

Beyond
YOUTH CUSTODY

**RESETTLEMENT
OF YOUNG PEOPLE
LEAVING CUSTODY
LESSONS FROM THE LITERATURE**

UPDATE: MARCH 2016

**Professor Neal Hazel
and Dr Kelly Lockwood**



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Introduction

In April 2013, Beyond Youth Custody (BYC) published an extensive literature review on the resettlement (re-entry) of children and young adults leaving custody (Bateman et al, 2013). As new publications are constantly added to the literature, the shape of the evidence base continues to change. Therefore, BYC is committed to publishing and disseminating regular supplements that take account of the latest developments in resettlement policy and practice, to ensure that practitioners and policy makers have access to the latest available lessons.

This review explores relevant publications that have been circulated since the most recent update was published in November 2015 (Lockwood and Hazel, 2015). It will begin by considering the trends in imprisonment and challenges for resettlement of children and young people, before going on to explore policy developments and then recent research findings. This update includes a particular focus on interim findings from the current 'Taylor review' of youth justice. There are recurring themes in this report of the implications of the reducing custodial population for children and young adults, the importance of considering diversity for resettlement, and vulnerability and trauma in custody.

Trends in imprisonment and challenges for resettlement

Overall prison population

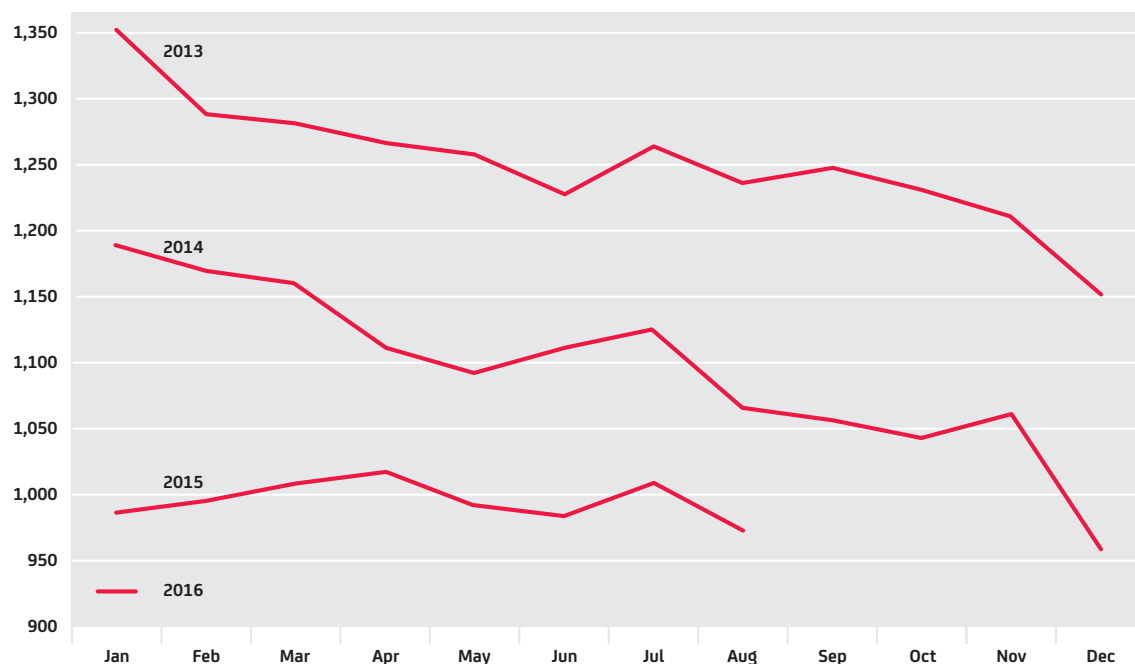
The overall prison population in England and Wales has increased significantly over recent decades. The number of prisoners in England and Wales reached its record high of 88,179 prisoners on 2 December 2011 (Berman, 2013). Since then, the overall prison population has stabilised somewhat, just shy of that peak figure. In the equivalent week in 2015, there were 85,075 people in prisons – 3.5% fewer than four years previously (Ministry of Justice 2015).

However, when analysing prison population change across recent Septembers, our last update reported a slight increase in the past two years, and speculated whether this would be a trend moving forwards (Lockwood and Hazel, 2015). In actual fact, there are slightly fewer people in prison at the start of March 2016 than there were in December – a decrease over the three months of 116 to 84,959 (Ministry of Justice, 2016b). Nevertheless, if we allow for seasonal shifts by comparing with the equivalent week last year, we again see evidence of that slight upward trend in the prison population – up by 1% from 84,147. We will continue to monitor this trend in future updates.

