

- £12 million by reducing the average number of court appearances before sentence from 3.63 to 3.00;
- £47 million by diverting first and second time offenders who receive low tariff sentences to pre-court schemes which address their offending behaviour; and
- £34 million by replacing custodial remands with bail support schemes.

The Audit Commission concluded that just by improving the effectiveness of the juvenile justice system, considerable resources (about £90 million or DM 270 million) could be released for prevention.

The first steps towards improving the cost-effectiveness of our response to youth offending are now being taken. **The Government has, for example, allocated £250 million** (DM750 million) to fund the Crime Reduction Strategy, which includes a long term programme to test a range of intensive multiple interventions with children and families at risk. Investment will be concentrated in a small number of areas over a 10-year period and the programme will be carefully evaluated in terms of its impact on future offending.

Conclusion

As I hope I have shown, much has been done to reform the youth justice system in England and Wales over the last two years. However, there is much still to be done. One of the great failures of the 20th Century has been the inability of Governments to secure the safety of their citizens from the actions of predators and we still largely ignore the fact that the risks of victimisation are greatest for children and young people. The current reforms will only succeed if they allow the voices of the victimised to be heard. But I would like to finish by asking you to reflect on what is happening in the USA, where both the fear and the reality of crime is so pervasive. Increasingly, the reaction in the US has been to resort increasingly to the principle of incapacitation and imprisonment to "win the war" against crime. The principle justification for incapacitation is that it stops offenders committing crimes, which they might commit if at large. It has a popular appeal. But preventing crime through incapacitation is expensive. In the last two decades, the American prison population has increased from less than 300,000 to over 2.0 million and in California public expenditure on imprisonment exceeds expenditure on higher education. If Europe is to avoid this enormous waste of human and financial resources, it must find another way. I hope today that I have given you some ideas about what that other way might be.