

Ignoring the facts is the
BIGGEST CRIME



Shape was established in July 2003 by a coalition of voluntary agencies - Barnardo's, The Children's Society, Nacro, NCH, NSPCC and the National Children's Bureau.

These organisations believe that the debate about youth crime is one which needs to be widened and that it is the interests of all - the public, politicians and not least children and young people - to ensure that clear messages about the causes of and effective ways of dealing with youth crime are the subject of rational debate. Shape works to promote this debate in the media and other public arenas. Shape has been supported in its work by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation via the Rethinking Crime and Punishment Initiative.

'A Vicious Circle?'

What the papers say about children in trouble with the law

Foreword

Many young people get understandably annoyed at how they are portrayed in the media. At times they feel they are accused of just about every crime there is. Of course, there are some who do break the law and they can't have their cases ignored. But the majority of young people are not just law abiding, they are often the victims of crime themselves.

Last year The Daily Mirror commissioned an opinion poll, which showed that under-18s are the victims of more than a million offences a year. Offences which are not reported in the National Crime Survey. We also found that some young people feel the government and police unfairly target them.

Yet there is no getting away from the fact that there are also many older people who blame younger ones for crime and are genuinely frightened by them. Reconciling these different positions is a vital issue for Britain today.

Shape the Debate is providing a forum for a discussion, which should help everyone. Politicians and other opinion formers sometimes seem to forget that they were young once – and today's young people will be tomorrow's MPs, judges and police chiefs. This report will hopefully play an important part in getting the debate moving.



Piers Morgan

Editor: The Daily Mirror



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1. Introduction



This report is designed to stimulate debate around the way in which children who may be in trouble with the law are portrayed in the media.

The moral panic about children's behaviour today is nothing new. As a nation, we have long been preoccupied with the causes of so-called bad behaviour amongst our young people, and how we can deal with it.

Devils or Angels – perpetrators or victims?

In June 1979 research done by Bradford University showed that 34% of all reporting about children related to youth crime or disorder. Twenty years later monitoring of 400 stories by Children's Express showed a similar concentration on stories of children as troublemakers or a threat. Children and young people seem to be afforded a particular status in the media. Very crudely, children are often portrayed either as innocents or demons.

The reporting of the murder of James Bulger by two young boys in 1993 represented a peak in the demonisation of children. The immense press coverage concentrated not on the death of the toddler but on the 'evil' of the perpetrators: born bad and unredeemable. On average, 60 children a year in this country are killed by their (adult) parents or carers, but our worst vitriol is reserved for children.

The antithesis of this is seen where children are portrayed as innocent victims of abuse, neglect or cruelty – the tragic stories Victoria Climbié and the Soham murders are prime examples.

Children have multi-faceted lives

Many aspects of children's lives are rarely reported in the mainstream press. There is almost no acknowledgement or discussion that the 'victims' and 'demons' are more often than not the same children.

An example is the recent reporting about the risk to children of being 'targeted' by sexual predators. There is near hysteria about the rise in child pornography on the internet and papers carry warnings to parents taking digital photos of their children. However some newspapers also publish names and photographs of two young boys made subject to Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, putting their safety and the safety of their families at risk.

What makes News – a demonstrable double standard

News is a commodity with a 'market value'. The media shape the truth in a particular way in order to market a product (newspaper) to a particular audience. This affects content, language, visual presentation – and the messages received by the reader.

Generic terms such as 'yob' and 'thug' are often used about subjects who are not in fact children (to whom we would be more sympathetic) but young adults. This lack of distinction is indicative of the attitude that everyone, no matter what their age or circumstances, is considered equally responsible and culpable for their behaviour.

The age at which a child is deemed to be fully capable of understanding and responsible for any criminal activity is ten. However the same child is deemed incapable of giving informed consent to any form of sexual activity until he or she reaches 13, and unable to decide what medical treatment he or she might undergo until the age of 16.

There is public (and media) sympathy for children in need and the problems of abused, vulnerable, poor and excluded families are firmly on the political agenda. But the line is drawn once children get into trouble, when public sympathy for them tends to evaporate.

Shape aims to change the way we think and talk about youth crime, and clearly the media have a large part to play in the public debate. In order to examine what news media were saying about children in trouble and youth justice, the National Children's Bureau, in collaboration with Shape, carried out an analysis of the content of a sample of national newspapers.

This report highlights the key findings from this analysis.

2. Methodology

The analysis had two principal aims, which were:

1. To describe the way in which children in trouble were portrayed in the national press
2. To examine the messages conveyed by the national press about youth justice.

The campaign team at Shape monitored the daily and Sunday national press over the course of a year for all articles related to youth crime. Due to limited resources, it was decided that this analysis would focus on what a sample of these papers had said about children in trouble and youth justice over a 3-month period, beginning 1st November 2002 and ending 31st January 2003. This particular period was selected because it was felt that it would contain a broad range of articles about youth crime. (Prior to November 2002 much of the press coverage had focused on the 10th anniversary of the Jamie Bulger case, after January press attention had shifted to the

fallout from the shooting of three young women at a party in Birmingham). The sample was to include four daily broadsheet and four daily tabloid newspapers with the biggest circulation (see table 1 in the results section of this report for a list of the titles included).

