

## Written evidence from Mr Edward Winfield (PCS0021)

I wish to make some general comments before making any specific comments about the bill. I am not a lawyer and I have not read and understood every word of a 300 page Act of Parliament. I have read my MP's (Steve Brine, Winchester) comments and articles in the press.

Our prisons are holding approximately 78, 700 prisoners and it is, therefore, a self-evident truth that these prisoners were not deterred by the threat of prison. 75% of prisoners re-offend with 9 years and 39% within 12 months. We, can assume, therefore, that prison was only effective for 25% of the prison population. I am certain that further analysis would reveal that of the 25% there will be other reasons for not offending such as old age or ill-health. There will be a whole host of other reasons in each individual case. We can reasonably conclude therefore that prison does not reform or work in any sense except for the obvious case where repeat and dangerous criminals are removed from society during their prison sentence.

Laws work when the public support the law and its intended purpose. I would suggest that all of us have broken the law at some time. I feel certain that almost every vehicle driver has broken the speed limit, for example including the member so the government committee look at the act before parliament.

My first comment is, therefore, that writing a lengthy bill and expecting it to work is doomed to significant levels of failure unless the expected consequences are accepted and supported by the majority of the public. I do not have an equally simple and effective answer except that we need to turn away from the concept that more punishment for more things will remove the need for that punishment. So, we must ensure that prisoners not punish but prepare prisoners for life outside of prison. Prisoners very often lose their previous accommodation, possessions, work and family during their time in prison and so must be properly supported, at least for a significant period after they leave prison to give them a chance to restart their lives and reform as they gain self-confidence and a sense of worth,

Looking at some aspects of the bill. I recognise that demonstrations can cause significant levels of damage to property and to people, including the police and that some supervision is required. However, the bill does not say anything about how to deal with spontaneous demonstrations which can involve hundreds of thousands of people and occur by a mechanism of non-linear feedback in a very short time. There is often no identifiable leader. Are the police empowered to arrest a 100,000 people or select, at random, people they assume to be the leaders, probably without evidence. These people are demonstrating about something they feel desperate about. You can see in Hong Kong and Myanmar that people continue to protest even when the police and or army open fire with rubber bullets, tear gas, water cannons and even rifles. The solution is not punishment but negotiation and compromise.

I sympathise with all who oppose violence against police officers, NHS workers, teachers, social workers, black people, women and any other identifiable groups or individuals. I understand the feeling that more punishment is the solution. It would be nice to think so but these crimes are almost always carried out by men who are mentally ill, immoral, drunk,

under the influence of drugs or maybe are just uncontrollably angry and temporarily out of control. They might be motivated by twisted religious or other extreme views and see themselves as martyrs. The threat of punishment, at the instant of the violence, will not deter them. We need to identify and work with the people who are likely to become aggressive, whenever possible, before they commit violence. Words on an Act of Parliament will not significantly reduce violent or abusive acts. This might also involve increasing the price of alcohol which is a primary cause of violence. It would also have a beneficial effect on the health of heavy drinkers or alcoholics.

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