

# Early Youth Crime Prevention Project

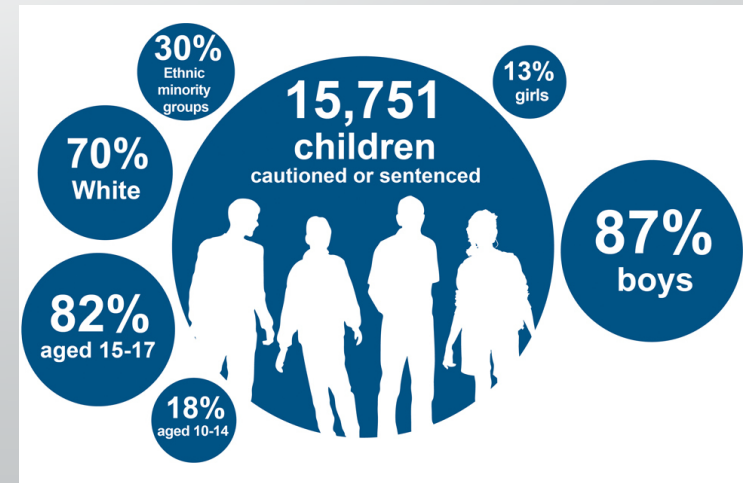
By Jake Thornton

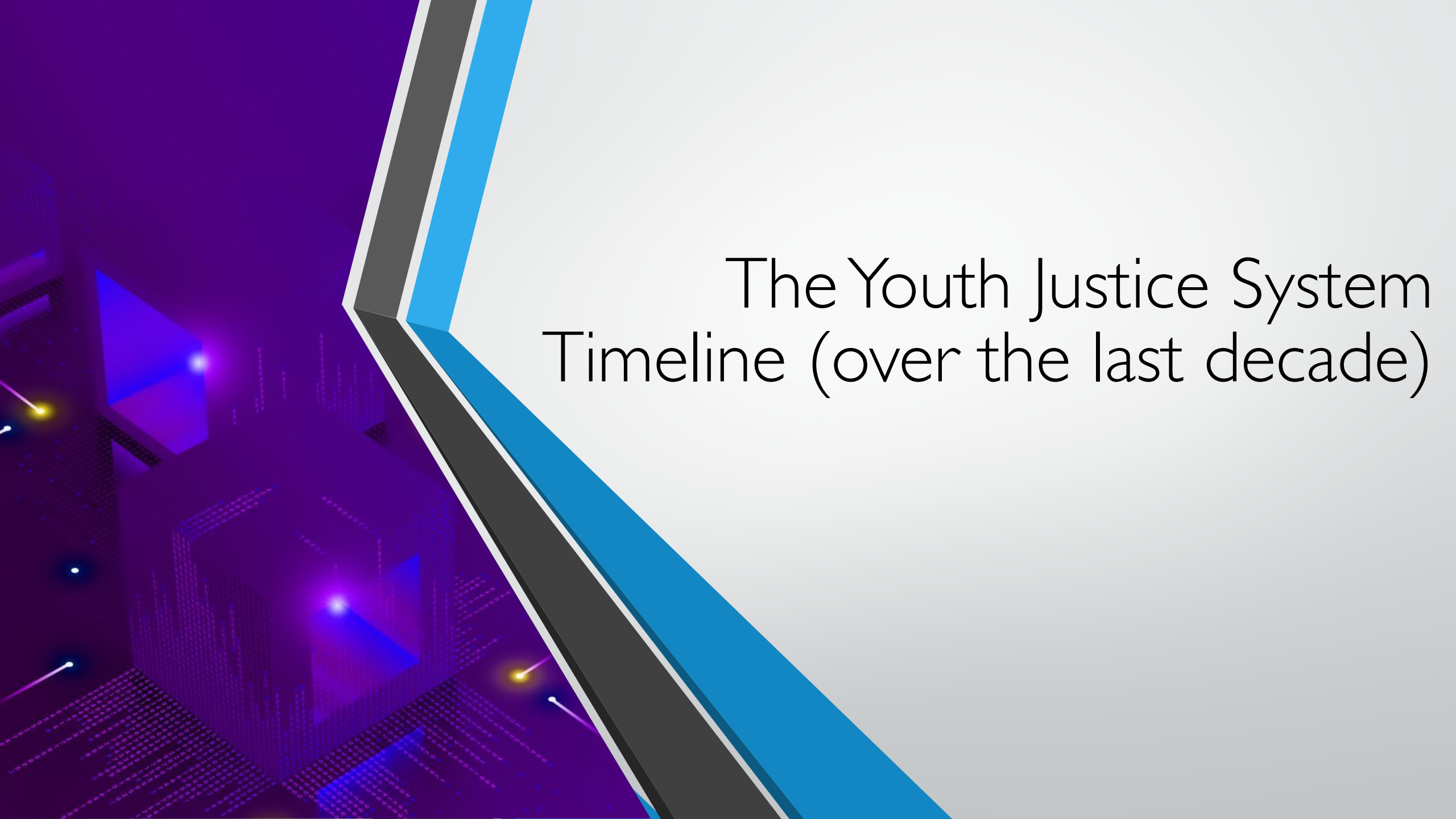
# Why is Preventing Youth Crime Important?

