

A significant proportion of those participating in the CSEW across the North East reported witnessing anti-social behaviour (44%). The wide range of incidents referred to included people gathering on the streets, littering and "begging, vagrancy and homeless people" (sic) to more concerning encounters with dangerous dogs, drug-dealers, abuse/ harassment and people committing acts of indecency. Varying perceptions of the seriousness of incidents may partly explain why a relatively low proportion of respondents overall (less than 10%) report experience of high local levels of anti-social behaviour.

The impact of crime and anti-social behaviour

We are all affected by crime even if we are fortunate enough to not experience it directly. Its economic impact is huge, creating a raft of extra costs that are passed on to consumers and taxpayers. Here are some examples:

- alcohol-related crimes like assaults, thefts and criminal damage are estimated to cost £14.6bn, of which the North East accounted for £812m;[xii]
- crime in retail costs businesses £3.3bn every year across the country in losses and prevention measures,[xiii] with an average cost per business of £60,000;
- in rural areas of the country the theft of items like agricultural machinery, livestock and technology equipment costs £49.5m. Losses of £8.3m in the North East make ours the second worst affected area in the UK; [xiv]
- imprisonment, however necessary it may sometimes be, is an expensive option. The overall cost of incarcerating a male prisoner in HMP Durham is now around £38,000 a year.[xv]

Similarly anti-social behaviour has an economic impact, estimated nationally to be around £850m. It reduces the value of housing, undermines local enterprise, reduces productivity, increases demand for services and creates an atmosphere in which more serious criminality can take root.[xvi]

Fear of crime and anti-social behaviour is also harmful, limiting both our sense of security and personal freedom. A national Children's Society survey revealed that 34% of children in year 7 and above either did not feel safe when out in their local area at night or regarded the question as not relevant to them (i.e. they did not go out at night). Even for the daytime the figure was 8%. Girls were more likely to be in these groups than boys. In the North East, 38% of adults would not feel safe walking on their own after dark in a quiet

street close to their home, and the national figures show a higher proportion of people in deprived areas, women, young people, older people, disabled people and Black people sharing such concerns.

The overall risk of being a victim of crime or anti-social behaviour varies between people with differing personal characteristics. For example, the CSEW data shows that young people are at most risk of crime, and (somewhat counter-intuitively) that risk increases both for those with higher level qualifications and disabled people. But overall risk is only part of the story. To really understand victimisation we need to look beyond general levels of risk – that could include susceptibility to high volume, relatively minor crimes – to understand how crime impacts on particular communities and individuals. We cannot explore them all in this report, but here are some significant examples.

- Girls and women are disproportionately affected by sexual harassment and violence perpetrated by boys and men. A 2021 Ofsted report[xix] for example found that harmful sexual behaviour towards girls and young women is prevalent even in schools and colleges, with 79% of girls reporting knowledge of sexual assaults. In the community at large just under a third of women reported being harassed in the past year whilst 7% had experienced domestic abuse; 3% had been sexually assaulted and 5% had been stalked. Many such offences go unreported, but the long-term impact on victims are severe. Research from Changing Lives suggests that in addition to deaths caused by direct violence, the abuse and exploitation of vulnerable women underpins their higher general mortality rate.[xx] The North East has higher than national average rates of sexual offences and domestic abuse.[xxi]
- There were 145,214 police-recorded hate crime offences against people on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity in 2022-2023, with numbers falling from a pandemic peak but aligned with an upward trend since 2018-20. In the North East the rate is higher than for England as a whole with 6,030 crimes motivated by race (3,670); sexual orientation (1,009); disability (566); religion (297) and transgender identity (248).[xxii] In addition, vulnerable people are often targeted for exploitation. Examples range from online scamming to sexual and financial exploitation. Our case study from LD: NorthEast focuses on both these areas of concern.
- 25% of people living in the most deprived neighbourhoods also live in the 10% of neighbourhoods with the highest crime rates, compared to 3% of people in the least deprived neighbourhoods.[xxiii] Research published in 2018 by Civitas suggests that arguments about poverty as a driver of criminality tends to draw attention from the victimisation of the majority of law-abiding citizens in poorer areas. We have explored above how living in an area of high deprivation affects the risk of victimisation.[xxiv] Civitas identify a range of less direct, but equally significant, negative impacts: psychological and physical harm due to fear of crime; barriers to accessing employment due to car or bicycle theft/vandalism; higher vulnerability to the impact of events like flooding due to lack of access to affordable insurance; less choice and higher prices as local shops struggle with higher security costs and finally, the corrosive effect of crime on community relationships.[xxv]
- Crime in rural areas has a significant economic impact, particularly in the North East as highlighted earlier in this report. Recent research from Dr Kate Tudor of Durham University[xxvi] suggests that the nature of rural crime is inadequately understood, and that a failure to respond to the challenge it presents is undermining public confidence in rural policing. It has also highlighted the particular factors that can amplify the impact of victimisation on individuals, from geographic isolation to the local presence of individuals and families with a long track-record of offending and intimidation.

If the worst happens, personal responses to being a victim of crime can vary considerably.

The severity of the offence is not always a good indicator of its potential negative impact. The level of resilience of the victim will often determine how well they cope regardless of the severity of an offence. Negative outcomes for victims can include anger, physical symptoms, feelings of self-blame, depression and anxiety, or just a loss of the ability to cope with normal life.[xxvii]

The impact of anti-social behaviour is also often both disruptive and distressing. The Neighbourhood Watch survey found that 66% of respondents were worried about it, with the impact on people generally highest for those types of anti-social behaviour that are perceived as criminal in nature such as drug-dealing and vandalism. The last word should perhaps go to one of the North East research participants cited by the previous government in its Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan. They highlight the corrosive nature of persistent anti-social behaviour on our sense of community: *"...people are getting away with things because they're a bully, or because they're being anti-social and they don't think the rules apply to them."*

Funding projects that reduce the likelihood and impact of anti-social behaviour and crime is, in our view, a priority for philanthropy. Civil society organisations have the reach to address the root causes of offending with projects that promote positive attitudes in areas like sexual relationships or attitudes to difference, which raise awareness of the risks of victimisation (as in our LD:NorthEast case-study below) and which help communities to work together to address the challenge presented by crime and anti-social behaviour. And most important of all, they provide many of the specialist services victims of crime need (e.g. refuges for women experiencing domestic violence) and the low-level everyday help that can enable people to take action on the issues that concern them (e.g. support with reporting nuisance behaviours).