Because national press coverage of youth crime was such a broad topic, covering international incidents and a range of criminal activities and behaviours, it was necessary to narrow down the focus of the study. In order to make it more manageable, two questions were set to define the inclusion criteria, which were as follows:

1. Does the article describe a case/situation in England and Wales
2. Does the article involve at least one young person (aged 10-17) in connection with the youth justice system?

An instrument containing 22 questions, some with pre-coded and others with open-ended response categories, was devised to guide the analysis (a copy of the instrument is attached to this report as an appendix). The questions were designed to tap the following domains of each article:

1. Background or contextual information
2. The way in which children in trouble were portrayed
3. The way in which the youth justice system was portrayed
4. The author's understanding of children's offending
5. The messages conveyed about children in trouble and youth justice.

All the articles that met the inclusion criteria were examined using the instrument and all relevant information was recorded. Quantitative data was analysed using basic descriptive statistics with the aid of statistical software (SPSS). The qualitative data was arranged into a number of common themes.

3. Findings

During the 3-month monitoring period, 74 articles were written about children in trouble and the youth justice system in the eight daily newspapers included in the analysis. Table 1 shows the number of articles found in each newspaper:

Table 1. Number of youth crime articles in the press

The tabloids	Freq.	The broadsheets	Freq.
Daily Express	8	The Guardian	6
Daily Mail	9	The Independent	5
Daily Mirror	11	The Daily Telegraph	10
The Sun	13	The Times	12
Total	41	Total	33

The tabloid press contained more articles about youth crime than the broadsheets and, as might be expected, there were differences in the reporting style, content and the way in which children in trouble and the youth justice system were portrayed between the two formats and between different newspapers.

3.1. Content of the press coverage on youth crime

The vast majority of the articles about youth crime were ‘news’ stories written by staff journalists (93%). In terms of their position in the newspapers, few articles appeared in the commentary, analysis, editorial or letters pages. The Sun ran one editorial and printed two letters pages on youth crime (with 11 and 12 contributions from the ‘public’) - all of which were in support of implementing tougher measures for children convicted of committing criminal offences - and one letter about the role of genetic factors as one of the causes of youth crime appeared in The Daily Telegraph. While youth crime received little in the way of overt press opinion during the 3-month monitoring period, many articles used loaded language to describe children in trouble and a range of covert messages were contained in the texts. One of the ways in which these messages were communicated was through key informants quoted in the reports (see table 2).

The views of key informants appeared in around three-quarters of the articles (n=57), of which neighbours (18%) and members of the judiciary (15%) were the most often quoted. The tabloid press was more likely to have presented the voices of the victims of youth crime as their key informants than the broadsheets. These included the immediate neighbours of children who had committed the offences, the relatives of victims and other members of the community affected by youth crime. The broadsheets were more inclined to include the voices of politicians and campaign groups.

Table 2. Key informants used in the ‘stories’

Informants	Freq.		
	Tabloids	Broadsheets	Total
Neighbour	8	5	13
Offender	1	0	1
Victim’s relative	6	0	6
The ‘community’	2	0	2
The Police	3	2	5
Academic	3	2	5
Judiciary	6	5	11
Politician	2	5	7
Campaign Group	2	5	7
Total	33	24	57

In only one story was the key informant a child who had committed an offence and, in another five articles (8% of all stories), the views of children who had committed offences were reported very briefly in comparison to the views of other informants. Where children who had committed offences were quoted in the text, it was generally to demonstrate the extent of their disdain for authority. For instance, in one such article, a 13-year-old girl was reported as saying: “No campaign is gonna stop me and me mates. Blair might be big in London, but this is Liverpool. This is my city and I’ll do what I want” (Daily Telegraph, 2/11/02). One article did quote a young person convicted of a range of minor offences to show him in a more positive light: “[The young person], 14, said: ‘I regret any trouble that I may have caused. I don’t want to end up in jail and I’m going to clean up my act’” (Daily Mirror, 28/11/02).

It was revealing to look at the type of stories that the press chose to run with. Table 3 summarises the types of youth crime story covered.

Table 3. Type of youth justice ‘story’ covered by the press

	Criminal case	% Criminal behaviour	Causes of youth crime	Youth justice System
Tabloid	68	2	3	27
Broadsheet	30	12	3	55
All Coverage	51	7	3	39

Taking all the newspaper coverage into account, around half of the reports focused on specific criminal cases (51%), typically involving one young person. These generally focused on the behaviour (and in some cases the attitudes and character) of the individual, and as such some journalists adopted a very personal approach to their reporting. A small number of these types of reports featured family groups (n=5), which generated some of the most powerful headlines, such as ‘BAD BOYS LIFE BAN: Exclusion zone for terror brothers’ (Daily Mirror, 27/11/02). Indeed young men were much more likely to have been the focus of the press’s attention than young women (38% of stories covering criminal cases were about young men, compared to 10% about young women). None of the reporting mentioned the ethnicity of young people, although judging from the available evidence (photographs and cultural references) most of the cases involved young people from white, working class backgrounds.

