

Prisoners and looked after children- a common cause?

Strategies to reduce poverty

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INSTITUTIONAL CARE AND POVERTY

This review examines international evidence about the links between institutional care and poverty and recommends strategies for the UK.

http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/Reducing-poverty-reviews-FULL_0.pdf

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Institutional care and poverty: evidence and policy review

by

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<http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/publications/institutional-care-and-poverty-evidence-and-policy-review>

Where was the evidence?

- We looked for well-designed studies with measurements at more than one point in time and showing outcomes for comparable groups
- We focused on UK, North America, Europe and Australasia seeking English language material.
- We searched academic databases, websites and the internet
- We issued calls for evidence on websites and on mailing lists
- The results were disparate, with more evidence for imprisonment and for looked after children than for other care settings

Are institutions in retreat?

- Ambivalence about 'institutions' hinders clear thinking.
- Community placements mean that mainstream services can be provided and people live in their own accommodation. Education, training and social security payments can be accessed more directly. There is a better prospect of service continuity.
- Imprisonment – like immigration detention – has expanded its reach: it restricts earning opportunities and pays for work at very low rates.
- Prisons penalise the already poor and fail to protect against the risk of future poverty.
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Institutions and social justice

- Institutional care - defined as state-funded public care
- State funding and placement can imply dependence and control
- It should entail responsibility, care and partnership
- If we accept the idea that the state and its citizens have a responsibility to redress the damage of longstanding and intense harm then the social justice implications are profound
- The aim of a social justice policy is therefore reparation, rather than simply an acceptable standard of care
- This is the context for anti-poverty proposals which apply to prisoners and young people being looked after
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What goes wrong?

- Concerns about people in need tend to focus on what happens after time spent in an institution
- But looked after children and prisoners , like the disabled and detained migrants, tend to have come from backgrounds of poverty
- In both cases we can question what is done to redress the disadvantage while they are in an institution
- Disadvantage is compounded when they leave
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How similar?

- Both children looked after by local authorities and prisoners are likely to have previously been in poverty and to face an enhanced future risk of poverty.
- They also share characteristics which hinder access to employment. Most looked-after children in the UK have special educational needs. Almost half have diagnosable mental health needs. Prisoners experience higher rates of mental health problems than the general public.
- Up to one in four of the general population has a disability, but as many as 55 per cent of prisoners have a disability if those with anxiety or depression are included. Up to 60 per cent have literacy and numeracy levels below those normal among 11-year-olds. Strikingly, a quarter of adult prisoners have themselves been looked after.
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Dissimilar?

- Convictions are a bar to regulated employment
- Impact of the stigma of conviction can be similar to that of imprisonment
- What choices are left for people subject to stigma and barring?
- Is there a stigma attached to having been in care?
- How can forms of active sponsorship help to overcome prejudice?
- How can reform of employment law help?
- Are there model policies among individual companies?
- No one should be in poverty

What has failed to reduce poverty risks?

Failures of prevention in childhood including lack of material support for families and carers

Failures to block routes from public care into prison

Disorganised and short-term interventions

- Failures to monitor educational outcomes, make plans and ensure adequate provision
- Lack of asset building for maturity

Ineffective prison-based interventions

Education and skills for prisoners

- Link between prison education, employment and better wages is not firmly established
- Subsidised transitional jobs don't work
- Job preparation has inconsistent impact

Joint Thematic Review of Resettlement showed:

1. Poor monitoring of outcomes
2. No one followed a trade for which they has been trained in prison

A one-third reduction of imprisonment would be safe (Justice Committee 2010)

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What is helpful for young people

Extended support

Children Leaving Care Act led to improved employment outcomes by delaying a young person leaving care until they are ready, providing personal support and increasing financial help for caregivers.

- Evaluation of the Youth Contract for 16 and 17 year-olds has shown that having a key worker can have significant impacts in terms of reduction of the NEET population and in terms of net financial benefits measured against the programme costs (Newton 2014).
- Support schemes mentioned in the recent Update on the Careleaver Strategy.
- A lot more needs to be done to organise and coordinate support (NIACE report by Dixon and Robey 2014).
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Is the government doing enough?

- The Children and Families Act 2014 has created a multiagency planning framework for children who require health, education and care plans
- It has extended the right of young people to live with foster carers to 21 years of age
- Should all young people have the right to a home with their carers until 25 years?
- The Act provides for plans to meet needs of detained young people when they leave custody. Is it good enough?
- No mention of poverty or living standards in The Careleaver Strategy update or the Education Committee report on 16 plus care options

Assets and savings:

- According to the government's Update, the government is placing £200 in a junior ISA for all looked after young people and is expecting local authorities to add more. How does this compare with the child population's savings?
- Relevant results of *Transforming Rehabilitation* pilots not yet available
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What to do

- Preventative support for children and families is key to reducing admission to institutional care and could help reduce hardship and costs in the long run.
- Wasteful costs could be avoided with new policies to prevent young people looked after by local authorities and at risk of poverty from entering the prison system.
- The problems faced by prisoners could be better addressed in community-based settings where they can better access a wider range of support and services.
- Social Justice Premiums, designed to compensate for inequality and social injustice, should be introduced to ensure sufficient anti-poverty assistance for those in need and failed by society

The common cause

- Put prisoners and looked after children in the same priority category
- Reduce imprisonment by one third (Justice Committee 2010)
- Address aggregate needs especially in areas of high poverty
- Provide educational bursaries, training and vocational preparation
- Ensure people have (and keep) financial assets especially at times of transition
- Increase labour demand at all levels
- Attack discrimination
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Social justice and society

- My final question!
- Progress in achieving enduring change depends how social movements gain traction
- If radical policy effects are to be secured, it will be because the society itself has recognised a reparative responsibility towards its damaged members
- How could that movement emerge and grow in ways that could ultimately be effective?