We noted in the last update that, even taking into account the recent upward trend, the prison population was not increasing at the rate projected by the Ministry of Justice (2014). Indeed, the government has since revised down its projections for the increase in prison numbers moving forwards (Ministry of Justice, 2015a). It has also changed the way that the projections are presented, moving away from having three possible scenarios, all of which proved too high. There is now a single scenario, but with confidence intervals either side of 30%, 60% and 90% certainty. This “experimental measure of uncertainty” seems safer, given that after just four months of predictions, the prison population figure at the end of February (including Immigration Removal Centres) was already 547 fewer than projected (Ministry of Justice, 2016c).

Children in custody

Figure 1: Child custodial population – annual trends 2013-2016



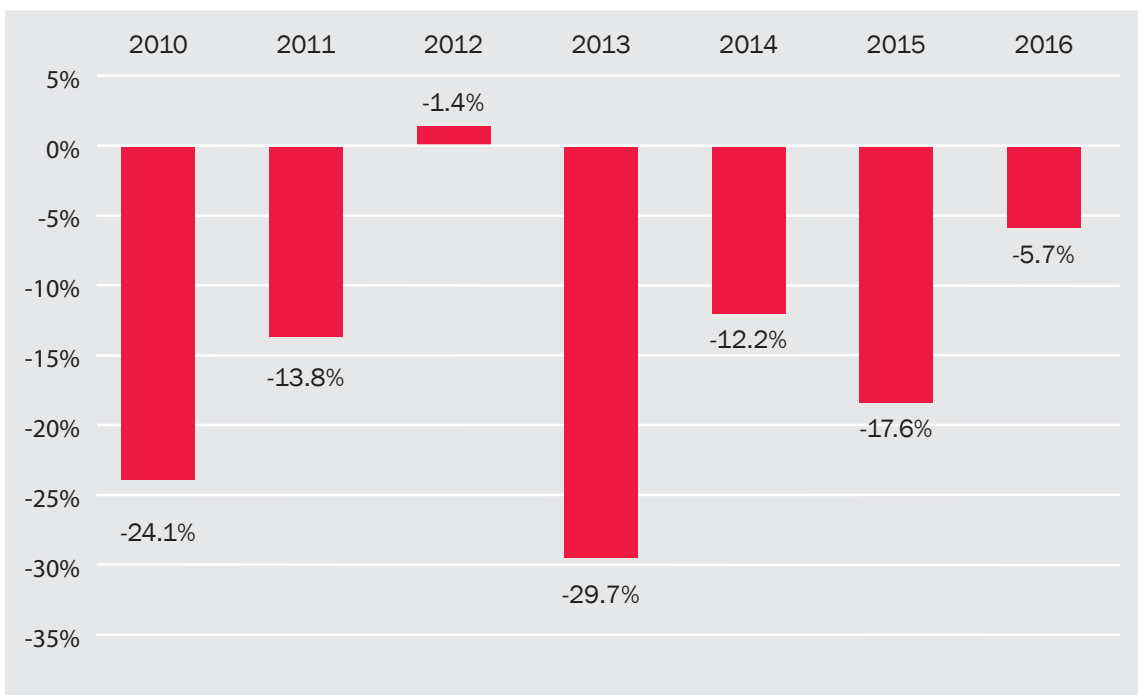
Compiled from data provided in Youth Justice Board (2016)

Our previous updates have noted that, in recent years, trends for the numbers of children in custody in England and Wales have not mirrored those of adults. Although both age groups saw a sharp rise in the custodial population through the 1990s (Pickford and Dugmore, 2012), from 2002 the numbers of children began to decline while adults in prison continued to rise. This decrease became more rapid from 2008 onwards, with a further 20% reduction in the children's custodial population witnessed in 2014 (Bateman, 2015).

In our July 2015 update, we noted an atypical rise in the number of children in custody at the start of the year (Lockwood and Hazel, 2015a), and speculated whether this signified that the reduction of recent years was bottoming out. However, as we later noted (Lockwood and Hazel, 2015), the figures were back in line with recent seasonal trajectories by the summer, albeit starting from a higher number in custody than if the atypical rise had not taken place. As Figure 1 shows, this included a dip in numbers in early summer, the usual rise in July, and a rise in the autumn before a sharp fall in December. The decrease in December was important because, following the atypical rise at the start of the year, this was the first time all 2015 that the numbers of children in custody were lower than at the end of 2014. Indeed, the 929 children in custody in December 2015 was the lowest number since the 1990s.

It should also be noted that this year is not yet seeing a repeat of 2015's atypical rise in numbers at the start of the year. January 2016 (the most recent figures available at time of writing) saw an even lower average number of children in custody than the record low of 921 in the previous month. Although this continued fall shows that the child custodial population did not bottom out last year as feared, Figure 2 demonstrates that the reductions is slowing down proportionately as well as in raw numbers. The fall in the year to January 2016 was the smallest for the equivalent month since 2012. At 5.7%, it was only a third of the proportionate size of reduction seen in the year to 2015. As the figure shows, the speed of the reduction in child custody numbers has increased and decreased in recent years, but we should repeat our previous warning that further shifts in justice policy or sentencing policy may be needed to continue the reduction in the child custody population.