Getting ahead of the problem

In 2022 around 12m people in the UK had a criminal record, with 33% of men and 9% of women born in 1953 members of this group[xxviii]. This proportion will fall if crime rates continue to come down, but the fact remains that many among us have offended. To understand the challenge this presents we need to consider how levels of offending are shaped not just by the bad choices people make, but by the way that the criminal justice system operates.

Justice is traditionally portrayed as blind to the differences between people. However, in reality, difference can be very significant in deciding who ends up within the criminal justice system. The murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 led to a movement to address discrimination not just amongst individuals within the system but within its institutional practices and assumptions. But *"we still have a long way to go,"* as Stephen's mother Doreen Lawrence has recently said. Here are a few examples.

- The Local Government Association has argued that the introduction of legal remedies for anti-social behaviour from the late-1990s has led to activity once perceived as merely immature or adolescent being conflated with criminality and treated as such. The House of Commons Justice Committee (2016) acknowledged that such behaviour is often the manifestation of normal human development. Nevertheless changes in the law rather than the worsening behaviour of young people continued to drive a perceived increase in offending.[xxix] And recent research has highlighted how anti-social behaviour measures can result in people with vulnerabilities such as mental health problems and addictions being imprisoned by the civil courts.[xxx] It remains to be seen whether the Labour government's "tough new Respect Orders"[xxxi] which include criminal sanctions will have such unintended consequences.

- Black young people were targeted by 20% of stop and searches in 2021. That is 14% more than one might expect given the size of this population group. Of those involved in what can be a humiliating experience, 77% were subject to no further action and only 10% ended up being arrested yet alone convicted of an offence.[xxxii] A recent survey of 373 legal professionals conducted by the University of Manchester had 95% of respondents identifying racial bias in the processes and outcomes of the justice system. Official statistics show that since 2018 defendants from minority ethnic communities have higher average custodial sentences imposed for indictable offences than white ones and spend a greater proportion of their sentences in custody. People from minority ethnic backgrounds constitute 27% of the prison population, compared to 18% of the population at large.[xxxiii]
- The Prison Reform Trust point out that women in prison have often been the victims of more serious crimes than those for which they are imprisoned, with the experience of domestic violence, sexual abuse and coercive control often linked to their offending behaviours. They have been found to be twice as likely to receive harsher sentences for assaults committed whilst intoxicated, with the most likely explanation being that this is because they are regarded as acting against traditional expectations of female behaviour.[xxxiv]

Deprivation also seems to have a bearing. There is considerable academic literature that suggests that the weight of the criminal justice system falls heaviest on the poor and marginalised. Data we have on things like qualification levels within the prison population certainly suggest the poor are overrepresented there, along with people

from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities. The 2021 Census revealed that more than half of children in care had a criminal conviction by age 24 compared to 13% of children who had not been in care.[xxxv] A recent study from the Revolving Doors charity examines how poorer young people are being failed by the criminal justice system, often despite the best intentions of those enforcing the law. It highlights how they will often have a history of traumatic family situations and of encountering the police in this context. It suggests that this can frequently manifest itself in negative attitudes towards authority, which may be amplified by policing approaches or high stress situations like being taken into custody. This can result in a range of inappropriate behaviours that increase the likelihood of conviction, from aggressive behaviour to admitting alleged offences just to get things over with.[xxxvi]

Recognising that there can be unfairness within the criminal justice system enables us to address injustices and ensure more trust within the communities it serves. Civil society organisations, particularly but not exclusively at the national level, play a key role in campaigning for changes in policy and practice. This is however a contentious field, and so the invitation issued by the Prime Minister prior to the General Election may have a particular resonance: *"you should feel that you can speak up on behalf of the people you serve without fear, call out injustice where you see it, and continue to push us all to be and do better."*[xxxvii]

None of this, of course, detracts from the personal responsibility of individuals for their own behaviour. The North East has higher than average levels of crime and of young people being cautioned or sentenced, as well as higher rates of reoffending amongst those who have previously been in the criminal justice system. Reducing the burden of crime and anti-social behaviour on our region must involve helping people – and young people in particular – to resist being drawn into criminality and helping those already in the criminal justice system to put their offending behind them.

This is an urgent priority because we are struggling to cope with pressures on the criminal justice system. Prisons are perhaps the starkest example. Allowing for the general increase in the population, there are twice as many people in prison now than there were in the late Victorian period. The prison population is 87,900 – 134 for every 100,000 people in England and Wales.[xxxviii] In recent years this has continued to rise, even as crime levels fall. There are three drivers:

- a substantial increase in the length of sentences over the past decade, and not just for those convicted of the most serious offences;
- more prisoners being held on remand, including a substantial number yet to be convicted of a crime, due to a backlog in the courts and
- the number of those recalled to prison for breaching the terms of their parole has risen partly due to problems within the probation service.[xxxix]

If we continue as at present there may be 94,500 prisoners by the end of 2024, more than the number of places in the prison estate. Shabana Mahmood, the new Justice Secretary, has spoken of the imminent and potentially catastrophic impact that overstretching capacity would have on both the criminal justice system and law and order more generally.

