

Young people commit a disproportionately high level of offences. Nearly 50% of all known offenders are under 21. Much of this offending happens as part of the maturation process, as adolescents test the boundaries of acceptable behaviour; some if it becomes entrenched, however, with 5% of persistent offenders being suspected of committing 70% of crime.

Juvenile and youth offending has traditionally had one of the highest profiles in discussion and debate about criminal justice, and it is now an enormous subject, too large and complex to fit into a single issue of Criminal Justice Matters. The editors particularly regret not having the space to look at young women offenders, but realise that another issue devoted to youth crime will have to follow in the not too distant future.

For the present, we are especially pleased to publish articles on some of the most pressing and difficult questions in youth justice: **Theo Sowa** on the scandal of young people committing suicide in prison; **Frank Warburton** on the much-hyped 'bail bandits'; **Lorna Whyte** on the continuing difficulties faced by young black people when they come up against the criminal justice system; **Caroline Ball** and **Denis Jones** on where the Criminal Justice Act (1991) lost some of its focus in the progression from Green Paper to White Paper to Bill to Act; **Graham Sutton** from the Home Office on the attempt to involve all agencies in a partnership approach to the problem; and **Andy Wade**, **Liz Dixon** and **Roger Graef** put into context and demystify the ubiquitous 'persistent' young offender.

Chief Inspector Doug MacNicoll's support for the caution is most timely now when the practice is coming under attack from some quarters; **Alex Chard** takes a critical look at the remand process, while **Francis Charlton** focuses on some

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relevant aspects of the Children Act. Finally, there is an important reminder from **Alan Doughty** that young people are frequently on the receiving end of crime, and have to cope with the after-effects.

The Editors are very pleased to be able to introduce a letters page in this issue of the magazine. We welcome any

future correspondence, and hope that those concerned with criminal justice will comment on articles, raise issues of concern to them, and at times open up a dialogue through this medium. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yolande Burgin and Julia Braggins

*Each issue of CJM focuses on a special area of criminological interest. CJM 11 will consider **Crime and the Media**. Contributions are welcome, and will be considered for inclusion if sent to Julia Braggins, ISTD, by March 15th 1993.*

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