Figure 2: Child custodial population – yearly percentage difference from previous January



Calculated from data provided in Youth Justice Board (2016)

Diversity in the child custodial population

While the overall population of young people in custody continues to decrease, those who remain have more complex and diverse needs to be addressed in resettlement (Bateman and Hazel, 2014). This increase in diversity was highlighted well by an analysis of demographic figures recently released by HM Inspectorate of Prisons and Youth Justice Board from their annual survey of children in custody (Redmond, 2015). Table 1 below compares the figures released for diversity self-reported by boys in Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) over time.

Table 1: Diversity of children in YOIs, comparison of HMIP survey cohorts

Demographic characteristic	2001-2003	2010-2011	2014-2015
BME	23%	39%	42%
Disability	-	9%	18%
Muslim	-	16%	21%
Gypsy, Romany or Traveller	-	5%	8%

Compiled from HMI Prisons (2015)

As the HMIP report notes, these figures show some considerable changes in the profile of boys held in YOIs, suggesting increased diversity in the custodial population. The only demographic figure available for comparison from at the height of the custodial population in the early 2000s was the percentage of boys identifying as from a Black and Minority Ethnic Background, which has almost doubled from 23% to 42% in the latest survey. In the four years from 2010/11 to 2014/15, the demographics have seen a doubling of boys identifying as having a disability (from 9% to 18%). The proportion of boys identifying as Muslim and those from a Gypsy, Romany or Traveller background has also increased.

The increased diversity of the custodial population demonstrates the need for resettlement planning to be customised in order to reflect the individual needs of the young person. This issue of diversity was noted by a recent Beyond Youth Custody report (Wright et al, 2015) as crucial to resettlement services for several reasons, including:

- Tailoring resettlement interventions to young people's diverse identities is key to effective engagement, which is necessary for achieving positive outcomes.
- Adequately assessing and understanding the diverse needs of individuals is essential to engaging them effectively in their resettlement plan.
- The Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires all organisations delivering public services to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between different people.

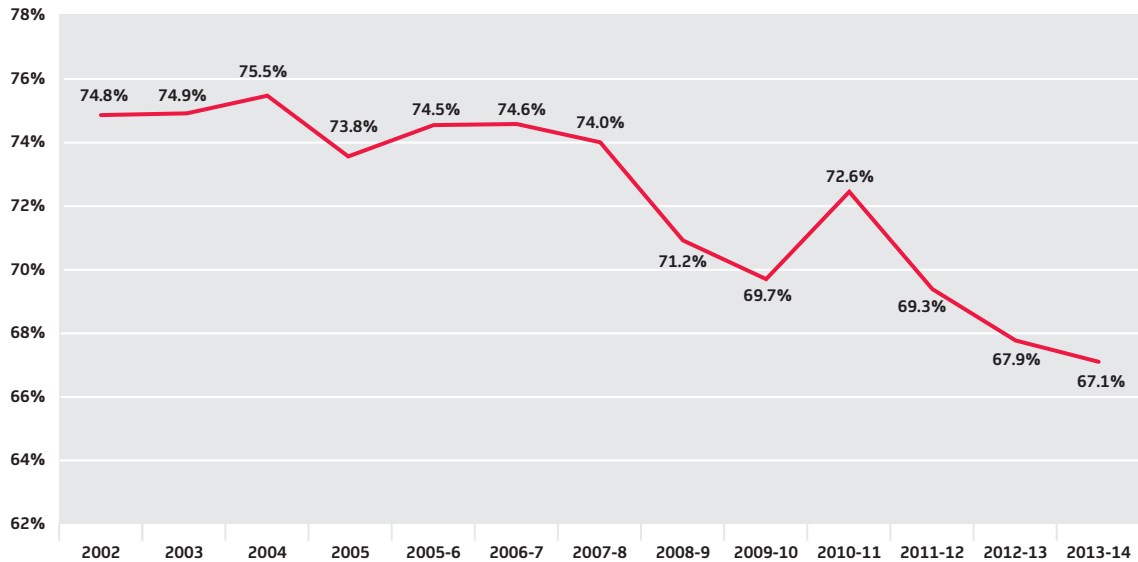
The report concluded that more needs to be done to acknowledge diversity as a factor in resettlement, and that improvements in monitoring are needed in order to fully understand and address differential treatments. It called on practitioners to "develop truly tailored interventions that address all aspects of their diverse identities" (Wright et al, 2015:7).

Reconviction rates

The proven reoffending rate for children released from custody has continued to fall slightly, year on year. Figures recently released by the Ministry of Justice showed that the 67.1% of under-18s released from custody

between April 2013 and April 2014 were reconvicted for an offence within a year (Ministry of Justice, 2016d). As figure 3 shows, that figure is a decrease of 0.8% from the 2012-13 cohort and a fall of 7.8% since 2003.