For many decades, youth crime has been a problem in society, with individuals under the age of 18 being involved in illegal or disruptive activities. The prevention of youth crime being put into place early is important, as it mitigates the community damaging crimes it causes, like assault, theft and drug abuse. It is also crucial for the livelihood of the young individual, as garnering a criminal record at an early age can limit their future opportunities in education, employment and in necessities like purchasing a home.

During research of this topic, I was particularly interested in, what changes have been made in law over time to support the prevention in youth crime, as well as what interventions are being used in the modern era to combat the issue.

In this PowerPoint, we will explore the most important changes made over the last decade to prevent early youth crime. Additionally, we will go over the intervention strategies that have been introduced and discuss in what scenarios they benefit.





# The Youth Justice System Timeline (over the last decade)

# Significant changes made from 1900-1950

- **1902**
  - **The first borstal institution** for young males opens on an experimental basis near Rochester in Kent. Sir Evelyn Ruggles-Brise introduces a strict regime based on physical drill, training and education.
- **1907**
  - **Probation of Offenders Act** allows magistrates to discharge offenders on the condition that they are supervised in the community. Initially, it is principally aimed at replacing punishment for young offenders.
- **1908**
  - **Children Act** establishes a separate juvenile court for the first time, dealing with both crime and welfare issues, abolishes custody for children below 14, and now requires the police to provide remand homes.
  - **Prevention of Crime Act** rolls out borstals nationally for males aged 16-20 on an indeterminate sentence between one and three years. Release is followed by a supervised licence period of resettlement in the community.
- **1933**
  - **Children and Young Persons Act** requires courts to have regard to a child's welfare, raises the age of criminal responsibility to eight years old, and abolishes the death penalty for the under 18s.



Inmates attending evening class Borstal Prison c.1906.

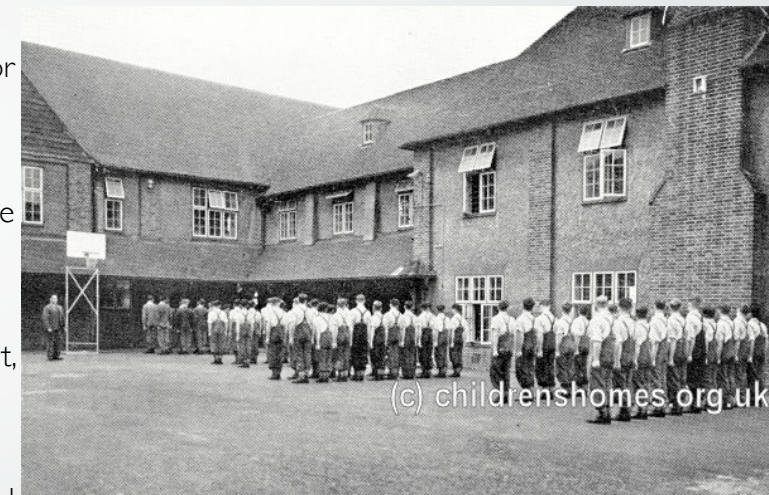
## Slide Glossary

**Borstal** – A type of youth detention centre ran by the HMP prison service, used with the intention of reforming young offenders.



# Significant changes made from 1951-1975

- **1952**
- **Detention Centres** are opened, where sentences of up to three months are intended as a 'short, sharp, shock' for 14 to 20 year olds.
- **1961**
- **Ingelby Report** recommends raising the age of criminal responsibility from 8 to 12. Set up in 1956, the Committee emphasises local authority welfare, early intervention and support for the family.
- **1963**
- **Children and Young Persons Act** raises the age of criminal responsibility to 10. Responding to the Ingleby Report, it also requires local authorities to undertake preventative work with children and families at risk of offending.
- **1969**
- **Children and Young Persons Act** introduces supervision orders and care orders. Secure units and approved schools are combined into local authority community homes. Raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 is never implemented.
- **1971**
- **The first of two youth treatment centres opens** at St Charles, Essex. The Department of Health units are for young people considered too disturbed for other custodial options. Both youth treatment centres are closed by 2002.



Inmates at Blantyre House Detention Centre.

