

Unit 5: The Role of the NI Justice System

Active Citizenship



Lesson 3: Young offenders

This lesson relates to young offenders and how they can be encouraged to stop any reoffences after they have served their time behind bars. It also introduces the role of the Youth Justice Agency in Northern Ireland and looks at the similarities and differences between youth and adult experiences of incarceration. The lesson primarily gets pupils to consider how offenders can integrate themselves into society and respect the justice system.

Planning

Prior Learning

Pupils should have gained prior knowledge and understanding of:

- justice and lawfulness;
- the role of the Northern Ireland justice system; and
- the role of the PSNI.

Learning Outcomes

Pupils will be able to:

- describe the reasons why prison isn't always the best option for people who break the law;
- identify ways in which people could be helped from reoffending once released from prison;
- define the role of the Youth Justice Agency;
- evaluate the similarities and differences between prison life for those under 18 and those over 18; and
- outline ways in which young offenders could be stopped from committing further crimes.

Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities Focus

Pupils will have opportunities to develop the following:

Managing Information

- Ask focused questions

Being Creative

- Learn from and value other people's ideas
- Take risks for learning

Working with Others

- Listen actively and share opinions
- Be fair

Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making

- Make links between cause and effect
- Examine options and weigh up pros and cons.

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Attitudes and Dispositions	Pupils will be encouraged to develop the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empathy• Openness to new ideas• Concern for others.
Resources	<p>Animation: <i>The Role of the Northern Ireland Justice System</i></p> <p>Unit 5: Lesson 3 Resource A – Mind map Unit 5: Lesson 3 Resource B – Comparison table Unit 5: Lesson 3 Resource C – Person outlines</p> <p>Youth Justice Agency NI video: Youth Justice Agency DVD Introduction www.youtube.com/watch?v=1KUg0o8kMKI</p> <p>International Juvenile Justice Observatory video: Young people's experience of the formal youth justice system www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDdrbj0Hf2Q&t=10s</p>

Suggested teaching and learning strategies

Launch

Lead a class discussion, using prompt questions and effective questioning techniques:

- 1. What is the role of the Northern Ireland justice system?**
- 2. Why do people sometimes reoffend when released from prison?**
- 3. Why do you think young people, under the age of 18, commit crimes?**

You may now wish to show the animation *The Role of the Northern Ireland Justice System*.

Possible answers and discussion points:

- 1. To protect the people of Northern Ireland and ensure that when someone has committed a crime they are dealt with fairly*
- 2. Because they are so used to prison life they find it hard living in normal society again.*
- 3. Because they are bored and think there is nothing else to do; because their friends are doing it and they face peer pressure; family members or groups they have joined may force them to.*

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Activities

Activity 1: Stop reoffending

- Display the following on the board: '46% of all prisoners will reoffend within a year of release. 60% of short-sentenced prisoners will reoffend within the same period.'
(From 'Prison reform: Prime Minister's speech' by David Cameron, 8 February 2016, available at www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prison-reform-prime-ministers-speech)
- Ask the pupils how they feel about these statistics. Then, in groups of four or five, invite them to come up with as many ideas as possible to help stop reoffences from occurring.
- Provide copies of **Resource A** for them to note their ideas. Encourage them to elect a scribe, a time keeper and someone to feed back to the class.
- Facilitate a discussion, including focused questions, with the class.

Possible answers and discussion points:

- Provide more support to ex-prisoners when they leave prison, for example help to find housing and details of key contacts in their community.
- Provide education and training in prison.
- Help provide jobs for the prisoners, so they have work to do on the outside and can earn their own money.
- Make sentences harsher, so people will be put off committing crimes in the first place.

Activity 2: The Youth Justice Agency

- Ask the pupils to work in pairs and, using the 'think–pair–share' method, discuss the questions below. After they have shared their own ideas, show the [Youth Justice Agency DVD Introduction video](#) available at www.youtube.com
 1. Who are the Youth Justice Agency?
 2. What do they do?