The release of certain categories of prisoners earlier in their sentences is being implemented as a short-term fix. However it will pose a significant challenge to Offender Management Units and probation services already struggling with organisational challenges, prison over-crowding and understaffing. This may exacerbate the rise in prisoners on recall, a group that already make up 14% of all prisoners. Building more prisons and employing more staff to run them is a longer-term solution, although thousands of new places are already planned to come onstream by the end of 2025. But this seems a very expensive option that some argue does little to solve the problem of repeat offending. Later in this report, Fiona Sample of the **Oswin Project** explores the whole question of how well our prison system meets the needs of the majority of prisoners, particularly in delivering rehabilitative services. Suffice to say, there may be alternative options that could prove more effective in reducing criminality.

Impact of the Summer 2024 riots on prisons

Over 1,000 arrests and swift sentencing following the riots has exacerbated the crisis in our prison and probation system. The BBC has reported that *"four days before the riots, HMP Durham - the nearest "reception" prison to the disorder in Sunderland, which would therefore normally be a likely first institution to accommodate newly convicted local men - had just one spare bed because it was already holding 984 inmates"*.[xl] As a result emergency measures are being implemented. These will essentially hand additional responsibilities on to the police, who are now required to house those unable to enter the prison system, whilst increasing the workload of those responsible for prisoners released earlier on license to free-up prison spaces.

Reducing levels of offending and reoffending has to be at least part of the solution to the problems we face. There are many explanations for why people are drawn into criminal behaviour. Perhaps the least disputed is the influence of personal factors – ranging from the long-term effects of childhood malnutrition, neglect or abuse to alcohol and drug dependence – that affect the ability to regulate behaviour. More contested are sociological explanations focused on:

- a lack of opportunities to achieve a reasonable standard of material comfort – or aspired-to levels of wealth, success and status – by legitimate means;
- an absence of those factors that discourage criminality such as attachment to community; the degree of investment in lawful activity (e.g. work) and a commitment to pro-social values. These can be undermined by the experience of inequality;
- toxic assumptions about gender, race, disability or sexuality that can underpin problems such as domestic violence, sexual violence or hate crime;
- environmental factors such as the design of public spaces and prevalence of low-level disorder and anti-social behaviour.

Whichever of these possibilities one chooses to go with, it is readily apparent that civil society organisations are working every day to address the root causes of crime, for example by:

- **helping to alleviate poverty and disadvantage (e.g. welfare rights and foodbank provision);**
- **supporting families and children under pressure (e.g. providing family support and help with accessing statutory services for children; supporting families to maintain contact with parents in prison[xli]);**
- **supporting people trying to overcome alcohol or drug addictions and linking them to specialist services;**
- **helping people at risk of exclusion from the jobs market, for example by providing volunteering opportunities;**
- **bringing people together in communities and supporting positive attitudes to difference (e.g. through community buildings, local activities and events);**
- **providing youth activities at times when anti-social behaviour can peak, and detached youthwork services to reach out to disengaged young people;**
- **helping to improve the attractiveness and level of foot-fall in public spaces;**
- **supporting the work of statutory services by ensuring the voice of victims of crime, and others involved in the criminal justice system, is heard.**

Philanthropic funding for organisations undertaking work on these issues – including innovative projects that need time to prove their value - will contribute to reducing anti-social behaviour and crime whilst doing much to improve quality of life in communities across the North East.

The role of civil society organisations in working with offenders and ex-offenders at risk of entering a cycle of offending and reoffending is also well established. The

charity **Clinks** supports voluntary sector organisations working in the criminal justice system. It produces an annual **state of the sector report** drawing on the experience of charities and other community organisations. Largely small in size and including generic and specialist groups in roughly equal measure, these reported being active in prison with those serving sentences, on remand or due to be released as well as working in the community with people under probation supervision and ex-offenders. Many took referrals from statutory agencies ranging from Probation and Youth Offending Teams to Local Authorities and schools. But interestingly 80% took people off the street, and 60% made contact through other voluntary organisations – perhaps demonstrating how such groups have won the trust of local people. Part of this trust is built on agencies' willingness to involve those with experience of the criminal justice in their work. Nearly all did so as consultees (73%), staff (69%), volunteers (55%) or trustees (53%).

Do ex-offenders have the potential to succeed in work?

Many well-known high street names think they do, with companies like Tesco, Boots and Marks & Spencer offering ex-offenders the chance to make a fresh start.

Timpson is one of the largest employers of ex-offenders in the UK. One in ten of its workforce have a criminal conviction, and its retention rate for them is 75%. Here's what they say on their website:

"The vast majority of ex-offenders we recruit are extremely loyal, productive, hardworking, and make excellent colleagues. Many have been promoted and fully grasped the second chance they have been given. To put it simply, recruiting ex-offenders has been great for our business."

Greggs is also active in this area with its Chief Executive Roisin Currie reported as saying that:

"We believe passionately in giving people a 'fresh start' and have been rewarded tenfold by the dedication which has been shown by those colleagues who have joined us having previously been in the justice system."

Statutory services have a strong focus on supporting prison leavers into employment, not least because this reduces the likelihood of reoffending. Much valuable work has been done to engage employers to this end, but nevertheless currently 70% of prison-leavers remain unemployed six months after release. Voluntary agencies working in this space argue that a key problem is the lack of an holistic approach that provides both a bridge from prison into the community and support to find and maintain employment. **Oswin Project**, already mentioned, is a good example of work in this area. Another local initiative is **Recruitment Junction** which has achieved a 71% job retention rate and a reduced reoffending rate of just 2% by providing people with convictions looking for work with sustained support including liaising with Probation, the Department for Work and Pensions and other statutory agencies, helping job-seekers with securing accommodation, ID, bank accounts, clothes and travel costs and supporting both the employee and employer to maximise the chances of success.[xlii] Both demonstrate the striking impact that civil society organisations can achieve in this field.

