

Boy, 12, is arrested nine times

Name Redacted

DPA

A TWELVE-YEAR-OLD boy at a controversial "crime-a-day" young offenders' home has been arrested nine times, police revealed last night.

But the open-doors home is powerless to lock him up to end his spree.

The boy is one of a hard core group of young criminals whom police say have brought havoc to a quiet area.

Police say the boys, sent to Beechwood House in Nottingham by local courts, regularly walk out to commit more offences and have been involved in 54 arrests already this year. Last night Health Minister Tim Yeo promised prompt action and said local authorities had a duty to ensure persistent young criminals in their care were kept under control.

Mr Yeo said: "The report in the Daily Express will fuel public concern at a time when people are already agitated and understandably so."

Government officials are now talking to Nottinghamshire Social Services and Mr Yeo expects to have a full report within days.

But last night Phil Arnold, social services head of Notts County Council homes, clashed with the police for

By ALEX HENDRY

publicising statistics about the home. He said: "We would have appreciated the police telling us if they had a problem at Beechwood."

He said the "most singularly unsuccessful" method of dealing with young offenders was locking them up. But Inspector Kevin Aldread, who released the figures, said: "Ten or 15 years ago youngsters would be intimidated by the courts or at the thought of being arrested by police. Now they know only too well they are not going to get custodial sentences."

"Being arrested and locked up briefly by the police seems to be a bit of a game for them."

Insp Aldread said that by the time youngsters were old enough to be given custodial sentences, they had already had the opportunity to commit a lot of crimes.

"There are a lot of children getting involved who I think would steer clear of crime if there was a proper deterrent of some kind."

He said two youths had boasted to him that police drivers were not fast enough to catch them when they stole cars.

"There is nothing we can do however. They would never admit to the offence in an interview."

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