Possible answers and discussion points:

1. The Youth Justice Agency was launched as an Executive Agency, as recommended in the Criminal Justice Review 2000, on 1 April 2003. It replaced the former Juvenile Justice Board. It aims to make communities safer by helping young people to stop offending. The Agency works with children aged 10–17 who have offended or are at serious risk of offending.
2. The Agency provides a range of services, often delivered in partnership with others, to help children to address their offending behaviour, divert them from crime, assist their integration into the community and meet the needs of victims of crime. These front-line services are delivered by the Youth Justice Services and Custodial Services directorates.

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- Ask the pupils to write on a Post-it one thing that they learned from the video and stick their note on the wall.
- Read out a number of the notes.

Possible answers and discussion points:

- The Youth Justice Agency helps young people to stop reoffending.
- They work with over 1200 young people each year.
- They help young offenders, victims, their families and communities.
- They help victims meet the person who carried out the crime against them.

Activity 3: The same or not?

- Show the video [Young people's experience of the formal youth justice system](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...), available at www.youtube.com
- Then ask the pupils to work in groups of four or five to discuss the similarities and differences between young offenders being incarcerated and those over the age of 18.
- Provide copies of **Resource B** for them to keep track of their ideas.
- Ask for feedback and use focused questions to facilitate further discussion.

Possible answers and discussion points:

Similarities

- They are kept in a secure facility and are not allowed to come and go freely.
- They do not have a say in what they eat.
- They attend class and there are punishments if they don't go.

Differences

- People who work with under 18s are youth and community and social worker qualified.
- Staff don't wear uniform.
- They call cells 'bedrooms'.
- They call the offenders 'young people', not prisoners, and staff are called 'staff', not prison officers.
- Young people have their voice heard on day-to-day activities.

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Activity 4: Turning things around

- Ask the pupils to work in pairs. Tell them they are going to put themselves in the shoes of a young offender.
- Give each pair a person outline from **Resource C** to consider, and ask them to document their ideas for the following around the outside:

'What could you do to ensure that this young person does not reoffend?'

'How could they become a member of society who looks out for their community and respects the justice system?'

- Ask the pupils to leave their outline on their desk and walk around the room, looking at other people's ideas.

Possible answers and discussion points:

- They could join a local community group, where they could become a volunteer and use their free time in a productive way.
- They could go back to school or a further education college to gain more qualifications so they can get a better job, make more money and have a better standard of living.
- They could get involved in a project to help clean up their local community.

Debrief

Discuss the following:

1. **Do you believe that prison sentences for reoffenders should be harsher than for their first offence? Why/Why not?**
2. **What are the main reasons why young offenders often appear to have a negative attitude towards the police?**
3. **How can we change this attitude and ensure that young people have more trust in the justice system overall?**

Possible answers and discussion points:

1. **Yes** – if the sentence they were given for their first offence hasn't worked, then the sentence for reoffending should be harsher.
No – if someone has committed a crime before and reoffended, they may not have realised or cared about the seriousness of their actions and harsh sentencing may not be a deterrent.
2. They might think that the police are hard on them and treat them as if they were adults. They might believe the police have a negative opinion of young offenders and nothing they do could change their mind.
3. By training the PSNI on how to deal with young offenders; the PSNI could work with more young people in their communities to break down negative barriers and stereotypes.

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How can the government, other agencies, communities and individual citizens help prisoners not to reoffend once released from prison?