"Our experience shows that making jobs accessible (to the prisoners) is only a small part of the solution. Without consistent support, many people continue to falter even before the job starts or drop out within the early weeks. What makes a sustainable job is long-term support in their first-year post-release."
Beverley Brooks, Founder-Director Recruitment Junction

A major problem remains funding. Most of the agencies participating in the Clinks report reported a difficult financial environment and increasing demand, echoing concerns within the sector as a whole since the advent of the cost-of-living crisis. A 2023 Centre for Social Justice report[xliii] highlighted the need to put more targeted statutory funding into community organisations to help prisoners into work:

> *"Many of the organisations working to support ex-offenders into employment in the community receive virtually no public funding and are unstable due to year-on-year grant funding, fiercely competing for a generous but limited pool of philanthropic funders."*

This raises a question as to the best way to ensure this is accessible to a wide range of potential providers. In this regard the North East has perhaps some innovative solutions to offer from other areas of work, such as those discussed by Chris Drinkwater in our Vital Signs North East **Health report**.

In relation to demand, the loss of, or disruption to, statutory services has been a key factor. It is hard not to conclude that early release will further exacerbate the situation, with many agencies questioning how long they can sustain making up for deficiencies in statutory provision.

This all poses something of a dilemma for charitable funders, who often baulk at doing too much to fill the gaps in statutory funding and services. And yet, if philanthropists do not step up who will support work that helps reduce the burden of repeat offending and shows what can be done to help ex-prisoners become productive members of the community? In the short-term providing funding for projects that demonstrate how to reduce reoffending effectively, in particular by supporting ex-offenders into work, has to be part of our approach.

Philanthropy and justice: case studies

How the P&G Fund at the Community Foundation helped Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland undertake outreach work to help keep young people safe in relationships

Rape Crisis Tyneside and Northumberland is a Newcastle-based charity operating from several outreach bases in Tyneside and Northumberland. It works primarily to support women and girls over the age of 13 who have been raped, sexually abused or suffered sexual violence at any point in their lives. It provides services under contract for a variety of statutory agencies and receives grant-funding from a wide range of partners including charitable foundations.

In 2020 the charity received an award of £5,576 from the P&G Fund at the Community Foundation as a contribution to a wider programme of group work with young people in schools, colleges and the community on the subject of staying safe in relationships. The sessions sought to help young women to reassess relationships where there was abuse or the risk of abuse, and to encourage young men with negative attitudes on issues like consent, coercion or harassment to reconsider them. It also provided sessions to education professionals on these issues.

Participant feedback revealed an increased awareness of safety in relationships amongst the teenagers. One example was the issue of a boyfriend or girlfriend demanding to "check" a young person's phone. This was initially considered by some group members to be a reasonable request: *"what's the problem if you have nothing to hide?"* However, attitudes changed once such behaviour were considered in the context of issues of control and abuse.

Hopefully by supporting preventative work like this we can help young people avoid the type of harmful relationships that can make the support of agencies like Rape Crisis so necessary. As the group itself said: *"if this work helps just a few young men re-evaluate their approach to such issues, or a few young women reassess their relationship with abusers or potential abusers, then it will have proved money well spent."*

How LD: NorthEast helps people with learning disabilities and autism to protect themselves against hate crime and exploitation and stay safe online with support from the Squires Foundation Fund at the Community Foundation

LD: NorthEast is a North Tyneside-based charity that supports adults and children with learning disabilities, learning difficulties and autism, and their families. The aim of the group is summarised in its latest annual report: *"We believe that everyone deserves to have fun, spend time with friends and feel good about themselves and our mission is to support people to do just that, from birth right through to older life. Our vision is to achieve equality and social inclusion so people can live their life their way."* To this end it provides personalised outreach activities that help with people's social, leisure, health and wellbeing and daily living skills. Its funders include the local NHS, a range of charitable funders and local social housing providers and private businesses.

Unfortunately the organisation knows from first-hand experience that the vulnerability of some of the people it works with can result in them being victimised. Examples range from name-calling, assaults and harassment in the street or on public transport to domestic violence, exploitation and "scamming" at home and online. Often such issues are not reported because either they are accepted as part of life or out of fear that nothing will happen and they will face reprisals. In response LD: NorthEast has sought to highlight the issue and the need for action, developing good connections with the local police, the Crown Prosection Service, Victims First and Nexus in the process.

'People who have a learning disability have faced extreme hate crime in their community. Often they've accepted this as something that just happens to them. We are very passionate to educate our community that this is not acceptable. We work closely with our local police to help people at risk to identify what a hate crime is and gain confidence to report incidents and crimes. Charitable funding to continue our work is vital, and we thank all those who have supported our work.'
Jacqui Thompson,
Chief Executive: LD:NorthEast

In an attempt to get upstream of the problem LD: NorthEast developed a programme of preventative workshops on hate crime awareness, reporting hate crime, keeping safe online and healthy relationships. It was to support this work that an application was made to the Community Foundation, resulting in an award of £3,306 from the Squires Foundation Fund. In all 12 workshops were held in 2023-2024 focused on hate and **mate crime**, keeping safe online and online scams. Northumbria Police and Nexus contributed to workshops on keeping safe in the community and on public transport, and on how to report hate crime. Creative workshops were used to encourage people to identify ways in which they could support themselves and work with others to eradicate the problem. A lasting legacy of the activity were 'easy read' contact cards to ensure people with learning disabilities would know who to contact in the event of being victimised.

An evaluation of the programme showed that most of the 220 participants gained increased awareness of what hate crime is, had greater confidence to report it and felt safer after attending. As important it emerged that some who were currently being victimised had gained the confidence to report their problems to the police.