Where articles reported on a specific criminal case, the main type of crime covered was anti-social behaviour (51%). This was followed by reports of assault (22%) and murder/manslaughter (16%). Other youth crimes reported on were robbery/mugging (n=2), illicit drug use, cruelty to animals and sexual offences (one of each case). Most of the stories about criminal cases involved young people convicted of an offence (74%), followed by those who had been arrested (18%). Less attention was paid to suspects or those charged with a criminal offence (three cases in total). Regardless of the type of youth crime covered or status of the young person involved in the case, there were some important differences in the ways in which newspapers covered their stories, the detail of which will be discussed in later sections. To put it crudely, these could be divided into ‘factual’ and ‘non-factual’ reporting.

A large proportion of the stories were concerned with various aspects of the criminal justice system (39%), the majority of which focused on youth detention (28%). Other areas covered were court proceedings (20%), Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) (19%), policing (11%), early intervention (10%) and, to a lesser extent, naming and shaming and community sentencing (3 and 1 cases respectively). A small number of articles referred to the 'youth justice system', without mentioning any particular aspect of it (n=4).

Fewer stories appeared in the press that focused on different types of criminal behaviour and the causes of youth crime (8% and 3% respectively). In these types of article, four different perspectives on the causes of youth crime were discussed: the role of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), lifestyle factors such as poor diet and drug-taking, the pressures of consumer culture and social conditioning factors.

3.2. The portrayal of children in trouble with the law

The objectivity of the press in terms of the way in which children in trouble with the law were portrayed, once again, varied. In general, it was the tabloid press that were more likely to have vilified those children that they reported on, although this was not exclusively the case. Some of the key features of the press's characterisations are discussed below.

Young people's status and identity

Across all the articles included in the analysis, it was found that the term used most often to describe young people's status was 'child' or 'children' (a simple count revealed that this term of reference was used 103 times). The next most often used resource was to quote young people's age in years (n=89), followed by 'teenager' (n=44) and 'youngster' or 'youth' (n=35). Less well-used terms were 'young person' (n=12), kid (n=5) and juvenile (n=4). It could be argued that the use of the words teenager, youngster and youth are too general in the sense that they refer to a group and hence their use implicates all members of that group as potential criminals, especially considering that the majority of articles were about the individual. In an analysis of this nature it is difficult to assert that this was the intended 'work' that the author hoped the use of the term would do.

It was encouraging to see that many articles did refer to children in trouble as children and, indeed, young people. Some of the other descriptive resources used to portray young people's identities were on the whole less positive.

Again, using a simple count, it was found that, taken together, the terms 'thug' (n=36), 'yob' (n=21) and 'lout' (n=3) were used more frequently to describe young people involved with the youth justice system than 'young offenders' (n=35). Indeed, these terms – thug, yob and lout – were the main descriptive resource used to portray children in trouble in 27% of the articles, compared to 16% that mainly referred to them as young offenders. In some of the more sensational reports young people were described as 'brutes' or 'monsters' (n=3), 'hooligans' (n=2), 'burglars' (n=2) and 'scum', 'thief', 'menace' or 'scally' (with one reference each). In a number of articles (n=12), references were made to young people's character, which, given the terms of reference used, one can only assume that the idea was to de-humanise them in order to portray the young people involved as somehow from another world and not children or young people at all. In seven articles children in trouble were consistently described as 'evil'; other articles labelled their subjects 'heartless' (n=3), 'sick' (n=2), 'menacing' (n=1) and 'in-human' (n=1).

In a similar number of articles, oblique references were made to the backgrounds of children in trouble in an attempt to demonstrate how 'bad' they were. For example in one report, a neighbour was quoted as saying: "I don't know why they are so bad except that they have a single-parent who works nights" (Daily Telegraph, 2/11/02). These sorts of descriptive resources were, it seems, designed to apportion blame for children's offending. Not all of these types of reference were quite so oblique, for example in this extract the reporter explains what she believes has happened on housing estates around the country: "As the old residents died or moved into residential homes, so their homes were filled with problem families: single parents and children who ran wild... It was as we shall see a story of our times: of children growing up with no boundaries, of fractured families, communities broken by crime, sexual promiscuity and drug abuse among teenagers, a shocking lack of parental control and increasing violence among girls" (Daily Mail, 2/11/02).

Young people's attitudes and behaviour

In about a quarter of the articles an attempt was made to construct a portrayal of the attitudes of children in trouble, which were almost exclusively negative (15 out of the 16 articles where such constructions were made). Children in trouble were generally portrayed as callous or disrespectful, for instance: "The yobs showed no emotion as they were led from the dock to begin their sentence"

(Daily Mirror, 17/1/03) or "When told to pay attention [the young person] said: 'I know, I've been down four times. I ain't going to listen'" (Daily Express, 1/11/02). Another report quoted a young person saying that crime was "easier than going to college and then into a job... you don't have to go through all those years of education before you can start to earn money" (Daily Express, 11/1/03). The one article that did paint a young person in a positive light was the article that has already been mentioned concerning the repentant 14-year-old who did not want to end up in prison (Daily Mirror, 28/11/02).

