The seminar will engage with a series of controversial questions arising out of research concerning the imprisonment of children and there will be ample opportunity to consider, discuss and debate the implications for policy and practice.

This Making Research Count conference brings together some of the leading researchers in the youth justice field.


Using the social work concept of ‘rule of optimism’, Carolyne will catalogue the abuse and neglect suffered by children in prison, and advocate the closure of these damaging institutions.

Professor Barry Goldson currently holds the Charles Booth Chair of Social Science at the University of Liverpool. He is also Visiting Professorial Research Fellow at the Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia (since 2010) and Adjunct Professor at the School of Justice, QUT, Brisbane, Australia (since 2014). His most recent authored and/or edited books include: Comparative Youth Justice (Sage, 2006, with Muncie), Dictionary of Youth Justice (Willan, 2008), Youth Crime and Juvenile Justice (an edited three-volume set of international ‘major works’, Sage 2009, with Muncie), Youth in Crisis? ‘Gangs’, Territoriality and Violence (Routledge, 2011), Youth Crime and Justice, 2nd edition (Sage, 2015, with Muncie) and Re-imagining Juvenile Justice (forthcoming, Routledge, 2016).

Building upon Foucault’s observation that the ‘prison is dangerous when it is not useless’, and drawing upon, a wealth of international research and practice experience, Professor Goldson will outline the ‘dangerous’ impositions of child imprisonment alongside its ‘useless’ outcomes in respect of crime prevention and community safety. He will further address two key questions. First, in the face of such evidence why do children continue to be imprisoned? Second, how do we account for the ebbs and flows of child prisoner populations over time (within the same jurisdictions) and over space (between different jurisdictions).

Ian Cummins is Senior Lecturer in Social Work at the University of Salford. With recent high profile cases highlighting the need to rethink the approaches taken to young people in police custody, Ian will discuss his research looking at vulnerability in police custody, with a particular focus on the needs of 16 and 17 years olds.

The seminar will be of particular relevance to: academic researchers; those with an interest in youth justice policy and children’s rights; and practitioners working with young people in youth justice, social work, probation, community development and youth work settings.