Philanthropy in action:

The Hokey Cokey Fund

The Hokey Cokey Fund was set up at the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland by Mike Worthington, Wendy Dale and Sue and Tony Winfield all of whom had worked professionally in the criminal justice field. The purpose of the fund is to support innovative projects in crime prevention and the rehabilitation of offenders in Tyne & Wear and Northumberland. Since 2017 it has provided funding of £24,681 to nine organisations supporting young people at risk of offending, people serving custodial sentences and ex-offenders.

Mike Worthington is a former Chief Probation Officer for Northumbria; a trustee of numerous national, regional and local charities and a current honorary Vice President of the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland. He is therefore well-placed to discuss the role of philanthropy, civil society organisations and community foundations in the field of criminal justice and beyond. Below we explore his perception of the difference community organisations can make particularly in reducing offending behaviour, the thinking behind the work of the Hokey Cokey Fund and his views on the unique role the Community Foundation has to play across our region.

Mike, as someone with a wealth of experience in the criminal justice field, what do you think are the biggest challenges we face in the North East in relation to reducing levels of offending and reoffending?

The question here is where to begin – it's a big subject and it can seem overwhelming. But let's start with what has happened in the recent past. Inequalities have grown. There is more poverty and destitution, and a loss of services in areas like health, housing, education and employment. I'm thinking in particular about the decimation of public services within local authorities; the loss of Sure Start and Youth and Community Services and the chaos we've seen within the criminal justice system. The North East has been particularly affected by this.

There are many explanations for why people offend, and about why individuals from some social groups are more likely to be brought into the criminal justice system than others. But there is research that suggests that depriving people of opportunities to get on in life makes them more vulnerable to be both the perpetrators and victims of crime.[xliv] My own experience is that it is when people do not receive due attention, and nothing is done about the issues that hold them back in life like health, housing, education and employment, that they are more likely to offend. That is the situation many people now experience in our region.

Once you are in the criminal justice system, and labelled as a criminal, it can be hard to get out. Most of the offences that create problems for communities are minor ones, committed by a small minority of people. For them spells of reoffending - punctuated by short sentences of imprisonment – can end up becoming a way of life.

You've had a lot of experience as a trustee of civil society organisations, and in particular with specialist organisations working on these issues. How do you see their role within the overall pattern of service provision?

The big advantage of state-run services is that they remain comprehensive, even given the contraction that has occurred since 1979. That and the fact that they are supported with legislation when needed.

The voluntary sector has traditionally plugged gaps in provision and developed new approaches that later become part of mainstream provision. Many statutory services – including probation – started as voluntary services. That may have changed somewhat, particularly with the increase in contracting, but in any event there is a problem with short-termism. I was the trustee of a voluntary organisation working in a Young Offender Institution. Its innovative service got 85% of those leaving custody into employment, education and training compared to the usual 5%. But after three years' funding it had gone. Only a few large national charities and funders have the resources to provide long-term sustainability for services like these – smaller players like the Community Foundations can only do the best they can.

What is the story behind the decision to set up the Hokey Cokey Fund? And of course we want to know how you chose its name!

I have served two terms on the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland Board. The first was during the 1990s when our focus was on engaging those local philanthropists with the means to set up funds immediately – and it was an exciting time! But by the end of the decade myself and other trustees like Pamela Denham, were thinking about how to extend the opportunity to become philanthropists to people who though comfortably well-off might need longer to build up a fund. The solution the Community Foundation came up with was the "Acorn Fund", and in 2005 I set up one in my own name. When Wendy and I married we wanted to ask people to donate to the fund in lieu of wedding presents but felt there should be a new name for it and struggled to think of one. One evening Wendy suddenly came out with "The Hokey Cokey Fund!". I asked why, and of course the answer was "'Cause that's what it's all about!"

Our friends Sue and Tony Winfield had also established an Acorn Fund. Shortly after our wedding they suggested merging the funds, and that doubled its size. We have all been involved since then, with the fund growing sufficiently to make its first grants in 2014. Sue and Tony's daughter Catherine, and Wendy and my former colleague and friend Laura Seebohm who now works in the voluntary sector, have since joined us as successor advisors.

How do you and the other people involved in the fund make decisions about what grants to make? Is there a project that sticks in your mind as having been particularly rewarding to support?

Our priority is to use the Hokey Cokey fund to "pump-prime" projects, providing support in the early stages to get things going. We are strong-minded people, each with their own particular interests. Even though we are all on the same page decision-making can take some time. We tend to do things by email, rather than meeting up. My job has become to coordinate things, with support from the Community Foundation.

Our grants are relatively modest, but they can make a real difference. One of our first grants really sticks in my mind: a really very small grant, but one that encouraged ten young women at risk of offending and sexual exploitation to move their lives in a more positive direction. In terms of preventing offending and reoffending, you can achieve a lot by intervening at just the right time. That could be before someone gets into the criminal justice system, but it can also be at the point they leave prison having committed an offence. For example I was particularly interested in making a grant to The Wheels Project in South Tyneside, which provides young men with skills in car maintenance whilst also encouraging them to be responsible drivers. Sue, on the other hand, championed our awards to the Oswin Project which helps provide routes into work for prison-leavers. These are just two examples of successful projects we've funded over the years.

It's actually harder to identify these types of project than you might think. I wouldn't want to underestimate the importance of the support we get from the Community Foundation. Our fund manager, Elaine Holdsworth, really "gets" what we are interested in doing and supports us both in the process of making grants. Together we make a great team.

What would your advice be to anyone thinking of setting up a fund with us?

For anyone interested in philanthropy the Community Foundation enables you to tap into a well of information, expertise and knowledge about how your giving can have a real impact. It handles the administrative side of grant making for you, and in particular the day-to-day relationship with grantees and gathering of feedback on the activities you fund. It's really useful to be supported by an organisation that understands the local sector and grant making, and which can help you put your successes and setbacks as a grant maker in context.

