

# CHAPTER 14

## CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Imagine crime falling year on year because the causes of crime are being dealt with – unemployment, insecurity at home, school exclusions, inequality, mental health issues, drugs. Imagine a prison population at the European average rather than way over it. Picture prisons in public hands and actually rehabilitating prisoners. Have you been a victim of crime? Picture restorative justice, which gives you a voice and helps the offender to take responsibility and make amends.

It's been said that, the more dysfunctional a society is, the more laws it has. Here is how dysfunctional the UK has become:

- Under Margaret Thatcher there were 1,724 new laws per year;
- Under John Major there were 2,402 per year;
- Under Tony Blair, 2,663 per year.

The UK imprisons more people than any other country in Europe. Under the Coalition, the prison population reached an all-time high of 88,179 in December 2011, and the number of front-line prison officers dropped by 30% between 2010 and 2013. This is a picture of a very uneasy society.

### THE CONTEXT OF CRIME

Crime has a context:

- 60% of offenders have no qualifications at all;
- 48% have literacy skills below those expected of an 11 year old;
- 65% have numeracy skills below those expected of an 11 year old;
- 67% were unemployed at the time of imprisonment;
- 49% of prisoners ran away from home as a child;
- 41% were excluded from school;
- 71% suffer from two or more mental disorders;
- 70% of offenders had been drinking at the time the offences for which they were imprisoned were committed;
- There is more crime in more unequal societies.