



## **An Inquiry by Parliamentarians into the operation and effectiveness of the youth justice system**

### ***Call for evidence***

A Parliamentarians' Inquiry has been set up under the chairmanship of Lord Alex Carlile QC, to investigate the operation and effectiveness of the youth justice system, including the experiences of young people. Lord Carlile will be assisted by a cross-party panel of six other parliamentarians. These are: Robert Buckland MP, Lord Bach, Baroness Greengross, Baroness Lane-Fox, Sarah Teather MP and Angela Watkinson MP. The inquiry is supported by the Michael Sieff Foundation and the National Children's Bureau.

The inquiry has been prompted by long-held and growing concerns that criminal courts do not, in their current form, offer the most effective means of dealing with young offenders. The inquiry will start sitting in the autumn of 2013 and publish its report in spring 2014. Organisations and individuals are invited to make written evidence submissions, focussed on the terms of reference. **The deadline for such submissions is November 18<sup>th</sup> 2013.** A number of oral evidence hearings will also be convened in late 2013 and early 2014.

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### **Terms of reference:**

The inquiry will examine the following:

- **The role of the youth court**
  - Does the youth court operate effectively under the two principal statutory aims of the youth justice system: to reduce offending and have regard to the welfare of the child and in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?
  - Is there a case for a more holistic approach to dealing with children and young people that offend but are also in need of welfare intervention?
  
- **The use of the Crown Court for children**
  - To what extent is the Crown Court the best venue for children and young people who commit serious offences?
  
- **Specialism in the Youth Court and Crown Court**
  - Is there a need for legal practitioners and sentencers in youth criminal to have youth specialist expertise?
  - If so, how could this be achieved?

- Should there be a separate 'youth' sentencer division in the courts system as in the Family Division with a President of the Youth Division?
  - **The merits of a non-adversarial approach**
    - Is there a case for a non-adversarial approach, instead of the present adversarial system?
    - To what extent is there a need for additional court powers to require investigation?
    - Are there viable alternatives to the criminal courts system for children and young people? The panel is particularly interested in submissions regarding the Children's Hearings system in Scotland and the Youth Conference Service in Northern Ireland. Examples from other jurisdictions are welcome.
  - **The delivery of the welfare principle in criminal proceedings in the youth justice system**
    - How engaged are children's services in England (and social services in Wales) in meeting the welfare needs of children who offend?
    - To what extent are children's and social services addressing the welfare needs of children who offend and are involved in criminal proceedings?
  - **The use of diversion from the criminal court system**
    - To what extent is the use of pre-court diversion, triage, conditional cautions etc. effective at preventing young people from entering the criminal courts system?
    - Is there a case for such diversion measures to be extended still further?
  - **The views and experiences of young people who have been through the criminal courts**
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### ***How to respond***

Written evidence submissions should address the terms of reference and be no more than 3,000 words. The deadline for submissions is: November 18th 2013.

Submissions should be sent by email to: [Yjinquiry@ncb.org.uk](mailto:Yjinquiry@ncb.org.uk). The body of the email must make clear who the submission is from, providing a contact name, telephone number and postal address.

If you are unable to make your submission by email, we are able to accept alternative formats. Please contact Alexandra Wigzell on 07771 984 526 to discuss this.

Your written submission should include:

- A summary of the key points made in the submission
- A brief overview of the organisation/ individual submitting evidence
- Any request for some or all of the evidence to be kept confidential (including the name of the submitter), and reasons for the request.

Paragraphs should be numbered. All material and data referred to should be clearly referenced. Supporting material – such as articles or reports – may be submitted alongside your written evidence, but you should ensure that your written submission is self-contained.