Unit 5: Lesson 3 Resource A Mind map

Unit 5: The Role of the NI Justice System



Unit 5: Lesson 3 Resource B Comparison table

Similarities

Differences

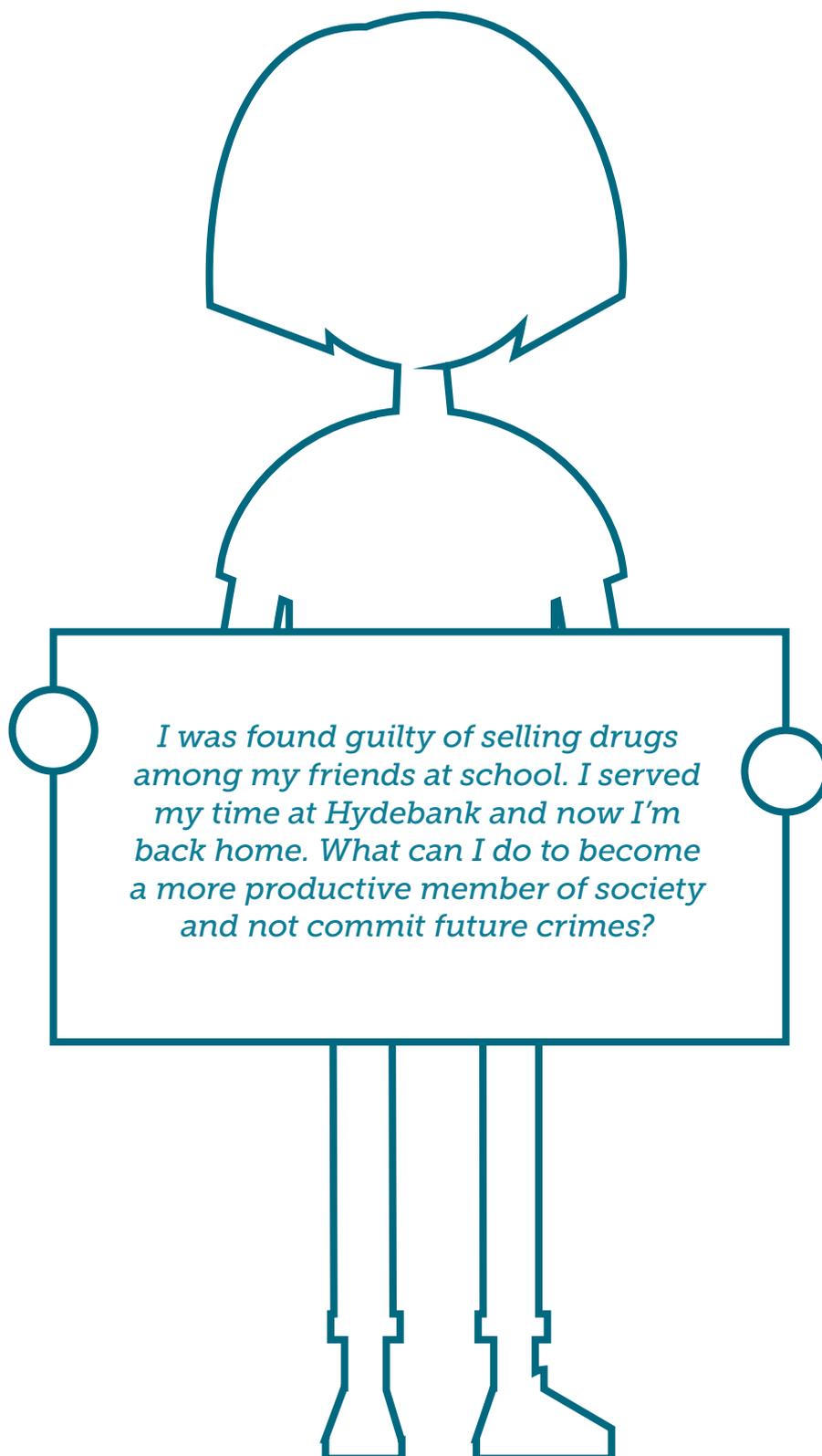
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Unit 5: Lesson 3 Resource C

Person outlines



I was found guilty of selling drugs among my friends at school. I served my time at Hydebank and now I'm back home. What can I do to become a more productive member of society and not commit future crimes?