In around 40% of the articles judgements were made about the acceptability of the behaviour of children in trouble. These ranged from describing their behaviour as 'out of control', 'tearaway' and 'loutish' to 'brutal', 'callous', 'violent' and 'menacing'. In many of the same articles, the children's behaviour was framed in the context of its effect on the community, such as 'terrorised', 'frightening' and 'threatening'.

3.3. What the papers had to say about youth justice

In over half of the articles (n=39), an opinion was offered as to the current state of one or more elements of the youth justice system. While it is difficult to detect definite trends in this small sample of articles, there were a couple of interesting differences in the type of coverage by elements of the tabloid and broadsheet press. Articles in the tabloids tended to focus on punitive measures, such as sentencing and custody. The broadsheets almost exclusively talked about policy, in particular suggesting policy changes. Within these categories a number of themes were detected that ran through the coverage of certain newspapers.

Tougher on youth crime

The central theme identified in the tabloid press was a 'tougher on youth crime' discourse. This appeared to be something of a campaign in The Sun, which managed to thread this message through almost all of its youth crime

stories - although the same messages were found in a number of Daily Express and Daily Mail stories. Areas of youth justice under most scrutiny were sentencing, youth detention and policing.

Sentencing was the main element of the youth justice system to be criticised as being 'soft' on children who offend. The parts of the press that commented in these terms were particularly unhappy about what they saw as the increased use of community sentences in place of custodial sentences. Journalists used academics, campaign groups and the 'public' to back up their claims. One reporter quoted a study that "found that punishments must be harsher", because - the article continued to present one of the report's findings - "the courts seemed to make little impression on young people after their first appearance, unless they risked getting a custodial sentence" (Daily Express, 11/1/03). In another report with the headline 'Escaping the law, a generation of young delinquents' (Daily Mail, 22/1/03), the reporter quotes a study which he suggested provided evidence that the youth justice system is more lenient and less effective than it was 28 years ago. The reporter says: "the findings come at a time of growing anxiety over the involvement of children in crime and the inability of the justice system to deal effectively with those who do come before the courts". The fact that the evidence presented in the report bore little resemblance to the reporter's conclusions, demonstrated the lack of objectivity in this type of article. The same theme is picked up again a couple of days later in a report on Cherie Blair's involvement with a campaign to improve conditions in custody for children, with the reporter informing its readers that: "the prime minister's wife joined the debate in the wake of research revealing that tens of thousands of hardened child criminals who would once have faced punishment are no longer even arrested" (Daily Mail, 24/1/03).

The sentencing theme continued to run through certain elements of the media's coverage of the court's use of community sentences. For example, in one case where a group of young women were convicted of assault and received a range of community sentences and supervision orders from the judge, a reporter wrote: "Three girl bullies who battered a pretty teenager GRINNED as they walked free from court... The Victims of Crime Trust said [the judge] should be sacked because of his leniency" (The Sun, 3/12/02). A few days later a selection of letters was published in the same newspaper all singing from the same song-sheet, a typical comment being: "soft on crime - that's the signal [the judge] gives to the honest law-abiding citizens of this country" (The Sun, 6/12/02).

While ASBOs were generally supported in the tabloid press, The Sun used stories about young people given them to promote its stance of zero tolerance of community sentencing, in what appeared to be a total disregard for the nature and severity of the offence let alone a consideration of whether ASBOs or other community sentences worked. In a report under a headline that screamed 'FORCED TO WATCH TV? HE SHOULD BE JAILED' (The Sun, 16/1/03), a reporter wrote about a young man serving an ASBO in which it was reported that: "A police source said 'he's lucky he's sitting at home watching TV. Most people think he should be locked up'". This was despite the fact that the young man was on licence and had already served 18-months in custody for the offences for which he was serving his sentence.

A second front in the 'tougher on youth crime' campaign was an attack on the conditions in which young people were detained. The sorts of commentary that appeared on the subject were framed in terms that suggested children in trouble were being rewarded for their crimes. For instance, in one editorial it was asserted that "teenage thugs locked up in Britain's biggest young offenders institution are pampered: they have their own amusement arcade, Sony Play stations, pool tables and widescreen TV" (The Sun, 29/11/02). In another report on

the Youth Justice Board's proposals to introduce Detention and Training Orders, the author of the report claims that "Britain's worst offenders will be freed from jail and taken to football matches and cinemas under plans unveiled last night". It reiterates the message by saying, "Yobs, who are tagged, are also taken by mentors to films and football" (The Sun, 28/1/03). In the same newspaper, a selection of 12 letters was published in which readers vented their fury over what they saw as the soft life of a young offenders' institution and a liberal establishment that had allowed this to happen. Typical contents of the letters read: "violent youngsters who break the law and get put in detention centres must think it's a holiday camp. There are too many do-gooders in this country and they are ruining it" (The Sun, 4/12/02).