You have been involved in the work of the Community Foundation for Tyne & Wear and Northumberland almost from the start. What do you see as being the wider benefits of giving through our Community Foundation?

As a donor you become part of a regional, national and international community foundation movement. You also become part of a network of donors and people from the voluntary, public and private sectors drawn from across the North East. That's because those sectors have been represented on our Community Foundation's Board from the outset in 1988, ensuring that the Community Foundation is deeply rooted in the life of the region. For this we must thank our co-founders and, notably, our first Chair, the prominent businessman, academic and social activist, Grigor McClelland.

During my second spell as a member of the Community Foundation Board, I had an opportunity to meet leading thinkers within the American Community Foundation movement. We'd done well for over a decade in building up the organisation's donor base and endowment, but I had started to think about where we could go next in realising the organisation's potential. Talking to them helped me to clarify my thinking about how the Community Foundation could use the knowledge and networks it had built to try and "get ahead" of the problems that philanthropic grant making was struggling to solve.

This led to my leading on two Community Foundation initiatives that brought people together to look at how best to address youth homelessness and sought to head off the funding crisis that began to hit the regional voluntary sector from the mid-2000s. And also to our running major events to help inform thinking about how to tackle the region's social problems, notably a conference attended by the influential American academic Robert Putnam on Social Capital. I'm pleased that this approach is now embedded in the Community Foundation's strategy. Vital Signs is simply the latest example of how we bring people together from a range of backgrounds to help make the North East a better place to live.

All aboard?

Rehabilitative services transform the lives of prisoners and reduce reoffending. So why aren't they better supported?

Fiona Sample MBE, Chief Executive of the Oswin Project, puts the case for using philanthropic funds to support the work of charities filling a gap in services to offenders

Speaking in the House of Commons in 1910 Winston Churchill, not known for his liberal views, said:

> *'The mood and temper of the public in regard to the treatment of crime and criminals is one of the most unfailing tests of the civilization of any country'.*

We are failing that test, and the collateral damage are the often-hapless individuals caught in the revolving door of recidivism, their families, communities, and most significantly their victims. Prison is a hothouse that cultivates crime rather than rehabilitating individuals.

Successive governments have failed to address the ever-increasing prison population though most of the electorate want safer communities, wish to keep families together and to reduce the burden of reoffending on the taxpayer.

As I write, there are 87,248 people in prison in England and Wales (only 3,636 are women). This is the largest prison population in Europe and numbers continue to climb. Prisons are now extremely overcrowded. Under the Ministry of Justice's own definition of safety and decency, the prison estate should not hold more than 79,615 people. If our Victorian ancestors returned, they would recognise two-thirds of the prison estate, what they would not recognise is the lack of purposeful activity in many prisons. In HMP Durham (built in 1819), despite an excellent Governor, due to the overcrowding (according to the MOJ nearly 1,000 men in a prison with a capacity of 573) and due to the constant 'churn' (a high number of the population are on remand) men spend much of their time in their cells. When originally built there was one diminutive Victorian per cell now there are two 21st century men.

If dogs were kept in such a restricted manner there would be an outcry.

It seems many consider animals more worthy of sympathy than prisoners. This is why historically politicians of all hues have under-invested in rehabilitation and why the third sector has had to step in to fill the void. Yet charities working in this area desperately need greater support from philanthropists and charitable funders. Unfortunately whilst many of us are touched (in both senses) by cancer and other similar potentially life-limiting diseases, or are rightly horrified by suffering and inequality, far fewer think 'I want to invest in offenders or prison leavers '. Yet those who are willing to do so transform the lives of individuals, build safer communities, reduce the number of victims of crime and keep families together. Their impact is huge.

Though essential for some, prison fails most. Only around a quarter of the prison population need to be incarcerated; another quarter are addicts or have mental health issues and would be better helped with treatment. A quarter more are from the long-term unemployed (the fourth generation in our post-industrial North East). The final quarter are just ordinary people with no particular disadvantages who have made one foolish decision, had a moment of madness.

I work for the Oswin Project where we offer second chances to prisoners and ex-offenders by providing support and mentoring leading to employment; offering training and the opportunity to gain qualifications;

rebuilding confidence; facilitating work experience; encouraging social inclusion and supporting prisoners and ex-offenders to become a contributor to society rather than a dependent. Our primary aim is to break the cycle of reoffending. The North East has recorded the highest reoffending rates in England and Wales for over a decade, with an average recidivism rate of 67% within a year of release. The Oswin Project's reoffending rate is under 4%, proving this approach works.

We address significant need amongst prisoners and prison leavers, a highly disadvantaged and marginalised group, whose challenges almost invariably begin before they encounter prison. Before custody, prisoners are nearly 9 times more likely to be unemployed compared to the general population; over 3 times more likely to be homeless; and over 42 times more likely to have been expelled/permanently excluded from school, leading to 47% of prisoners reporting having no qualifications, and 13% never having had a job.[xlv]

Once in the prison system, there are more challenges and a lack of a routine exacerbating mental health problems (52% of people in prison surveyed by inspectors in 2020/21 reported mental health problems), leading to increases in violence and suicides. These challenges have been widely reported in recent press coverage and an upsurge of TV dramas and documentaries:

> *"These conditions mean prison is not achieving any of its functions: to punish fairly, to keep the community safe, or to rehabilitate people so they can safely rejoin the outside world. Locking up people in conditions that put their lives at risk is never an appropriate punishment, and the failure to use prison to rehabilitate people undermines its role in improving long-term community safety."*
> **The Observer, 6 August 2023.**[xlvi]

The current dysfunctional Criminal Justice System is not sustainable. The average prisoner in England and Wales has over 19 prior convictions. The financial impact of reoffending in England and Wales is estimated to exceed £18 billion, with the average cost

of keeping just one person in prison over £48,000 per year. The personal and social costs are equally catastrophic, with an estimated 312,000 children separated from an imprisoned parent every year.