Figure 3: The trend in proven reoffending rate for children leaving custody (2002 to 2013-14)



Compiled from Ministry of Justice (2016d) proven reoffending tables

This decrease comes despite the increase in diversity and complex cases noted above. It contrasts with the rise of 1.9% over the same period in the reoffending rate of young people who had served a sentence of any type of disposal (to 38% in 2013/14).

Young adults in custody

The young adult prison population for England and Wales (18-24 year olds) has also fallen, although the reduction had been more modest in comparison to children (Bateman and Hazel, 2014), until 2010 when a more pronounced decline began (Bateman, 2015). From 2010 to 2014 there was a more significant decline of more than a third in the young adult population, and that trend has continued. In fact, the rate of reduction in the adult population is now increasing; during 2015, the young adult population fell by 7.6%, compared with a 6.14% reduction in 2014. Indeed, the last quarter of 2015 saw the young adult custodial population fall below 16,000 for the first time in recent years.

Table 2: Young adult custody by age – December 2013-December 2015 (end of each month)

	Dec 13	Mar 14	Jun 14	Sep 14	Dec 14	Mar 15	Jun15	Sep 15	Dec 15
18-20 years									
Males	5,727	5,759	5,533	5,306	5,030	4,993	4,879	4,693	4,574
Females	188	180	168	167	172	177	171	147	133
Total	5,915	5,939	5,701	5,473	5,202	5,170	5,050	4,840	4,707
21-24 years									
Males	12,014	12,136	12,021	12,037	11,614	11,601	11,573	11,312	10,863
Females	420	459	452	435	406	406	366	374	347
Total	12,434	12,595	12,473	12,472	12,020	12,007	11,939	11,686	11,210
Young Adults									
Total	18,349	18,534	18,174	17,510	17,222	17,177	16,989	16,526	15,917

Compiled from Ministry of Justice (2013: Table 1.8); Ministry of Justice (2014a: Table 1.3), Ministry of Justice (2015d: Table 1.3) and Ministry of Justice (2016f: Table 1.3)

We have reported in previous updates that the reduction in the prison population has been much greater for 18-20 year olds than for 21-24 year olds (e.g. Lockwood and Hazel, 2015a). That continued to be the case across 2015, although the difference was less marked than previously. The numbers of 18-20 year olds fell by 9.5% (12.1% in 2014) whereas the numbers of 21-25 year olds fell by 6.7% during 2015 (3.32% in 2014).

We noted previously that the rate of reduction of the 18-20 age group was higher than the under 18s, and highlighted the theory that we are seeing the trends for reductions in child custody, and diversion from criminal prosecution that has fueled that, filtering through to this age group (Lockwood and Hazel, 2015). The December 2015 figures show that the 21-24 year old age category is now also falling at a greater rate than under 18s, suggesting that the benefits of diversion at a younger age are even filtering to the higher age category of young adults. As we warned above in relation to the reductions in the child custody population, fewer young adults in custody will also mean a concentration of those with more complex problems and embedded offending behaviour for practitioners to tackle in order to achieve sustainable resettlement.

Developments in the custodial estate and implications for resettlement

Prison reform programme – and a reduction of prison population?

The current Secretary of State for Justice, Michael Gove, stated at the end of 2015 that he would like to see the overall prison population fall over time, which commentators took as a clear change in policy direction from previous incumbents (BBC Online, 2015). He told a Howard League for Penal Reform conference that he wanted to do this through “effective rehabilitation”, although this did not explicitly refer to an emphasis on reduced reoffending through improved resettlement. Central to government plans for effective rehabilitation is its recently announced ‘prison building revolution’ which focuses on replacing several Victorian-built inner-city prisons with nine new prisons elsewhere with “new facilities fit for the modern world... which allows prisoners to be rehabilitated, so they turn away from crime” (Ministry of Justice, 2015c). The plan reflects proposals previously made by think tank, Policy Exchange (Lockyer, 2013) for “swapping old for new” to build large Hub Prisons containing up to 3,000 inmates, each based on the premise that “the key determinant of the decency, safety and effectiveness of a prison is not its size, but its age” (Lockyer, 2013:6).

The BBC reported that ministers were also looking at lowering the prison population by finding ways to reduce the numbers recalled to prison for breaching the terms of their licence, although this would seem difficult given the expanded licence supervision under the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014. At 31 December 2015, there were 455 prisoners in custody directly as a result of the Act, which accounted for 7% of those currently in prison for breaching the terms of their licence (Ministry of Justice, 2016e). Similarly, previous research has highlighted the risks of increased breaching (but reduced offending) if any increased supervision and resettlement support includes compulsory participation as part of licence requirements (Hazel et al 2012). In fact, in the most recent quarter (July to September 2015) for which data is available, there was an increase in the numbers recalled for breaching their licence of 28% compared to the same period in the previous year (Ministry of Justice, 2016e).

