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YOUNG OFFENDERS

Every Russian knows that we have a lot of troubles with juvenile delinquency. But not many of us know about troubles with young offenders in other countries. So I am going to tell you about young offenders in Great Britain.

First of all lets see on survey.

“Up to 30 per cent of teenagers carry some kind of weapon to protect themselves, with one in five boys carrying a knife, according to a survey which shows widespread concern among young people about their physical safety.

The survey of 24,000 teenagers by the Schools Education Unit of Exeter University shows that two-thirds of girls and one-third of boys fear physical attack.

About a third of girls and a quarter of boys are so fearful of bulling that they are sometimes, often, or very often afraid of going to school.

Almost half of 12-13-year-olds and 60 per cent of 14-15-year-olds consumed at least one alcoholic drink.

About 10 per cent 12-13-year-olds and 30 per cent of 14-15-year-olds had tried at least one illegal drug, usually cannabis.” (The Guardian November, 1996)

Now lets see what police say about young offenders.

“Northumbria police identified 58 youngsters- most 15 or younger – officially responsible for 1,079 crimes in Newcastle upon Tyne last year and arrested on 833 occasions.

They include one boy arrested 37 times in a year, who was a thief and a burglar at 11, and another thought to have committed at least 300 crimes. He had been arrested 64 times in three years. Six month ago he stole an army motorcycle and an automatic rifle – both later recovered- after absconding from a remand center.

But on the assumption that he 58 have committed an overage of 7.8 crimes for every arrest, the report estimates that they could have been responsible for a staggering 6,500 crimes last year.

Young criminals were graded in five categories from ‘most persistent offenders’ to ‘minor’.

Alan Brown, the assistant chief constable of Northumbria, called for a national strategy to deal with juvenile offenders – starting with special units for boys under 15 who, at present, cannot be remanded in custody. ‘They need to be prisonlike, but could be used for juveniles on the verge of becoming persistent offenders who need supervision before they become seriously involved in crime,’ he said. (The Guardian November, 1996)

All this makes us think about one thing “What makes them commit crimes?” Here is some points.

Involvement in offending and drug use amongst young people is widespread – every other male and every third female admitted to committing offences and the same numbers admitted using drugs at some time – but most offending is infrequent and minor and most drug use is confined to using cannabis.

The strongest influences on starting to offend are low parental supervision, persistent truancy and associating with others involved in offending, all of which are strongly related to the quality of relationships with parents.

The most common age fore starting the following activities:

1. 14 years for truanting and running away from Home.
2. 15 years for offending and taking cannabis
3. 16 years for taking drugs other than cannabis

The peak ages for offending are 21 for males and 16 for females.

So, how we should prevent crime by young people?

British specialists offer: “It would be better to prevent the offending behavior in the first place. Steps can be taken by a wide range of agencies to address such problems by intervening before those at risk start to offend. Local agencies need to pilot such interventions in the areas where they era most needed, and evaluate them to learn what works.

Children brought up in families with lax parental supervision and which live in poor neighborhoods are more likely to become offenders. Parents who are bringing up their children in difficult circumstances can be helped by professionals to improve their parenting skills and produce better-behaved.

Where parents fail to socialize their children adequately, schools end up coping with bad behavior among their pupils. Young people who are excluded from school or who truant are more likely to offend – so it is worrying that the number of pupils permanently excluded from schools has risen. Schools can be helped to deal with difficult pupils by support workers, and by advice from child and adolescent mental health services.

Use of drugs and alcohol is high among young offenders – 70 per cent of those on supervision orders admit to taking drugs and over half get drunk at least once a week. Multi-agency Drug Action Teams need to ensure that some of the services developed locally cater for the needs of those under the age of 18.”