

“Ministers under pressure on sentencing reforms must keep their eyes on the prize: the real problem in prisons is the ‘revolving door’ of offenders going in, out, and in again for short sentences of under a year. Parking someone in prison for a few weeks is phenomenally expensive and criminally ineffective. Ken Clarke said last month it was a ‘national scandal’ that half of all prisoners on these short sentences re-offend within a year. He was right then and it is right now that he should do something about it.

There are really robust, intensive community sentences out there which are tougher and more effective than a short spell in prison. An intensive alternative to custody in Bradford reduced offending by up to 90%, at a fraction of the cost of giving an offender a few weeks short break in prison. These schemes offer both punishment and what the public and victims of crime want most: simply for the crime not to be committed again. Both coalition parties have recognised for some years now that the system is crying out for reform to address astronomically high reoffending rates and spiralling prison costs. The country simply cannot afford a u-turn now.”