However, a more recent interview with the Secretary of State suggested to commentators that reduced prison numbers had ceased to be central to his ideas of penal reform. He is reported to have stated that there is no need to “manage down the prison population” by shaping sentencing policy or to introduce an “artificial target”, and that to do so would have a harmful effect on the criminal justice system (Gentleman, 2016). He continued his emphasis on increasing activities that he sees as central to rehabilitation, including the amount of time that prisoners spend out of their cells working and learning. However, this was not framed in terms of linking with activities or opportunities after release, as principles of effective resettlement would suggest (Goodfellow et al, 2015).

Changes for female prisoners

An early announcement of changes in his prison reform programme was the planned closure of Holloway prison for female offenders (Ministry of Justice, 2015c). The Secretary of State announced in November 2015 that remand prisoners will be held in HMP Bronzefield, and sentenced prisoners will be held in refurbished facilities opened as a women’s prison in HMP Downview later this year. Interestingly, his written statement recognises the vulnerability of many women in prison, well established in research (Bateman and Hazel, 2014). His subsequent media interview expanded on this theme, arguing that the “current model that we have for dealing with female offenders is deeply flawed” and indicating that a “more appropriate and sympathetic way of dealing with people, many of whom have tragic lives” is needed (Gentleman, 2016).

But what does a more “appropriate and sympathetic” way look like? The emphasis given by the minister was on strengthening relationships, to “build self-confidence and build a sense of opportunity and possibility in [prisoners’] lives”. This emphasis is encouraging because it reflects the critical focus on resettlement necessary for gender-responsive resettlement of girls and young women – identified as a ‘gender prism’ of vulnerabilities, relationships and empowerment (Bateman and Hazel, 2014). In addition, “a sense of opportunity and possibility” is in line with the shift in personal narrative recognised as fundamental to sustainable resettlement (Goodfellow et al, 2015).

However, there are concerns as to whether the closure of Holloway will actually help women to strengthen empowering relationships. Although the Secretary of State argued that the new prisons will provide better settings for family visits and have good transport links to London, where a large proportion of the women will have come from, this has been questioned by the Leader of the Opposition. Jeremy Corbyn argued that both the new prisons are “not easy to access by friends and families, especially those with children”, and called for a new prison on the existing site in London (Morris, 2015).

The two sides are right to stress the importance of maintaining family relationships while in custody which, for both genders, is linked to increased wellbeing, better behaviour in prisons (Barefoot Research, 2015) and lower recidivism (Ladlow and Neale, 2016; May, Sharma and Stewart, 2008). New practitioner guidance from BYC will stress the importance of service providers assisting families in reaching institutional meetings, and urges institutions to supplement meetings with video conferencing (Hazel et al, In Press).

Review of youth justice system – interim report

As noted in our October update, the Secretary of State for Justice has asked Charlie Taylor, former Chief Executive of the National College of Teaching and Leadership, to conduct a review of the youth justice system. He has been asked to consider whether current arrangements in the system are fit for purpose to prevent youth crime and rehabilitate offenders. The review published its interim report of emerging findings on 9 February and is divided into five parts, all of which have some implication for resettlement of children (Taylor, 2016).

The introduction to the review raises questions about whether the current youth justice system, which was created at a time of high numbers, is still appropriate with fewer, and more complex children. It notes that reoffending rates have risen; this is indeed the case, rising from 33.4% reoffending within a year of conviction/release in 2002 on a fairly steady trajectory to 38% in 2013/14 (Ministry of Justice, 2016d). However, it should be noted that this is an incorrect starting assumption when looking at youth custody, which is a major focus for this review. As shown above, the reoffending rate among children released from custody has fallen alongside the reduction in custodial population.

The introduction also states two key principles that have informed the review thus far:

- Children are treated differently to adults, and the aims of community reparation and protection must make room for helping children overcome their difficulties.
- Education must be central to an effective youth justice system. Children in trouble with the law must be given “the skills, qualifications and aptitudes to lead successful, law-abiding lives”.

The first principle has been widely welcomed as likely to lead to a ‘child focused’ approach. It is interesting that the emphasis in these principles moves slightly away from New Labour’s Crime and Disorder Act (2008) – which states that the primary aim of the youth justice system is ‘preventing offending’ – towards focusing on the best interests of the child and their future. This is the most common approach in other youth justice systems around the world (Hazel, 2008). It does, however, still cede somewhat to the ‘risk agenda’ that has dominated the past two decades of youth justice in England and Wales with the nod to protecting communities.

The second principle, which focuses on education, is no surprise given the background of both Michael Gove and Charlie Taylor. It is also very much in line with developing government policy in this area as explored in our last update (Lockwood and Hazel, 2015). However, the argument given to support the principle – that falls in youth offending have coincided with improvements in educational indicators – may appear somewhat spurious without providing evidence of a causal relationship. It is certainly the case, however, that education and training have been shown to be important to resettlement outcomes (Little, 2015; Bateman et al, 2014) although research suggests that this must be seen as part of a wider shift package of support that shifts a young person’s personal narrative (Goodfellow et al, 2015).