The Oswin Project changes lives by capitalising on the rehabilitative potential of employment and training, providing not only work, but also the skills and attitudes to live an independent, crime-free life through its café, bakery, horticultural and joinery enterprises in HMP Northumberland, its farm shop (just outside the prison), cafe in Newcastle Cathedral and its inside and out maintenance, landscaping, forestry and heritage wall-building team. Our enterprises have developed over the past 4 years – trading income having grown from 56% of turnover in 2022-23 to 68% in 2023-24 (target of 80% by 2027). Our aim is not to be dependent on grant funding but as our work demands high staffing levels this hope may not be realised.

We are the only organisation in the North East providing a wraparound service to guide and support prisoners through mentoring and training programmes within real trading enterprises based in HMP Northumberland. We offer a bridge of opportunity to individuals on release through volunteering and employment in Oswin Project enterprises in the community; and provide a springboard from our own enterprises to paid work with external employers. We are part of a group of charities across the region working with those caught in the criminal justice system each of which are working in different ways to reduce reoffending rates by transforming individual lives.

Change is possible with philanthropic and public support.

In the 1990s, Norway was facing a similar problem to England and Wales today. It had a 60-70% recidivism rate over two years. The Norwegians used to believe in the efficacy of harsh conditions and lengthy sentences and prisons were plagued with assaults, riots and escapes. The Norwegian Government acted boldly and overhauled the prison system. Norway's largest prison now holds 400 (HMP Northumberland's population is set to rise to almost 2,000). The Norwegian Government embarked on a building programme of small institutions near the prisoner's home, well qualified staff and a high staff to prisoner ratio. The regime's emphasis is on moral and emotional rehabilitation and job skills. Norway now has the lowest rates of recidivism in the world, with a reoffending rate of 20% after two years and only 25% after five years. Their investment has paid dividends, transformed lives and resulted in safer communities. Unlike in England and Wales, they no longer haemorrhage taxpayers' money to sustain a broken system.

Appendix 1:

Table of Indicators

	North East	England	South East	Date*
Police recorded crime per 1000 population (change in year to Dec 2023)				
All (exc. Fraud)	109 (+3%)	90.2 (-1%)	77.2 (-1%)	2024
Violence against the person	34 (+2%)	33.7 (-3%)	30.3 (-3%)	
Sexual offences	3.8 (+3%)	3.1 (-2%)	3 (-2%)	
Robbery and theft	33.4 (+26%)	31 (+19%)	24.1(+11%)	
Criminal damage / arson	14.9 (-5%)	8.2 (-5%)	7.5 (-5%)	
Possession of weapons	1 (+6%)	1 (+6%)	1 (+20%)	
Public order offences	10.6 (-9%)	8.2 (-13%)	7.1(-17%)	
Fraud and computer misuse offences referred to National Fraud Intelligence Bureau by Action Fraud	4 (-11.1%)	5 (-15.3%)	5 (-11.3%)	2024
% of selected serious crimes involving a knife	6% (+ 8%)	7% (+7%)	5% (-3%)	2024
Domestic abuse rate per 1000 population age 16+	39.1	31	25.6	2024
Hate crimes per 1000 population	2.2	1.9	2.2	2023
Number of children cautioned/court sentenced (per 1000 population aged 10-17)	2.5	2.4	2.3	2024
Proportion of all offenders reoffending (average number of reoffences)	28.4% (4.1)	25.4% (3.8)	23% (3.7)	2024
Proportion of juvenile offenders reoffending (average number of reoffences)	35.2% (5)	32.3% (4.2)	32.2% (4.2)	2024
% of people who report experiencing or witnessing anti-social behaviour	44%	34.9%	36.1%	2023
% people perceiving high levels of anti-social behaviour locally	9.7%	7.9%	6.2%	2023
% of people that agree the police and local council are dealing with anti-social and crime issues that matter locally	42.2%	49%	47%	2023
Levels of trust in the police	Don't know: 1%. None/low: 29%. Neutral: 14%. Moderately High or High: 56%			2024
Levels of trust in the courts and judicial system (all-UK)	Don't know: 4%. None/low: 21%. Neutral: 13%. Moderately High or High: 62%			

* Links to Source

Note: in some instances there are gaps in the national reporting of crime as a result of IT issues in Greater Manchester and Devon and Cornwall

References

[i] "Latest estimates do not show a statistically significant change compared with the year ending December 2022 survey, although they do follow a long-term downward trend" ONS (2024) **Crime in England and Wales: year ending December 2023.**

[ii] See figure 1 of the DLUH&C (2024) **Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan policy paper** for general trends in police recorded and self-reported cases. **ONS (2024) Crime in England and Wales: year ending December 2023** notes that from 2013 -2023 there was little change in perceptions of the seriousness of local ASB, with less than 1 in 10 people perceiving their area had a high level.

[iii] The Metropolitan Police was rocked by a series of serious incidents ranging from the degrading treatment post-mortem of murder victims Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry (2020) to the murder of Sarah Everard (2021). These prompted concern about the management of our police forces and a culture of institutional misogyny (and racism following the 2020 case) that have been compounded by individual cases of sexual misconduct involving former and serving officers across the country including the North East. Consequently the May 2023 Independent **Office for Police Conduct Public Perceptions Tracker** showed increased negativity towards the police, and falling confidence in the police complaints process.

[iv] For example press reports suggest **22% of police officers are planning to leave the service in the next 2 years; that probation and prison staffing are dangerously low** and the **Crown Prosecution service is struggling to get the staff it needs**

[v] Prison overcrowding prompted **crisis measures** to be introduced in May 2024

[vi] Lengthy delays in rape trials, for example, were **branded unacceptable** by Lord Justice Edis in March 2024.

