

EU Reoffending end of project conference - Closing Notes

Thank you for inviting me today to close this conference. I am heartened to see so many people from so many different areas and backgrounds coming together with a single aim, to reduce reoffending and its impacts.

It's fantastic to see an international project of this scale and cross-border significance taking place in Merseyside and I would like to congratulate everyone involved both here and those from overseas.

Those of you who know me, or have worked with me, will know that I am passionate about reducing crime and making our communities safer, it is not only a priority of mine but it is something that our communities tell us is a priority for them.

As Police and Crime Commissioner, I am in a unique position - the only politician elected to represent the whole of Merseyside. I have a responsibility to monitor the whole criminal justice system in this area and to fix a budget that focuses on working in partnership to cut crime, reduce the number of victims and generally improve public confidence in the criminal justice system. That means reducing reoffending in order to cut crime and protect victims is one of my priorities.

Today has shown us all the stark reality that 68% of offenders released from custody go on to re-offend. 68%, that is a huge number. According to a Government policy paper released earlier this year, the estimated cost of that reoffending to the taxpayers amounts to between £9.5 and £13 billion.

Knowsley Council in partnership with Merseyside Police, The Probation Service, The Prison Service and MALS have collaborated to develop models that work. They have shown that through supporting offenders whilst in prison and through the prison gate that number can and has changed.

I have watched the Knowsley Video and you cannot help but be moved by some of the personal stories contained within it.

The world is getting ever smaller and it has never been more important to track and support offenders, regardless of borders.

This project has shown that agencies from the UK, Netherlands and Italy can work collectively to develop a model that works, regardless of where it is delivered. This project has brought together 3 years of working on a

transnational basis to reduce re-offending and make the lives of offenders, and their families, better.

Another passion of mine is to encourage agencies to work together. As belts have tightened, here and around the world, the importance of collaboration becomes ever more important.

Every public, private and third sector organisation is facing austerity. Merseyside Police alone has had to make savings of £77m over the last five years and is facing the loss of a further £48m by 2019. These cuts are further exacerbated by the budget reductions to our community safety partners, many of which are represented here, which are having a really detrimental impact on much of the very effective crime prevention and victim support work that has been going on in recent years.

In these bleak times, it has never been more important to work together in partnership to achieve outcomes and, as this project has shown, change lives.

This project is a great example of what can be achieved when agencies work together.

The outcomes for offenders, who have engaged in this project, and their families, are clear but let us not forget, reduced re-offending means less crime and fewer victims and future victims.

Surely that has to be the aim for everyone.