Youth custody

The second part of the review makes it clear that “fundamental change to the current youth custody system is needed” (Taylor, 2016:4). Again, the focus is that “ensuring children are in full-time education or employment can be one of the most effective ways to prevent crime” (p.4), which is true, but the resettlement research has shown that this is only one important constituent in preparation for release. Two sentences in the report read:

“If we have created disincentives for young people to learn in custody, it is clear that what is best for children has at times become secondary to containment, the management of risk and establishing uniform processes. Rather than preparing children for life on the outside, too often these establishments seem to be teaching children how to survive in prison.” (2016:5)

Although this does again primarily restrict interest to improving learning, it echoes a major theme in Beyond Youth Custody research and inspection findings (HMI Probation, 2015), that in order to achieve more effective resettlement it will be important for custodial institutions need to shift from a primary focus on managed containment and detention to preparation for release.

The review suggests imagining “radically different” youth custody by looking towards alternative provision schools, which tend to specialise in supporting children with behavioural difficulties. As such, it calls on reconceiving youth prisons as “secure alternative provision schools” (Taylor, 2016:6), rather than prisons with some education imported. If we look at the history of child custody, such a proposal is not surprising. An emphasis on trying to replicate school provision is a recurring theme in welcome attempts to focus on the welfare of the child (e.g. remodeling of borstals in the 1920s, Approved Schools in the 1930s) (Hagell and Hazel, 2001; Bateman and Hazel, 2014b).

It is more radical, however, that the report suggests that some children may attend education and training back in their communities and have a much more open regime. This could certainly help resettlement by reducing the isolation in custody, help maintain or establish provision in the community earlier, start the engagement process with community services, and smooth the transition back to the community. As with release on temporary licence, it could help address the debilitating disorientation that some young people feel after institutionalisation (Hazel and Bateman, 2014). Essentially, the more open the regime and less restrictive the custody, the easier it would be to prepare for, or actually begin, release. The implication of a larger number of smaller units would also mean that they could be closer to the child’s home, which would counter the increasing distances that has been well recorded as causing difficulties for resettlement (e.g. Bateman and Hazel, 2013). As such, the concept holds promise to help resettlement in a several ways.

Integrated services

The third part of the review emphasises the need for a “carefully considered and co-ordinated response from a number of partners, making the link between YOTs, children’s, health and education services all the more critical if the root causes of offending are to be addressed” (Taylor, 2016:7). Again, this emphasis on coordinated partnership across sectors reflects one of the key characteristics of effective resettlement found in research (Hazel et al, 2010; Hazel and Liddle, 2012; Goodfellow et al, 2015). Indeed, the intention of more wraparound services was central to the concept of the multi-agency YOT system, but after research indicated that YOTs needed to look to other statutory and non-statutory agencies to deliver resettlement support, such coordinated partnership was a key aim of the Youth Justice Board’s resettlement consortia (Hazel et al, 2013).

It is noted in the review that different authority areas have tried different models for improving this integration, including integration into wider youth services and merging YOTs to increase efficiencies in the wake of smaller caseloads. The fourth part of the review builds on this localism by calling for a youth justice system more devolved from central government, both in terms of responsibility and funding, in order to aid local integration. The review is clear that this would mean a “much reduced role for the centre” (Taylor, 2016:9), with the use of the word “centre” rather than “government” with likely implications for the Youth Justice Board. The central government role would be setting standards and accountability, and coordinating national custodial capacity.

Responding to children who break the law

The final section of the interim report moves away from concentrating on system organisation and focuses on interventions. It correctly recognises that research shows that contact with the youth justice system makes “some” children more likely to reoffend, firmly supports the idea of diversion from the youth justice system, and welcomes the continuing fall in first-time entrants to the youth justice system. As was noted earlier in this update, this approach has implications for further along the justice path, not only for custody and resettlement of children caught in the system, but also for young adults. The review promises to explore further opportunities for diversion.

Particular attention is drawn to the issue of children staying overnight in police cells, with a stated ambition by the review for as short a period in the police station as possible, with proper account taken of vulnerability. Practically, this involves the review looking further at how to reduce the process time in stations, challenging inappropriate use of detention for vulnerable children in need of other services, better safeguards while in custody and local authority support for children refused bail.

Finally, the interim report suggested that the review would be looking further at diversity in the youth justice system, and in particular the overrepresentation of those from black and ethnic groups, and looked after children. This update has previously highlighted the increasing diversity in the child custodial population in particular, and its implications for resettlement.

The final report is due for publication in July 2016 and will be reviewed in relation to implications for custody and resettlement in a future literature review update.

Medway Secure Training Centre allegations of abuse

Our previous update noted the controversy surrounding the decision to award the contract to run Medway Secure Training Centre (STC) to G4S (Lockwood and Hazel, 2015). The award was made despite the firm having lost the contract to run Rainsbrook STC, a few months after the publication of a critical inspection report into that STC, which suggested that staff conduct resulted in young people being caused distress and humiliation (Ofsted, 2015). We contrasted this with the fact that they had recently been praised for good practice in resettlement (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2015).

