

**Prisons**

Prison is used as a punishment as society needs to feel safe from dangerous people and persistent offenders. There are many types of prison in the UK, prisons for men, for women, young offenders’ prisons, high security and open prisons. There are many different crimes that could result in a prison sentence.



*There are many questions raised about prisons;*

**Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them.**

***Bible - Hebrews 13:3***

* Which criminals should be sent to prison?
* What should the conditions in prisons be like?
* What should be done to help reform prisoners?
* How effective are prisons?



Suggest answers to the above questions.

Buddhists have strong views about how criminals should be punished. They believe inhumane treatment of an offender does not solve their behaviour - the best approach is to reform them. Punishing an offender with excessive cruelty is damaging to both the criminal and the person administering the punishment.

**An action, even if it brings benefit to oneself, cannot be considered a good action if it causes physical and mental pain to another being. *Buddha***

Many Buddhists are concerned with the welfare of prisoners. They may campaign for prison reform, visit prisoners, or vote for a political party that reflects their views on justice and treating people equally. Buddhists are also taught to show compassion and forgiveness to others, and they will aim to demonstrate loving-kindness to all human beings, including those who have committed a crime. One of the ways Buddhists help people in prison is through the Angulimala Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy.

ANGULIMALA’S Aims:

* To provide teaching and practice of Buddhism in Her Majesty’s Prisons.
* To act in an advisory capacity within Her Majesty’s Prisons.
* To provide an aftercare and advisory service for prisoners after release.

Howard League for Penal Reform

The Howard League for Penal Reform is the oldest charity penal (prison) reform organisation in the world, founded in 1866 by John Howard who was a committed Christian. It also successfully campaigned for the introduction of the victims’ compensation scheme and introduced the Prisoners' Advice Service. The Howard League has mounted campaigns on children in prison, women prisoners, suicide and self-harm, community sentences, prison education, and young offenders (for whom it provides the only dedicated legal service for young offenders).

The League deals with treatment and conditions inside prison dealt with issues concerning support for children on release from custody, enabling children to leave custody with improved lives that are far less likely to a criminal future.

The Howard League for Penal Reform campaigns to encourage the use of community sentences over prison. They believe that Community sentences work towards reducing the rate of offending and can repay damage to individual victims or the community as a whole. They also say that Community sentences allow the opportunity to get to the causes of someone's crimes, for example through drug, alcohol and health services.

Between 2005-2008 the Howard League ran a project demonstrating the first ever prison based business. ‘Barbed’ was a graphic design studio managed by the Howard League. People involved in the business worked full-time and were paid for their work. They were able to pay tax, national insurance, make contributions to victims and their own families as well as save money to support themselves upon release.

Record...

On a table, briefly outline Buddhist and Christian attitudes towards criminals; the work of a Buddhist and a Christian charity that helps prisoners and a teaching or quotation from each religion about how prisoners should be treated.

Is imprisonment the best way to punish criminals?

There is one suicide in English prisons every week.

Some facts:

**54% of women prisoners have children under 16 at home.**

47% of prisoners have no qualifications.

On 17 June 2

It costs £60,000 a year to keep someone in a young offender institute.

**68% of under 18 year olds are reconvicted within a year of release.**

The prison system has been overcrowded every year since 1994

**Since 1993 the prison population has increased by 92%.**

**The number of children (under-18s) in custody**

**has fallen by 71% in the last eight years.**

70% of prisoners surveyed said that they had been drinking when they committed their offence.



Assess...

Considering all the information from this lesson outline arguments for and against the use of prison as a punishment for criminals.

Answer…

1. Explain three reasons why young offenders are treated differently to adult criminals.
2. ‘A life sentence should mean life in prison’. Do you agree? Explain your answer and include different points of view and religious views.