

conditional upon maintaining this commitment.

Successful applicants will be offered one of the 100 furnished one bed, Foyer flats. After about a year in the Foyer, tenants will have completed or be close to completing their various training programmes and will be ready to move to the second stage of our programme. They will be offered one of our 110 unfurnished one bed, Moving-On flats. This move allows us to assist them to secure furniture and, as they move into employment, to manage rent payments from their wages. After about nine months in Moving-On, and providing their rent accounts are balanced, we will then help them move out into their own permanent flats.

I believe the UK Foyer movement offers important opportunities for many young people. It does not meet the needs of all but does offer timely intervention in the lives of many, some of whom would, without it, almost certainly enter a downward spiral to the streets and loss of contact with their home and support services.

The new initiatives that I have spoken about such as Youth Offending Teams, Parenting Orders, Foyers, and there are many more, are important steps in tackling juvenile delinquency in the community. The links between poverty and offending are clear and it is with a sense of great regret and embarrassment that I stand in front of you as a member of the UK judiciary, who, collectively, are responsible for placing very large numbers of young people in custody. It is important I think to set my contribution today in context.

The Home Office Prison statistics for England and Wales for 1997 show that the population of young offenders under sentence [under 21 years of age], which fell by half between 1980 and 1983, rose by nearly 60% in the four years to 1997. Reaching 7,949 in mid 1997.

The total number of young people aged 15 to 17 held in prison is increasing, for boys the figures are 1,275 in 1993, 1,626 in

1995 and 2,408 in 1997 and for girls, 29 in 1993, 49 in 1995 and 71 in 1997.

The average time served by male young offenders is increasing, for those discharged in 1997 the time served was 4.7 months, compared with 4.4 months in 1996.

Personally I think we have made rather a mess of youth justice in recent years in the UK. It takes time to develop and properly establish quality programmes in the community. It takes time to see the results of such investments and it is not necessarily possible to deliver 'results' before the next General Election. It does not help that politicians often seem loath to put in place initiatives that they fear may only give credit to their successors. In addition the problem is exacerbated when a Home Secretary is intent upon proving he is a tough guy, only too happy to demonstrate his toughness by leaving courts with few alternatives to custody.

If properly implemented the initiatives at present underway in the UK will improve the range and quality of community penalties available to youth courts as well as an improvement in the range and quality of support programmes in the community. As a result, over time I expect to see youth crime reduce and in particular I expect to see a progressive reduction in the numbers of young people in our prisons. In general terms the example set by the UK in its approach to youth justice over the past fifteen years is not one I would recommend.