In January 2016, the issue escalated when the BBC ran an edition of Panorama – using an undercover reporter – alleged abuse and mistreatment of children, and collusion by staff inside Medway STC. The programme presented children distressed and humiliated, following apparently inappropriate physical force and restraint. Since the programme aired several developments have taken place, including police arrests, government announcement of an “independent improvement board” to examine Medway further following a critical HMI Prisons and Ofsted report (Ministry of Justice, 2016g) and G4S announcing that it has started a process to sell its business that runs Secure Training Centres (G4S, 2016).

Problems with ensuring appropriate control and restraint procedures have been a recurring issue reported in research and inspections at Medway and, historically, other custodial institutions holding children (Hagell and Hazel, 2001). Breaches of control and restraint procedures by staff at Medway were raised by a Social Services Inspectorate Team as long ago as its first year of opening in 1998. The Home Office evaluation of Medway noted that staff felt that permitted restraint techniques were not “heavy” enough and revealed allegations from children of abuse during restraints (Hagell et al, 2000).

Beyond Youth Custody publications have highlighted that traumatic experiences are very common in the backgrounds of young offenders and the need for staff involved in custody and resettlement to consider this in attempting to address behaviour. All children and young people are vulnerable, but those who have offended are likely to be even more vulnerable because of past trauma. We have warned that failure to understand this and inappropriate intervention, whether or not there is deliberate intent to mistreat, can be counterproductive to both the welfare of the young person and the sustainability of successful resettlement (Wright and Liddle, 2014).

Research findings

Young people's perceptions of experiences in custody

As we noted earlier when considering the changing demographics of the child custodial population, HM Inspectorate of Prisons and the Youth Justice Board have reported findings from their recent surveys of the views of children in custody, taken as part of unannounced inspections (Redmond, 2015). In his Foreword to the report, the then Chief Inspector of Prisons, Nick Hardwick, focused on the minority of children in both STCs and YOIs who described being frightened and unhappy, with almost a third having felt unsafe at some time. A large minority in STCs reported experiencing verbal (39%) and physical (23%) abuse from other children at their centre, and 9% reported feeling threatened by staff.

These findings of children feeling unsafe were complemented by recent Youth Justice Board statistics showing that the number of self-harm incidents has increased across the secure estate. In the year to March 2015, 7.7% of young people in custody self-harmed, which was an increase of 1.1% over the previous year and 2.4% over the year to March 2010. Self-harm incidents were higher for girls and children from White ethnic backgrounds (YJB, 2016a), which again emphasises the importance of considering the implications of diversity.

The report also highlighted that 14% of children in custody would not turn to a member of staff if they had a problem, with 55% drawing on family as the most likely source of support, underlining the need to ensure family involvement where appropriate, as highlighted in recent research (Hazel et al, 2016, In press).

With direct implications for resettlement, only the minority of children in YOIs (41%) recognised that they had a training plan, sentence plan or remand plan. This suggests that the children were not being fully engaged in planning, which echoes previous findings (e.g. HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2015).

Young women in custody

A recent report published by T2A (Transition to Adulthood) has argued that the intersecting gender and age specific needs of young women in prison are not being met (Allen, 2016). Highlighting information from recent prison inspections, the report suggests that there is a lack of strategy and service for young female adults, with a distinct paucity of young women-specific accredited programmes. In doing so, the report echoed many of the key themes in BYC's research on young women and girls in resettlement (Bateman and Hazel, 2014).

The report notes that young women in prison are a particularly vulnerable group with complex needs. It highlighted that young women in prison "are more likely to suffer from a toxic mix of fear and boredom than older women" (Allen, 2016). Young women in custody are disproportionately likely to have experienced statutory care as a child, recent traumatic events, with ongoing neurological and hormonal development increasing their susceptibility to peer pressure, and impede their ability to cope with prison life (Allen, 2016). Drawing on an article by Gray (2016), this review explores the impact on young people when they enter custody with their traumatic experiences unresolved and the harmful effect this can have on their mental health. Young adult women in prison are more likely to self-harm than other groups; more than a fifth (21%) of self-inflicted deaths were of those aged between 18 and 21. The report called for a strengthening of existing guidance and staff recruitment to enable effective, distinct management of young adult women in prison, and the introduction of a presumption against short prison sentences for non-violent crimes.

Identifying and supporting traumatised young people in custody

As noted above, a significant proportion of young people serving custodial sentences in England and Wales have experienced trauma. A recent article reports a study which specifically explored the trauma experiences of young men in custody, and considered the support that they had received to resolve their experiences (Gray, 2015).

The study adopted a narrative methodological approach to collating and analysing the biographies of 20 male children serving custodial sentences in a YOI. Eight boys recounted trauma (defined as either child abuse or the loss of someone important) that had substantial impact on their criminal justice experience.