[vii] See **https://www.clinks.org/state-sector-2023**

[viii] **A 2023 review** of the relationship between Police and Crime Commissioners and Community Safety Partnerships led to a series of recommendations that have set the path for closer collaboration, initially with a focus on addressing anti-social behaviour.

[ix] Neighbourhood Watch (2023) **Crime and Community Survey 2023**

[x] British Retail Consortium (2024) **Crime Survey 2024 Report**

[xi] Mackenzie, S et al (2010) **The drivers of perceptions of anti-social behaviour.** Home Office

[xii] See **https://www.fresh-balance.co.uk/news/alcohol-is-costing-the-north-east-nearly-1-5-billion-every-year/**

[xiii] See **https://brc.org.uk/media/tubas22s/brc-crime-survey-report-media-2024.pdf**

[xiiv] Research commissioned by **NFU**

[xv] See **https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6405f9f28fa8f527fe30dbd4/costs-per-prison-place-and-prisoner-by-individual-prison-2021-2022.ods**

[xvi] **https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/anti-social-behaviour-action-plan/anti-social-behaviour-action-plan**

[xvii] Children's Society (2023) **The Good Childhood Report**

[xviii] See **https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges#fnref:23 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/perceptionsofpersonalsafetyandexperiencesofharassmentgreatbritain**

[xix] See **https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges#fnref:23**

[xx] Changing Lives (2022) **Make the link: the premature deaths of women experiencing abuse and exploitation**

[xxi] See **https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/thelastingimpactofviolenceagainstwomenandgirls/2021-11-24**

[xxii] See **https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2022-to-2023#documents**

[xxiii] See **https://www.health.org.uk/evidence-hub/our-surroundings/safety/inequalities-in-likelihood-of-living-in-high-crime**

[xxiv] See **https://www.health.org.uk/evidence-hub/our-surroundings/safety/inequalities-in-likelihood-of-living-in-high-crime#:~:text=levels%20of%20crime.-,People%20who%20live%20in%20more%20deprived%20areas%20are%20more%20likely,with%20the%20highest%20crime%20rates**

[xxv] Cuthbertson, P. (2018) **Poverty and Crime: Why a war on criminals would help the poor most**. Civitas

[xxvi] Tudor, K (2024) **Rural Crime: Serious Organised and International** National Rural Crime Network. For a BBC radio interview with Dr Tudor see **https://nationalruralcrimenetwork.net/dr-kate-tudor-on-bbc-radio-farming-today/**

[xxvii] See **https://www.victimsupport.org.uk/help-and-support/coping-crime/how-can-crime-affect-you/**

[xxviii] See **https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7c98db40f0b65b3de09ea1/criminal-histories-bulletin.pdf** The statistic dates from 2010 when the cohort were in their late 50s.

[xxix] Halsey, K and White, R (c2008) **Young people, crime and public perceptions: a review of the literature**. LGA

[xxx] See **https://www.filia.org.uk/latest-news/2022/1/25/the-rich-go-to-rehab-the-poor-go-to-prison**

[xxxi] See **https://labour.org.uk/updates/stories/labour-party-prisons-policy-how-we-will-fix-the-prisons-crisis-and-keep-criminals-behind-bars/**

[xxxii] See **https://www.russellwebster.com/the-state-of-youth-justice-2024/#:~:text=Gateway%20to%20the%20justice%20system&text=Black%20children%20were%20involved%20in,represented%20compared%20with%20the%20population**.

[xxxiii] See **https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/ethnicity-and-the-criminal-justice-system-2022/statistics-on-ethnicity-and-the-criminal-justice-system-2022-html#executive-summary** and Monteith KC, G (2022) **Racial Bias and the Bench** University of Manchester

[xxxiv] See **https://www.thejusticegap.com/women-twice-as-likely-to-face-harsh-sentences-when-drinking/**

[xxxv] See **https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/educationandchildcare/articles/theeducationbackgroundoflookedafterchildrenwhointeractwiththecriminaljusticesystem/december2022**

[xxxvi] See **https://www.russellwebster.com/poverty-is-driving-crime-and-policing-makes-it-worse/**

[xxxvii] **Keir Starmer's speech to Civil Society Summit, 2024**

[xxxviii] Sturge, G (2024) **UK Prison Population Statistics** House of Commons

[xxxix] See **https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publication/crisis-prisons** It is hard not to conclude that the current crisis has arisen largely from the fact that the emphasis on imprisonment as a means to control crime since the mid-1990s has not been accompanied by sufficient investment in Prisons, Probation or the Courts.

[xl] See **https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cyvpj7vm95jo**

[xli] The work of **Nepacs** is worth mention as an example of an excellent North East service.

[xlii] See **https://www.clinks.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/RR3%20Special%20Interest%20Group%20on%20Employment%202023-24%20-%20Report%201%20%28V2%29.pdf**

[xliii] Centre for Social Justice (2023) **Unlocking aspiration: breaking down barriers to work for people leaving prison**

[xliv] Editor's note: see for example Newburn, T (2016) **Social disadvantage, crime and punishment** published in Dean, Hartley and Platt, Lucinda, (eds.) Social Advantage and Disadvantage. Oxford University Press. Newburn states that *"it is hard to conclude that social inequality is anything other than of central importance in understanding crime, anti-social behaviour, criminal victimization and state punishment."*

[xlv] **Prison Reform Trust (Winter, 2022) Bromley Briefing Prison Fact file**

[xlvi] See **https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/aug/06/uk-prison-crisis-damages-justice-society-and-prisoners**

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Let's talk

We hope that this report will inspire more of you to give to causes that contribute to improving community. You can help inform our work on this and the other Vital Signs themes by completing the Vital Signs North East 2024 questionnaire. Just visit **www.communityfoundation.org.uk/vitalsigns** or scan the QR code below.

If you would like to discuss this report further, or what you could do to help, please contact us:

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