Young offenders are children too

A second theme running through the press coverage on youth crime was a campaign to improve the conditions under which children were held in custody, which was mainly covered in The Times, although two other broadsheets – The Guardian and Independent – and the Daily Express and Daily Mirror covered these types of story too.

The main criticism levelled at the prison service was that, in order to better protect children, reform was needed to bring the supervision of children in custody under the provisions of the Children Act. In one report a representative from the Howard League for Penal Reform was quoted as saying: "the application of the Children Act within prisons would help to make them more transparent and accountable. We hope it would open up prison culture to the principle that the welfare of the child is paramount" (The Guardian, 13/11/02). In another article the reporter brings the reader's attention to a Social Services Inspectorate report into the issue of 'single separation', which "the SSI team found fell short of acceptable standards (The Times, 9/12/02).

Current youth justice policy is not working

Parts of the press were critical of the government's youth justice policies, which it was claimed were not working: "children's curfew schemes, bans on spray cans, truancy crackdowns, spot fines, child safety orders and ASBOs" were all described as "gimmicky policies" in one such article. By way of a justification for these claims, the author went on to say that: "the ban on [spray] paints will affect a generation of young modellers who use cans for undercoating large numbers of models before detailed colours are added" (Daily Telegraph, 2/11/02). Another article that appeared on the same day, quoted a local resident affected by anti-social behaviour: "The police are trying their best but there are not enough of them" (Daily Telegraph, 2/11/02).

Coming from a slightly different angle, a number of reports appeared to support the argument that, in principle, young people should not be put in prison. Again, referring to a campaign supported by Cherie Blair, one report said: "the vast majority of young offenders should not be sent to prison...jailing young people would not solve society's problems and they would learn more...through alternatives to jail such as meeting their victims" (Independent, 24/1/03).

Current youth justice policy is working

As has already been stated, a proportion of the press were supportive of ASBOs. To illustrate the sorts of things being said in support of them, in the following extract a police officer is quoted as saying: “This is a really positive message from the courts to show that we should not be in any position to accept anti-social behaviour from any individuals” (Daily Telegraph, 14/1/03). There was also support for naming and shaming policies: “I think it’s brilliant they are doing leaflets’... ‘with these leaflets people can recognise him’”. The reporter goes on “ [x], chairman of the community council said: ‘we want no hiding places for those who flout the law’” (Daily Mirror, 2/11/02).

Preventative measures

The final major theme found in the press coverage of youth crime was a call for more preventative measures to tackle the causes of youth crime. These were discussed in terms of intervention aimed at tackling ADHD and problems of poor diet, which have already been discussed, and a range of other protective factors or early intervention strategies. These were issues debated exclusively in the broadsheets.

In a number of articles the Home Secretary’s intentions to target intervention at young children were highlighted: “Children who are at risk of developing into criminals should be helped when they are at nursery school, David Blunkett suggested yesterday” (Daily telegraph, 15/11/03) and “the Home Secretary said yesterday that ‘young tearaways should be given boxing lessons to turn them away from youth crime’” (The Independent, 15/11/02).

The research and evaluation were done by
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4. Conclusions

The media analysis had two principal aims:

- 1.** To describe the way in which children in trouble were portrayed in the national press
- 2.** To examine the messages conveyed by the national press about youth justice

The portrayal of children in trouble with the law and the messages about youth justice put out by the press differed among different types of newspaper. The tabloid press was much more critical of individual children in trouble than the broadsheets, which tended to focus on policy issues connected to youth crime. The venom of the comment aimed at children in trouble in some of the tabloid’s coverage, particularly at those convicted of anti-social behaviour offences, was striking. Although the evidence regarding the young people’s backgrounds was scant, it did appear that the most of the vitriol was aimed at white, working class young men.

There were four clear messages – here ranked by the number of times they appeared in the press coverage:

By far, the most consistent message was that:

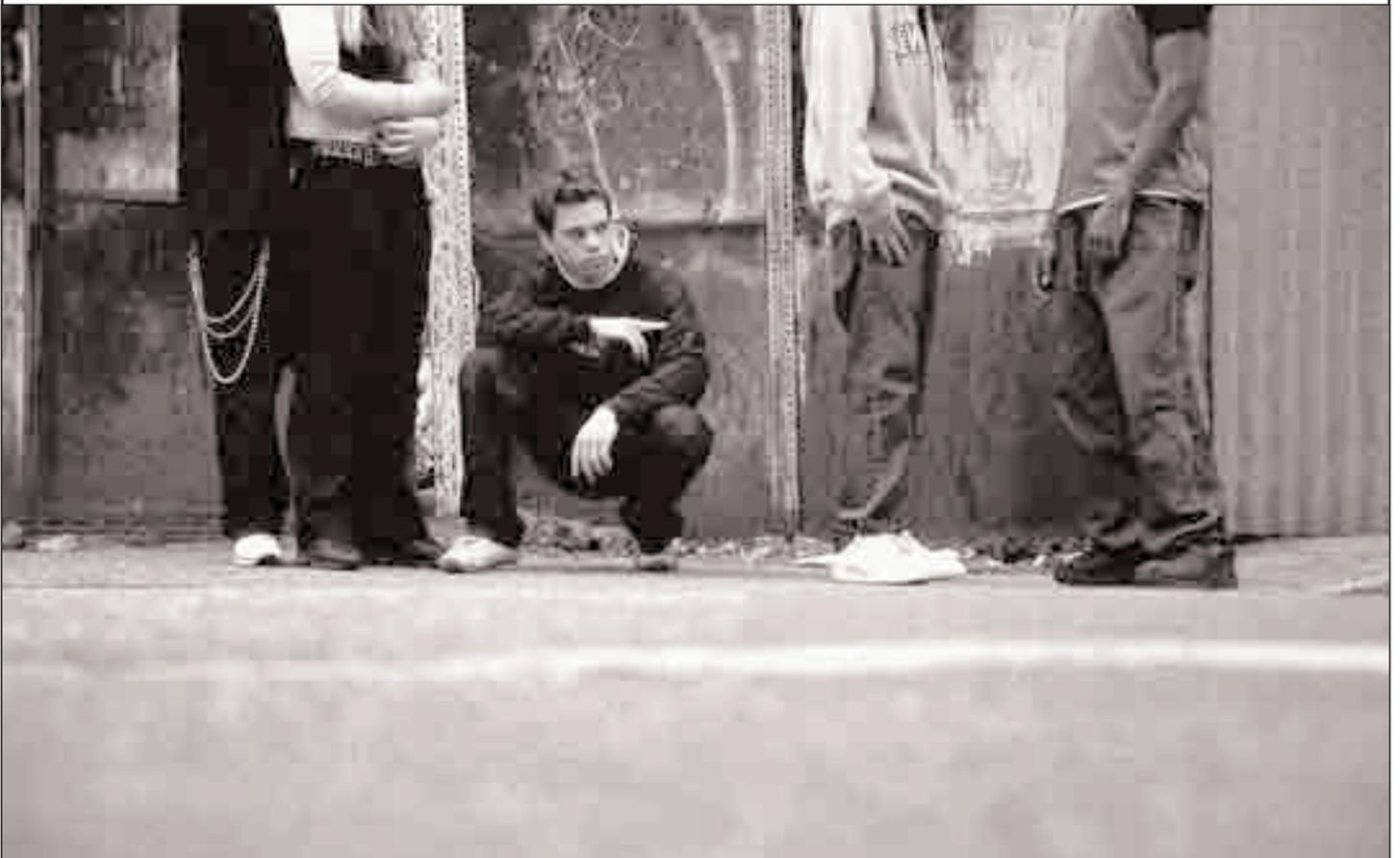
1. The youth justice system should be tougher on children in trouble, hand out tougher sentences and make detention tougher;

Less often and less forcefully, the papers stated that:

2. Elements of the youth justice system do not work;
3. Youth detention needs to become more accountable; and
4. There needs to be a shift in policy to tackle the causes of youth crime.

The clearest and simplest message is the most divisive and unhelpful. Shape would like to see a more reasoned debate in the media about youth crime and children in trouble with the law. Most young people do not become involved in the criminal justice system, and the majority of those who do have committed non-violent crimes. Dealing with the causes of neglect, abuse, exclusion and addressing the welfare needs of children will contribute to the crime reduction agenda. Strategies that divide communities, enable one section to ‘blame’ another section or group, or stigmatise individuals will only serve to further marginalise people. The public need to be made more aware of the effectiveness of new community penalties and the negative effects of custody for children. Custody does not reduce offending behaviour.

We hope that this report will assist in this process.



5. References

We examined daily and Sunday newspapers between 1 November 2002 and 31 January 2003 inclusive. In all, there were 74 articles scanned: 41 from the tabloids (Daily Express, Daily Mail, Daily Mirror and the Sun), and 33 from the broadsheets (Daily Telegraph, Guardian, Independent, and the Times).

The tabloids

1. Daily Express (1/11/02) Thug, 14, escapes from court
2. Daily Express (9/11/02) Outcasts: Town bans girls who led boys in terror campaign
3. Daily Express (13/11/02 'We are Europe's worst for locking up children')
4. Daily Express (19/11/02) Tearaway girl, 15, is locked up
5. Daily Express (19/11/02) Teacher butted by boy he threw out
6. Daily Express (27/11/02) The 3 demons: Damien, Daniel & Darren, of Dartford...branded thugs by a court for LIFE
7. Daily Express (27/11/02) Another trio of brothers just as grim
8. Daily Express (11/1/03) Greed of the teen muggers