Gray specifically notes the lack of support prior to custody (either from family and friends or professionals) in helping the young people to come to terms with or resolve their traumatic experiences. Consequently, many of the young people who participated in the study spoke of responding to their experiences through destructive violent behaviour and/or self-destructive substance misuse.

Consistent with previous research, the article highlights the wide range of negative conditions experienced in custody that have exacerbated problems with mental wellbeing. Feelings of powerlessness and helplessness were often confirmed, with many young men talking of feeling uncertain and out of control. With a lack of meaningful activity and periods of isolation while in custody, previous traumatic events were enabled to resurface during custody, intensifying destructive behaviour, including physical aggression to other inmates and staff and damage to physical surroundings.

The article moves on to explore how individuals in custody can be better identified and appropriately supported. The article recognises the limitations of existing tools that comprehensively assess physical, emotional and mental health needs. While the efficacy of some tools are identified, the article suggests that the biggest challenge to fully supporting young people in custody, is building trusting relationships in which they can disclose their vulnerabilities.

The parenting and custodial experiences of young offender fathers

The inclusion of families in resettlement work can improve outcomes for young people leaving custody (Hazel et al, 2016, In press). However, an article published as part of a study of young fatherhood notes that young offender fathers are often considered to be a risk for their children, which undermines opportunities to aid rehabilitation and resettlement.

Ludlow and Neale (2016) argue that young men are often considered to be irresponsible and likely to engage in risky behaviour; perceived therefore as a risk to, rather than a resource for, their children (Featherstone, 2013). They go on to suggest that a focus on risk can then have a detrimental impact on familial relationships and undermine their contributions as parents and their potential to forge new paths in life. This comes at a time when young people in custody may be struggling to forge healthy, independent relationships from their family of origin, while also trying to manage relationships with partners and perhaps develop positive bonds with their children.

As recent BYC research has indicated (Hazel et al, 2016, In press), if these familial relationships are cultivated carefully, they can offer opportunities to foster more constructive roles and identity and facilitate a move towards desistance from crime. Becoming a parent (or re-forming relationships with children) can be a key transition in creating a new and positive identity to replace an offender reputation (Meek, 2011). Furthermore, this is an opportunity in resettlement for a substantial minority of young males in custody or offending. Estimates suggest that young male offenders are six times more likely to be fathers than non-offenders of the same age (Dennison and Lyon, 2001), and that between 25 per cent and 50 per cent of young offenders are fathers or expectant fathers (Meek, 2011; Buston et al., 2012).

Aiming to understand change and shifts in identity, Ludlow and Neale adopted utilising a life course methodology. In listening to the stories of the young men's lives, the researchers identify a redemption script. Becoming a father was considered a reason to modify their previous risk taking behaviour and criminal activity, and was also considered a necessary transition in identity. Drawing on dominant narratives of 'good' parenting, the young men spoke of a desire to 'do good'.

The research acknowledges that these transitions in behavior and identity do not occur easily or necessarily in a linear direction. Professional interventions were considered to make a significant impact

on the transitioning identities of young offender fathers, affecting their contact with children while in prison, their skills in becoming a parent and their life chances upon release. Similarly, the role and identity of father was supported and reinforced by their families, particularly from their mothers and the mothers of their children, which provided a strong counterbalance to peer group pressure and a criminal identity. This chimes directly with BYC findings that families can help embed a constructive personal narrative by reinforcing the importance and respect of a young person's role in the family (Hazel et al, 2016, In press).

Despite recognition of the benefits of familial support during custody, many barriers were also cited. Young men indicated that maintaining contact with their children throughout the duration of their sentence was often be impeded by the strict surveillance and lack of privacy and intimacy within the prison environment. Also cited were logistical issues with visitation, such as distance from home, financial implications and the age of their child[ren]'s mother (if under eighteen years of age will need to be accompanied by an adult).

Findings of the research indicate that custody can be utilised for skills training and identity work and that fatherhood programmes support positive identities. Cundy (2015) notes that young fathers are more likely to engage in parenting programmes during custody than after release. However, there is a distinct lack of services tailored to the needs of young fathers and prospective fathers was acknowledged. Increasing challenges to support young fathers in prison arise through cuts to family liaison and social work provision in YOIs.

The caveat was made that while fatherhood was recognised as an incentive to desist, ideals of good parenting and associations with fatherhood and providing could lead some young men to go on to engage in criminal activity as a means of providing for their children. The authors therefore acknowledge that appropriate resettlement services are vital to offer practical support and consolidate and mobilise the fledgling identity as a parent and citizen.

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This review has been produced by the Beyond Youth Custody partnership, consisting of Nacro, ARCS (UK) Ltd, the Centre for Social Research at the University of Salford, and the Vauxhall Centre for the Study of Crime at the University of Bedfordshire.

Authors: Professor Neal Hazel and Dr Kelly Lockwood

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Website: www.beyondyouthcustody.net

Email: beyondyouthcustody@nacro.org.uk

Twitter: @BYCustody