



*Independent inspection of  
adult & youth offending work*

**Andrew Bridges**  
**HM Chief Inspector of Probation**  
Second Floor  
Ashley House  
2 Monck Street  
London SW1P 2BQ

**Response by the Chief Inspector of Probation to comments by Melanie Phillips and others on the Chief Inspector's Foreword to the Annual Report of HM Inspectorate of Probation for 2009-10**

***Melanie's Motion: That The Difficult Question Not Be Put***

Whether people wish to accept the uncomfortable fact or not, a (small) proportion of ex-prisoners will commit a serious crime at some point after their release. Unquestionably this is catastrophic for the victim(s), but the unwelcome truth is that something dreadful will always happen somewhere in a free society, whatever the various authorities do to minimise that possibility.

Whether we consider the matter explicitly or implicitly, the Question is: ***How many people are we prepared to keep locked up and for how long in order to prevent each serious crime?*** Undoubtedly this is a distasteful Question to pose, though there are others such as the public funding of certain cancer treatments that generate comparably high human emotions.

As an independent Inspectorate, I sought to put this Question into the public domain, in the Foreword of my Annual Report, to enable more informed debate and awareness, but I advocated/proposed/suggested nothing.

Currently we're keeping a minimum of 60 people in prison each year in order to prevent each 'Serious Further Offence', and at about £40k a year each.

I agree with Ms Phillips that it is not for the 'regulator' to advocate an answer, so I didn't – it is for the taxpaying electorate to decide the answer – but I now oppose her motion that The Difficult Question Not Be Put. People can judge the issue for themselves, and also see how we go about assessing the effectiveness of Probation and Youth Offending work, by going to [link](#).

**Andrew Bridges CBE**  
**HM Chief Inspector of Probation**  
**13 July 2010**