9. Daily Mail (1/11/02) Teenage thug escapes through court door
10. Daily Mail (2/11/02) TWO FACES OF EVIL: They look like any other surly teenagers. So what turned these young girls into killers who tortured and choked a kindly old lady...then dumped her frail body in a wheelie bin?
11. Daily Mail (22/11/02) Boy stabbed in gang fight outside school
12. Daily Mail (23/11/02) Teenage criminals face on-the-spot fines
13. Daily Mail (27/11/02) Life ban for hell's brothers
14. Daily Mail (17/12/02) Named, shamed and banned from town – aged 11
15. Daily Mail (21/1/03) Locked up, a hellcat of 12: Thug girl arrested 40 times
16. Daily Mail (22/1/03) Escaping the law, a generation of young delinquents
17. Daily Mail (24/1/03) Most young thugs should not be sent to jail, says Cherie

18. Daily Mirror (1/11/02) Carjack teen gets 7 years
19. Daily Mirror (2/11/02) GENERAL MENACE: Leaflet warns about teen thug
20. Daily Mirror (14/11/02) LAD FOOD: Poor diets could hold key to jobs' behaviour
21. Daily Mirror (21/11/02) Class yobs 'hang' kid
22. Daily Mirror (23/11/02) Tears for killed boy
23. Daily Mirror (27/11/02) BAD BOYS LIFE BAN: Exclusion zone for terror brothers
24. Daily Mirror (28/11/02) Bad boy: I'll change
25. Daily Mirror (30/11/02) TEENAGE THUGS TO BE PUT 'IN THE STOCKS'
26. Daily Mirror (30/11/02) KIDS IN JAIL HAVE RIGHTS
27. Daily Mirror (10/1/03) Mice's fire torment
28. Daily Mirror (17/1/03) INHUMAN: Thugs, 16, murdered friend they thought was a shoplifting 'grass'

- 29.** Sun (1/11/02) Rant yobbo flees court
- 30.** Sun (13/11/02) CARJACK KILLER: Horrific moment teenage brute attacked granddad
- 31.** Sun (16/11/02) BENSON AND LEDGES: kids climb flats for a fag
- 32.** Sun (19/11/02) EXPELLED BOY PUTS HEAD IN HOSPITAL: Yob, 15, goes berserk
- 33.** Sun (29/11/02) Soft touch: there was a time when young criminals were punished
- 34.** Sun (29/11/02) CAGED THUGS GIVEN FREE ARCADE GAMES
- 35.** Sun (3/12/02) THREE GIRL BULLIES LAUGH AT THE LAW: Dad's rage as thugs freed
- 36.** Sun (4/12/02) Young thugs should be punished not pampered
- 37.** Sun (6/12/02) Judge who let bullies go free is a disgrace
- 38.** Sun (11/1/03) Yob of 14 is shamed
- 39.** Sun (16/1/03) FORCED TO WATCH TV? HE SHOULD BE JAILED
- 40.** Sun (28/1/03) 'Send yobs to the cinema'
- 41.** Sun (29/1/03) 'SWEARING THUGS BEAT DAD'

The broadsheets

- 42.** The Guardian (13/11/02) Act of omission
- 43.** The Guardian (15/11/02) 10-year-old offenders to be sent to foster homes
- 44.** The Guardian (30/11/02) Court upholds rights of jailed youngsters
- 45.** The Guardian (22/1/03) Teenage girls held over attack
- 46.** The Guardian (22/1/03) Young people in prison
- 47.** The Guardian (22/1/03) Two arrested on ecstasy charge

- 48.** The Independent (2/11/02) Juveniles face fines for anti-social offences
- 49.** The Independent (15/11/02) Blunkett says tearaways should be given boxing lessons
- 50.** The Independent (2/1/03) Parenting classes to cut youth crime
- 51.** The Independent (24/1/03) Cherie Booth: keep youths out of prison
- 52.** The Independent (27/1/03) Jail terms for young offenders to be scrapped

- 53.** Daily Telegraph (2/11/02) 'Gangs turn to crime because of boredom'
- 54.** Daily Telegraph (2/11/02) 'This is my city and I'll do what I want'
- 55.** Daily Telegraph (2/11/02) 'These kids will nick anything for drugs'
- 56.** Daily Telegraph (2/11/02) Blair's blitz on yobs is starting to wear thin
- 57.** Daily Telegraph (13/11/02) Cherie plea for children's 'tsar'
- 58.** Daily Telegraph (15/11/02) Catch yobs at nursery age says Blunkett
- 59.** Daily Telegraph (16/11/02) First treat causes of childhood crime
- 60.** Daily Telegraph (27/11/02) Life ban for brothers who terrorised town
- 61.** Daily Telegraph (30/11/02) Blunkett under fire over jailed children
- 62.** Daily Telegraph (14/1/03) 11-year-old hooligan is banned from 80 streets
- 63.** The Times (12/11/02) We can do better for our children
- 64.** The Times (13/11/02) Ex-prisons boss highlights children's plight
- 65.** The Times (22/11/02) Teenager knifed

