Evaluate

**Hobbs & Holt (1976)** – investigated the effectiveness of a token economy employed with 125 boys detained in a correlational institution for offences ranging from truancy to arson and homicide. They compared boys living in separate accommodation units (cottages), three of which were on the token economy programme and one of which was not and used as a control. Behaviours such as rule-following, co-operation, being non-violent and not destroying property were targeted. They found that the system improved the targeted behaviours in the participating cottages, whilst the behaviour of boys not on the programmes remained fairly constant.

**Kirigin et al (1982)** – reported on the effectiveness of the Achievement Place programmes with young offenders, including girls and boys with a history of crimes, such as burglary, theft, assault and vandalism. The home based programme included the use of a token economy. Those who participated in the programme were about half as likely to re-offend as those who did not. However, in the follow-up period, contact with the police and courts was not different between groups.

**Rice et al (1990)** – found that, although a token economy programme with 92 male offenders in a maximum security psychiatric hospital resulted in behaviour change, this was unrelated to their behaviour once discharged. They concluded that treatment programmes for such individuals need to emphasise skills that will aid the individuals post-release.

Some studies show that token economies are ineffective or even damaging. **Ross & Mackay (1976)** studied the use of token economy programme with delinquent girls. This was ineffective at solving their behaviour problems when directed at either reducing antisocial behaviour or increase social acts. Nor was a token economy combined with peer training effective, yet peer training alone did improve the behaviour. These findings suggest that using a token economy may, in some situations, be disadvantageous in terms of improving behaviour.

**Corrigan (1995)** raises the criticisms that making adults submit to token economy is humiliating and infantilising. If the economy required inmates to earn basic rights, such as food, the system would be degrading, but this is not the case. Tokens are used to obtain additional, not necessary, goods and services.

A review of ten years of use of token economies in institutional settings, identified benefits such as the value of staff modelling good behaviour. This is important not only as an additional route to behaviour management, but also because it achieves behaviour change without reliance on direct reinforcement.