Breaking the Cycle: The Government Response

Easy Read

Creating a safe, just and democratic society
As you go through the document you will find some difficult words written in blue. A word in blue tells you that you can look up what it means in the ‘Difficult Words’ section at the end of the document on pages 12 and 13.
Introduction:

In December 2010 we wrote a Green Paper called “Breaking the Cycle: Effective Punishment, Rehabilitation and Sentencing of Offenders”.

The Green Paper told people about our plans to change how we punish, sentence and rehabilitate people who take part in crime.

Lots of people across the country told us what they thought about the Green Paper.

The Government has listened to what people across the country have said and this paper will tell you about our plans for the future.

Punishment:

Punishments must be tough. Prisoners will not be allowed to be lazy when they are in prison.

Offenders will not be able to ignore a court order and will have to face up to the crime they have carried out.
Custodial Sentences

We want to make prisoners work hard. We will:

• Make prisoners work up to 40 hours a week

• Make sure that work programmes in prison are long term and make enough money to pay for themselves.

• Focus education and training in prisons on improving prisoners’ skills and work experience so they are able to get a job when they leave prison.

We will write a plan in the autumn to tell people more about how we will do this.

Non-custodial sentences

Non-custodial sentences need to be tough. We want to make these sentences better so that they punish, control and change offenders. We want Community Orders to stop offenders getting to the point where custody is the only choice.

To start we will:

• Make sure courts have more ways of punishing and controlling offenders.
• Set up a panel of people to make sure that young people do what their sentences say.

• We will also look at other ways to change the system.

Payback

We will make offenders pay their victims and society back.

Offenders in custody

Prisoners owe a debt to their victims and society. We will take money from prisoners who work to fund victim support services.

We will write a plan about how we will do this in the autumn.
Offenders on non-custodial sentences

Making people pay money for their crime is a good way of punishing people. We want this to happen more often so that offenders pay back their victims and the community.

We will:

• Make Community Payback stronger. Offenders will work a longer working day and a longer working week.

• Make sure money is paid to victims.

• Write a plan called the ‘Victims’ Strategy’ and ask people what they think.

Progression

We want offenders to be punished for their crimes, but sometimes this is not enough to stop them from carrying out crimes again.

Nearly half of offenders are convicted of another crime within a year of their last crime.
We want to:

• Get **offenders** off drugs and alcohol.

• Address mental health problems as soon as possible.

• Get **offenders** into work.

**Offenders in custody**

We know that prisoners who take drugs are likely to end up in trouble again.

We want prisoners who use drugs to recover. We will set up “Drug Recovery wings” in 5 prisons to get prisoners with drug problems to stay off drugs for good.
We are working across the government to make sure that offenders gain the skills to work in prison and get a job when they leave.

**Offenders on non-custodial sentences**

We will look at whether there are more places where offenders can stay whilst they are treated for their drug and alcohol problems.

We need to make sure offenders with mental health problems get the treatment they need as soon as possible. We are working with other government departments to do this and want services to be in place by 2014.

We will look at how we can make sure offenders have places to live where they can be settled and supported.

**Payment by results**

We will make sure that the services that are there to change offenders really make a difference. If services do not make a difference then we will not pay for them.
Transparency

Opening up justice
We need to make sure that victims and the public have a better understanding of how justice works.

In March 2011 we wrote a plan to make it easier for people and communities to access information about local services.

We will:

• Make sure there is more information about justice.

• Make sure the rules around sentences are easier to understand.

• Find out what communities think and use this in the justice system.

• Make it easier for members of the community to tell us what they think about the justice system.

• Support local people to find solutions to local problems.
Recognising and repairing the harm caused to victims.

We will make sure that victims are at the centre of the criminal justice system.

Victims should be able to tell the justice system more about the harm a crime has caused.

Responding better to crime.

Over the past few years laws and targets have made decision-making difficult. To be able to respond better to crime we need to make changes to each part of the system.

Pre-trial: Each year a lot of people are held in custody when they do not need to be. We will make better use of remand.

Custodial sentences: Life sentences for murder are an important part of sentencing. There are no plans to change this.

However, we plan to look at sentences for serious sexual and violent offenders and create a new law so that any adult who threatens someone with a knife can expect a minimum sentence of 6 months in prison.
A simpler framework

- Over the last 10 years we have seen lots of changes to the law around *sentencing*. This has made the law too difficult. To change this we will make the law easier for courts and professionals to use when they sentence and deal with offenders.

A simpler way to tell how good our services are.

As well as making the law easier, we want to give professionals more freedom to do their jobs.

- We have written a new set of standards to give *probation officers* more choice.

- We are changing the way central government assesses *Probation Trusts* and prisons.

- We plan to make similar changes to the youth justice system.
Useful Words

**Criminal Justice System** - the words used for all the organisations/groups involved in deciding what should happen to people who break the law.

**Probation/Probation Officers** - a service to support a person who has carried out a crime not to commit further crimes.

**Punish/ Punishment** - an action that is taken against a person who has committed a crime.

**Rewarding** - paying and supporting an organisation for the work they have done well.


**Offender** - is someone who has been found guilty in court or someone who admits they carried out a crime.
Useful Words

Sentences/ sentencing - A sentence is the penalty someone is given when they are found guilty of a crime. For example, this could be time in prison or an order to work in the community for a number of hours.

Rehabilitation/rehabilitating - Rehabilitation means helping and supporting a person who has carried out a crime to not do this again.

Victim - someone who has been harmed by crime.

Remand - The charged person appears at a magistrates’ court. The charge sheet will be read out. This explains what the person is accused of. The solicitor may ask for bail. The magistrates decide whether to remand into custody or on bail. Remanded in custody - Someone who has been charged must stay locked up until they appear in court again. Remanded on bail - This means they are charged with a crime but can go free until they appear in court again.