

Working with the under 24 population in Wheatfield Prison, Mountjoy Progression Unit and Oberstown Detention Centre

Young adults aged 18-24 are disproportionately represented in the prison population: 20% of prison population compared with 9% of general population;



What's Working Well

- Young adults are more amenable to rehabilitation and change than older adults who commit the same crimes.
- The brain and maturity continue to develop beyond adolescence and into one's mid-twenties – the right interventions can support desistance
- Interventions and good practice that have proven successful in the youth justice system could be extended to young adults aged 18-24

The logo for COMPASS features the word "COMPASS" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letter "A" is replaced by a yellow, upward-pointing arrowhead. The letters "C", "O", "M", "P", "S", and "S" are in a dark blue color, while the arrowhead is a bright yellow. The logo is centered horizontally on the right side of the slide.

What's Not Working Well

- The Drugs gangs are growing in influence over young people in disadvantaged communities.
- In some parts of the cities daily drug use or sale and supply is normal behaviour.
- We are simply not going to scare young people into not taking drugs.
- We are not going to arrest our way to removing drugs from our streets.
- Even those in prison for other charges are often still drug related.
- The stigma and the possible criminal convictions prevent people seeking support.

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Meet Conor

- **21 years of age**
- **Daily cannabis smoker**
- **12 simple possession charges**
- **1 sale and supply charge**
- **Has completed community service,**
- **Has served 5 days in prison,**
- **Has paid fines**
- **Even went to rehab for 8 days .**
- **He still smokes.**
- **He still functions.**
- **He buys from criminal gangs.**
- **He unintentionally funds the drugs wars.**
- **He struggles to build a career, as he has a significant criminal record.**
- **He feels excluded from his community.**
- **He feels hounded by the Gardai**



What do we need to do differently?

- Not have young people growing up experiencing exclusion due to drug use.
- Connect the 18-year-old boy in the court for simple possession to wider societal inequalities.
- Promote education, harm reduction and safe alternatives.
- Have programmes in the prisons engaging with young people caught up in the drugs trade to explore viable exit strategies.
- Remove drug charges from criminal proceedings, fund addiction interventions.

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