## Slide Glossary

**Ingelby Report** – Published in an attempt to tackle the problems of child protection and juvenile crime.

# Significant changes made from 1976-2000

- **1988**
  - **Criminal Justice Act** restricts the use of custody for children and provides specified activities as a statutory alternative to custody. Youth custody centres and detention centres combine to form young offender institutions.
- **1989**
  - UN Convention on **the Rights of the Child is published**. Article 3 states that children's best interests should always be a primary consideration, and Article 37 limits custody to the shortest possible time.
- **1993**
  - **Two-year-old James Bulger is murdered** by two 10-year-old boys in Liverpool. The media and public backlash against young people hardens political attitudes to young offenders and influences justice policy for decades of offending.
- **1997**
  - **No More Excuses:** A new approach to tackling youth crime in England and Wales is released as a White Paper by the new government. Its hardened tone emphasises offenders taking personal responsibility and system efficiency.
- **1998**
  - **Crime and Disorder Act** introduces the principal aim for youth justice as being the prevention of offending. It establishes multi-agency youth offending teams and a range of orders. Criminal responsibility for children under 14 is abolished.



Example of what a young offender institution may look like.



The two 10-year-old boys that murdered James Bulger; this had a large effect on how young offenders were viewed and treated moving forward.

# Significant changes made from 2001-Present

- **2002**
  - **Presumption of early release** is introduced for children serving detention and training orders (except in certain circumstances), subject to an electronically monitored curfew.
  - **Justice Munby** rules that children in custodial institutions are entitled to the same mainstream services that most children in the community receive; they are still protected by the Children Act 1989 and human rights legislation.
- **2004**
  - **The first adolescent forensic unit** opens at the Westwood Centre, West Lane Hospital, Middlesborough. Locked units for 12 to 18 year olds effectively replace the much larger previous youth treatment centres.
- **2008**
  - **Youth Crime Action Plan is published**, with a target of reducing first-time entrants to the youth justice system by a fifth by 2020. The government pledges almost £100 million to fund youth crime reduction initiatives.
- **2012**
  - **Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act** devolves remand custody costs to local authorities. It also allows courts to conditionally discharge children, allows repeated referral orders and restricts the scope of public protection sentences.
- **2013**
  - **Transforming Youth Custody** proposes secure colleges for 12 to 17 year olds to replace existing custody, with the first to open in 2017.

**Ministry of Justice**

## Transforming Youth Custody

Secretary of State Chris Grayling announces a radical overhaul of the youth justice system putting education at the heart of detention.

**The current system is not working.**  
Average cost per place in custody is £100k per annum – this is too expensive.

**71% young offenders reoffend**

Young people in custody are spread between:

- Secure Children's Homes
- Secure Training Centres
- Young Offender Institutes

**The new establishment will:**

- have a head-teacher or principal
- individual learning plans for young offenders
- accommodate 320 young offenders aged 12-17

**This will eventually change the landscape of the youth secure estate.**


**1,323** young people in youth custody in England and Wales

95% Boys  
5% Girls

#YouthCustody

Ministry of Justice announces a radical overhaul of the youth justice system, putting education at the heart of detention (2014).





# Strategies to prevent early youth crime



An illustration of a family in a park. In the foreground, a man in a blue shirt sits on a red and white checkered picnic blanket with a basket of fruit. In the background, a family of four (mother, father, and two children) stands near a bench. To the left, two children are roller skating. The scene is set against a city skyline with a large yellow sun and a white airplane in the sky.

# Family Focused Strategies

Family focused strategies focus on working directly with the individual's families, improving their relationships, promoting positive parenting practices and providing support to families that require help.

- Behavioural parent training – Teaching parents to be consistent in reinforcing helpful behaviour and punishing or ignoring hostile or uncooperative behaviour.
- Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) - Young people are placed in short-term foster homes where they receive individual therapy and behavioural coaching similar to child skills training. At the same time, their parents (or guardians) receive weekly family therapy in which they are taught effective parenting and family management techniques.

# Evaluating Family Focused Strategies

## Benefits ✓

- Training parents on how to manage their child's behaviour is beneficial as children spend most of their time at home. This way, if parents can discipline their child at home, they have a better chance of avoiding negative influences from external sources like school and friends.
- Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) can be helpful for parents whose children are out of control. They can temporarily place their children in a foster home while they develop the necessary skills to care for them when they return.

## Drawbacks ✗

- Other areas of a child's life, such as friend groups, school, and communities, can also influence the individual's behaviour, meaning this should be addressed in addition to family focused strategies.
- Individuals may feel too 'controlled' by their families to be able to open up and work on their issues, causing them to rebel and react negatively, in comparison an outsider in the community may be a better unbiased and open person to be able to speak to.

The background of the slide shows a classroom setting. On the left, there is a black chalkboard mounted on a light blue wall. Below the chalkboard, a wooden desk and a yellow chair are partially visible. The floor is covered with grey square tiles. A large, stylized graphic element, consisting of a blue and black diagonal shape, separates the classroom image from the text area on the right.

