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Community Reparation for Young Offenders: Perceptions, Policy and Practice

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COMMUNITY REPARATION FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS

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Foreword © Lord Carlile of Berriew, 2016.

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For my parents

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Foreword

This timely publication is the first to make a really profound, fully researched examination of community reparation for young offenders. It is timely, given the reduction over recent years in the number of young offenders in custody, and the apparent appetite of the present Secretary of State for Justice to increase the long-term effectiveness of sentencing.

The notion of reparation has developed in recent years. Seen at first as a form of recognition of the real effect of crime on victims, its scope has broadened as practitioners have witnessed the important and beneficial effect on offenders' own perception of their actions when they become part of restorative justice activities. There is now no doubting the combined effect of reparation in (i) making victims feel better about the insult done to them, and (ii) making offenders behave better in the future through an enhanced understanding of the consequences of their actions. This book lays out a clear analysis of those processes, and leaves the reader with a strong notion that community reparation, properly applied, must be recognised as one of the most effective sentencing options available. It demands dedication, imagination and hard work on the part of service providers, and commitment on the part of the offenders, but it is clear that in many cases those combined aims can be fulfilled.

The cost benefit of effective community reparation is beyond doubt. The successful reintegration of unhappy and disaffected young men and women into the flow of everyday normality promises a reduction in the later use

of adult prison sentences, cohesive family life, and increased respect between generations.

The value of the extensive and methodologically rigorous research undertaken by Nicholas Pamment enables us to evaluate the type of work undertaken as part of reparation. He demonstrates that the merely menial is likely to prove less productive and successful than programmes which challenge thinking skills. A critical faculty is not a privilege provided only to those with higher education. Young people have a profound moral sense, indeed often moral 'codes' shared with their friends and peer group. Sometimes those values can be distorted and even dissipated in self-justification, or blaming others for a sense of separation from parents or other legitimate authority. Community reparation can counter those failures, by fostering in former offenders their own critical faculty as to what really is right or wrong, what they would regard as reasonable if done to them. This is an important discussion, and the book stimulates it by its reliance on real evidence, founded on the experience of participants.

I believe that future practice will be influenced by this book, which should become required reading for practitioners, including lawyers and judges at all levels.

Lord Carlile of Berriew CBE QC

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