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Unit 5: Lesson 3 Resource C

Person outlines



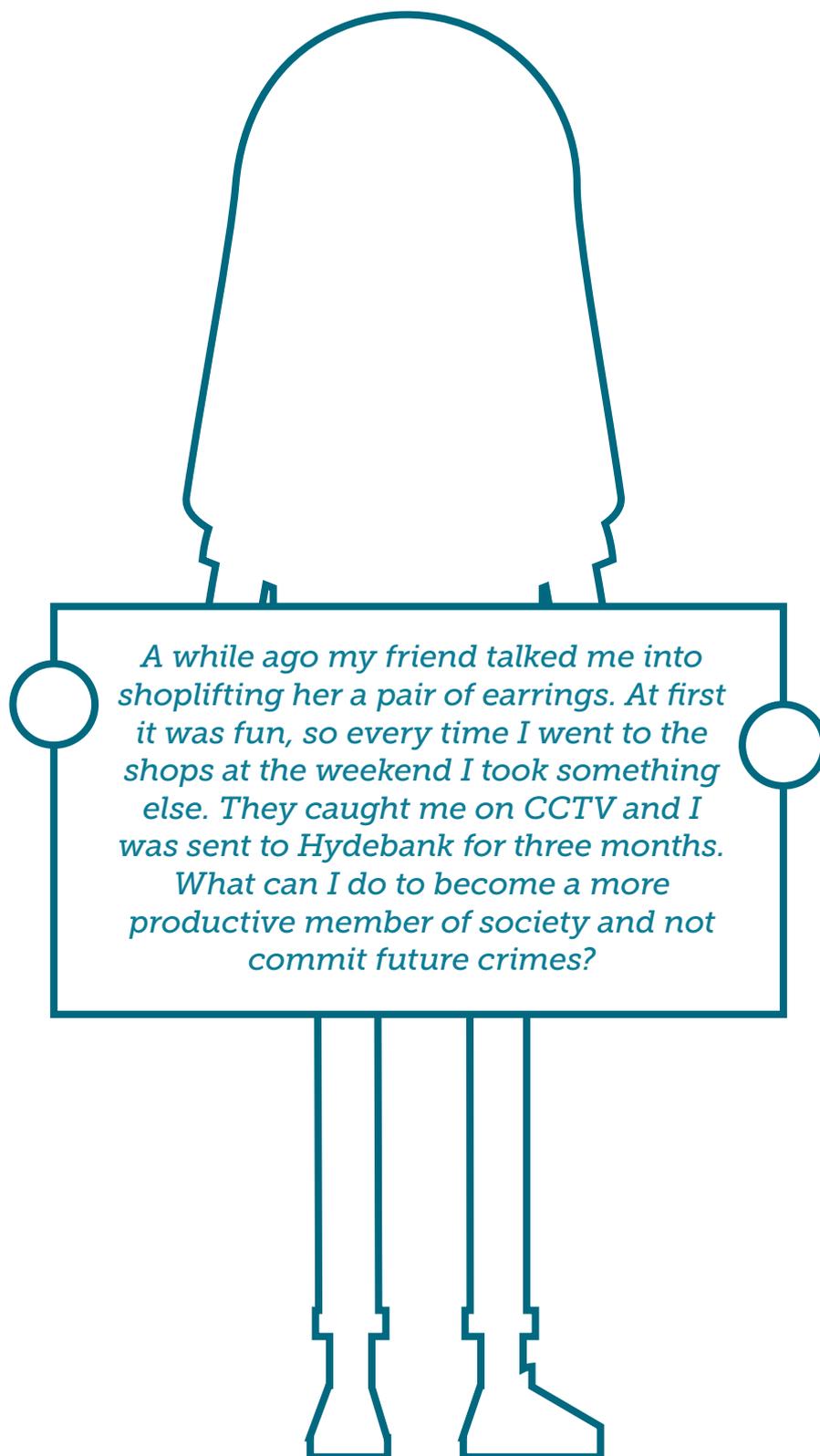
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Unit 5: Lesson 3 Resource C

Person outlines



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Unit 5: Lesson 3 Resource C

Person outlines