66. The Times (27/11/02) 'Hells Children' get lifetime ban
67. The Times (30/11/02) Children's ruling
68. The Times (9/12/02) Separation for young inmates 'breaks rules'
69. The Times (20/12/02) Teenager tried to kill little girl
70. The Times (26/12/02) Boy who attacked girl, 6 is named
71. The Times (3/1/03) Youths accused
72. The Times (10/1/03) Public humiliation may only make things worse
73. The Times (17/1/03) Two boys jailed for friend's murder
74. The Times (24/1/03) Spare young from jail, says Cherie

Other sources

'Youth and Crime'

'Hooligan' A history of respectable fears

'The media abuse of children'

'Public Opinion and Youth Justice'

'Youth Justice 2004'

John Muncie

Geoffrey Pearson

Bob Franklin and Jan Horwath

Nacro Briefing 2001

Audit Commission



Appendix

MEDIA CONTENT ANALYSIS RECORD SHEET

Inclusion criteria:

- Does article describe a case/situation in England and Wales?
- Does the article include at least one young person aged 10-17 involved with the criminal justice system?

I. Background information

Date:	Newspaper:
Headline:	
Source (for questions a, b & c, circle one response) a. Who wrote the article? Journalist / editor(s) / columnist / lay person / expert commentator / dk / other (specify).....	
b. Who else's views appear most strongly in the article? Neighbours / young offenders / victim's relatives / young offender's relatives / the police / community workers / researchers / judges, magistrates or JP's / unnamed sources / organisation for victim's of crime / no-one's / other (specify).....	
c. Does the article put forward the views of young people at all? Yes / no / dk	
Subject (for questions a & b circle one response) a. In general, what was the article about? Report on a specific criminal case / type of criminal behaviour (describe.....) / youth justice system (describe.....) / profile or lifestyle of a convicted young offender / other (specify).....	
b. What was the status of young person in relation to criminal case? Suspected / arrested / charged / convicted / no criminal case reported / dk / other (specify)..... (For questions c & d circle all appropriate responses)	
c. What type of criminal activity was reported? Anti-social behaviour / murder / manslaughter / assault / illicit drug use / robbery / burglary / breach of bail / other (specify).....	
d. Which element of the youth justice system was the article concerned with? The 'whole system' / court proceedings / ASBOs / bail / prison / parole / naming and shaming / policing / protection / custody / other (specify).....	

2. Who was the focus of media attention?

(Circle or write appropriate responses) Group: individual(s) (i.e. one or two) / family / 'group' of young people (e.g. Asians or drug users) (specify)..... / all young people / other (specify).....	
Age (in years if known):	Ethnicity (describe):
Gender: male / female / both / not reported	

3. Representation of young people

Labelling young people (For questions a & b count the no. of times each keyword appears in text)

a. How was young people's status reported? In years teenager(s) children
youngster(s) minor(s) youth(s) it wasn't other (specify).....

b. How was young people's identity reported? Boy lad /schoolboy girl
monster truant killer thug it wasn't / other (specify).....

Attitude (Tick all that apply and provide examples)

a. How was young people's attitude described?

- **Disrespectful:** e.g.
- **Repentant:** e.g.
- **Unrepentant:** e.g.
- **Arrogant:** e.g.
- **Disregard for others:** e.g.....
- **It wasn't**.....
- **Other:** (specify and provide example)

Behaviour (Count the no. of times each keyword or phrase appears in text: some interpretation may be required)

a. How was young people's behaviour described?

Out of control tearaway

b. immature brutal it wasn't other

c. (specify).....

Relationship with community (Circle all that apply)

a. How was the impact of young people's behaviour described in the context of the community? Terrorised / frightening / threatening / blighted / it wasn't / other (specify).....

Family background (Circle all that apply)

a. How was the family background of young people described?

Single-parent F / single-parent M / married / divorcee / twice married / no longer in touch with father / it wasn't / other (specify).....

4. Understanding of/explanation for young people's offending behaviour

a. Did the author suggest possible causes of young people's offending behaviour?

Yes / no / dk

b. If yes, which of the following best describes them? (Tick all that apply and provide examples)

- Poor parenting skills: e.g.....
- Family breakdown: e.g.
- Criminal family culture: e.g.
- Drug use: e.g.
- Pressure of consumer culture: e.g.
- Other: (specify and give example)

5. View of the youth justice system

a. Was a view about the current state of one or more elements of the youth justice system expressed? Yes / no / dk

b. If yes, which of the following describes this or these view(s)?

(Tick all that apply and provide examples)

- Prison works: e.g.
- Naming and shaming works: e.g.
- ASBOs are a 'soft option': e.g.
- Police need to be tougher on youth crime: e.g.
- YJS failed to protect young people's rights: e.g.
- 'Decriminalisation' of cannabis is not working: e.g.
- Protecting offenders identities is unnecessary cost to taxpayer: e.g.
- Secure accommodation is a 'soft option': e.g.
- Secure accommodation works: e.g.
- Magistrates/Judges/JP's are too soft on criminals: e.g.
- YJS is set up to reward criminal behaviour: e.g.
- Other: (specify and give example)





Ignoring the facts is the
BIGGEST CRIME