# School Based Strategies

School based strategies attempt to prevent problematic behaviour among students by promoting positive development, providing support, and improving their academic performance.

- The reorganisation of grades or classes – Grouping together disruptive pupils for periods of the school day, while teaching them with alternative curriculum material and using cognitive behavioral techniques.
- Classroom or instruction management interventions - Emphasising interactive teaching methods using cognitive behavioral techniques.



# Evaluating School Based Strategies

## Benefits ✓

- Addresses disruptive behaviour in the classroom by providing a safe space for like-minded individuals to receive the specific attention they need, allowing them to progress in their education while working through their issues, without affecting others.
- Can help identify and address issues that may be contributing to negative behaviour with the specific individual, such as learning difficulties, bullying, or peer pressure.

## Drawbacks ✗

- Grouping disruptive individuals together may cause them to feel isolated or 'the odd ones out', leading them to react negatively, over trying to find the root cause of their behaviour.
- Implementing strategies at school may not address underlying issues that may be happening at home, for example parental abuse, bullying, or violence, which will impact the individual's behaviour regardless.



# Community Strategies

Community strategies focus on promoting positive community engagement, providing access to resources and opportunities, and creating safe and support environments for the local youth.

- Mentoring – Typically involving a non-professional from the community spending time with the person in a non-judgmental, supportive way whilst also acting as a role model.
- After school recreation - Offers young people the opportunity to engage in and learn skills in a range of activities including non-academic ones.

# Evaluating Community Strategies

## Benefits ✓

- Sharing their problems with a supportive figure / role model, who they don't directly know, can provide them with encouragement to fully express their issues, while also having someone to rely on for support.
- After school recreation and activities can provide the youth with a constructive outlet and source of guidance to rely on, preventing them from staying out on the streets and getting into trouble.
- Beneficial in times like summer holidays, when school isn't open, to keep youth out of trouble.

## Drawbacks ✗

- Although this being an option in supporting the youth, these strategies may not address the issues that arise at home or at school, where the majority of the individuals time is spent.
- Family-focused and school-based strategies can be more easily integrated into the individual's day-to-day life, making them more straightforward to follow and implement, an after-school club or time spent with a supportive figure isn't always possible with time constraints.



# Strategies that tend to be less effective

Research has demonstrated that interventions that are reliant on 'shock value', such as the famous 'scared straight' programs, or those that are reliant on discipline and surveillance, like military-style boot camps, are often not effective in long-term changes to the individual's behaviour. This is due to the nature of these interventions not being focused on addressing the root cause of an individual's behaviour, leading them to quickly turn to resentment or resistance. Instead, strategies that prioritise rehabilitation, like counseling, mentoring and skills training, have been found to be more effective. This is due to these approaches aiming to identify the underlying issues that are causing troublesome behaviour and then working towards preventing incidents in future by catering to the individual's specific needs.



Example of Youth being sent into 'Scared straight' programs, dealing with real inmates



Example of a boot camp, specifically for troubled teens, in Indiana

# My Summary

Overall, I believe there is not just one best universal approach that works for every individual. The best intervention strategy is the one that is best suited to that individual's specific needs and circumstances at that time, as different people respond differently to different strategies.

For example, programs such as 'scared straight' or boot camps have shown to be less effective than other strategies (as mentioned in the previous slide), yet they may still work great for certain individuals, as some people need to be given a 'sense of reality'. For instance, in a 'scared straight' program, a conversation with a prisoner who has had a similar life to you, will act as a significantly more influential 'role model' (a role model to avoid their path) than anyone in your home or school could ever be. When you are at a young age it is easy to believe that crime comes with little consequence, this is obviously not the case, and hopefully the glimpse of adult prison time can change the majority of youth's minds in wanting to continue down the same path. In contrast, an individual that is facing abuse at home may find more effective support through school or community strategies. These strategies would be more tailored to them as it would be an output for them to discuss their issues and to seek help and advice on how to deal with them. Family focused strategies are an option for families who have not provided their kids with sufficient discipline in the past, by teaching families how to effectively carry out instruction and manage their children's behaviour in future.

SUMMARY





Thanks for viewing  
my Presentation



# Resources Used In This Project:

Timeline - <http://www.beyondyouthcustody.net/wp-content/uploads/youth-justice-timeline.pdf>

Prevention strategies - [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/182548/DFE-RR111.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182548/DFE-RR111.pdf)

Statistics (Slide 2) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/annual-statistics-a-system-failing-black-children>

Image (Slide 4) - <https://institutionalhistory.com/homepage/prisons/major-prisons/borstal-prison/>

Image (Slide 5) - <http://www.childrenshomes.org.uk/DC/>

Image (Slide 6) - <https://www.russellwebster.com/systemic-problems-in-young-offender-institutions/>