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# Resettlement of young people leaving custody : lessons from the literature update July 2015

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**Beyond**  
YOUTH CUSTODY

**RESETTLEMENT  
OF YOUNG PEOPLE  
LEAVING CUSTODY**

**LESSONS FROM THE  
LITERATURE**

**UPDATE: JULY 2015**

**Dr Kelly Lockwood and  
Professor Neal Hazel**



## Introduction

In April 2013, Beyond Youth Custody published an extensive review of the literature on the resettlement (re-entry) of young people leaving custody (Bateman et al, 2013). New publications are constantly added to the literature, so the shape of the evidence base changes over time. Beyond Youth Custody is committed to publishing regular supplements that take account of the latest developments in resettlement policy and practice, and disseminating the most recent research findings in the field. This is an overview of relevant publications that have appeared since the most recent update was published in March 2015. It aims to ensure that practitioners and policy makers involved with the resettlement of young people have access to the latest available lessons from research, policy and practice.

## Trends in imprisonment and challenges for resettlement

### Overall prison population

The overall prison population in England and Wales has risen dramatically since the early 1990s (Prison Reform Trust, 2012). In the nine years to June 2012, it doubled from 44,246 to 86,048 (Ministry of Justice, 2013b).

Since 2012, the population has stayed relatively level. At the end of June 2015, it stood at 84,777 (Ministry of Justice, 2015b). However, official predictions suggest that the prison population is likely to increase again.

By the end of June 2020, the government projects that the number of people in custody will be 90,200 (although estimates put the figure anywhere between 81,400 and 98,900) (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2015). With an average prison place now costing £36,237 per year, that means the overall annual cost of the prison population is £1.22bn more than it was in the early 1990s, according to the Prison Reform Trust (2015).

### Children in custody

The population trends for children over the same two decades show a rather different story to adults. In the first 10 years, from 1992 to 2002, the adult trend was mirrored. There was a rise of more than 85% in the number of children sentenced to custody (Pickford and Dugmore, 2012) and by 2002/03, the average child custody population was 3,029.

Within this period the number of under 15s sentenced to custody increased disproportionately by 800 per cent (Bateman, 2003). Sentence lengths also went up – from 5.6 to 10.3 months for boys and 5.5 to 7.1 months for girls (Pitts, 2003).

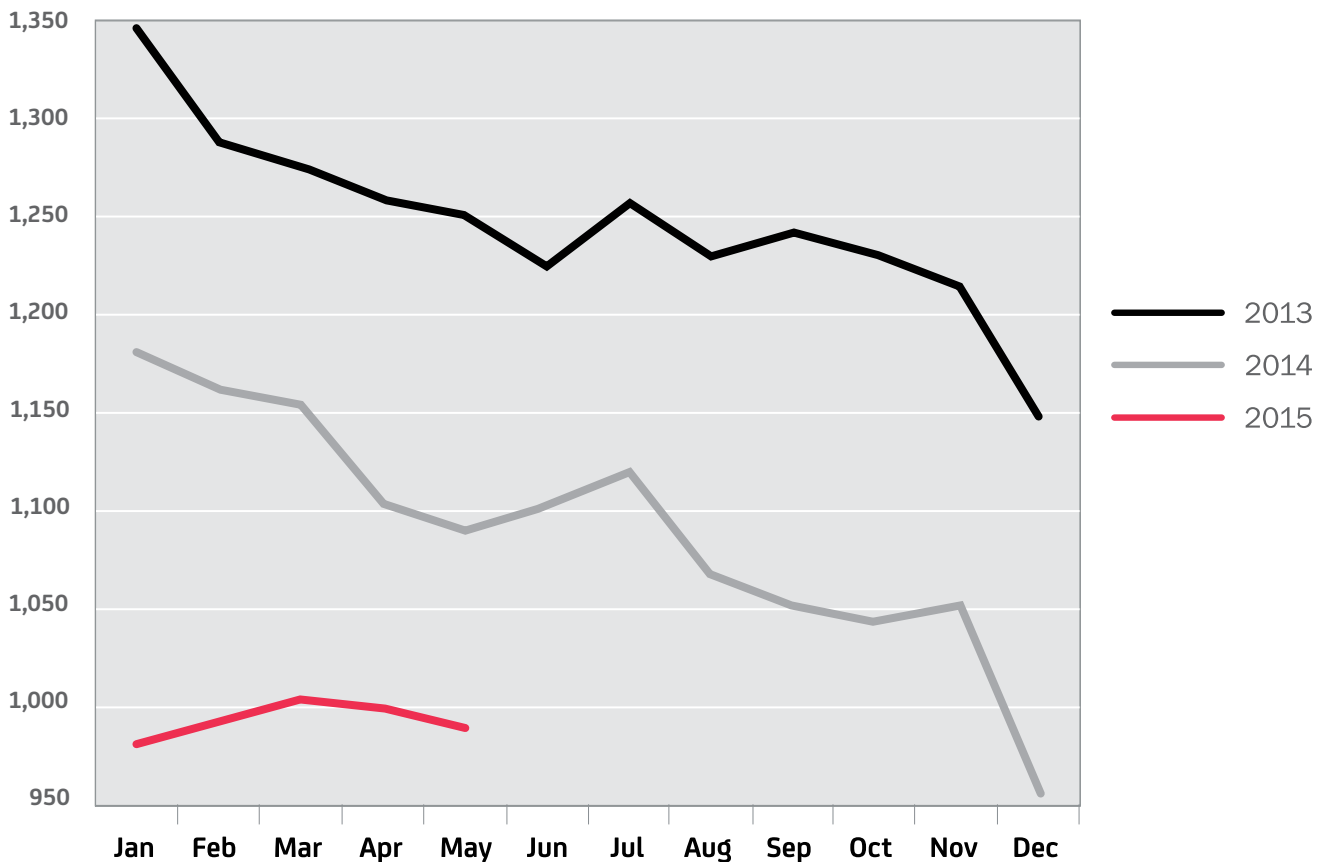
The following years saw a fluctuating child custody population, but in the late 2000s there was a sharp decrease. By 2012/13 it was down to 1,544 – a drop of 48% compared with five years earlier. That downward trend has continued, according to the latest available figures (Youth Justice Board 2015). In May 2015, the child custody population was 989 – down 10% over the previous 12 months.

The continual falls in child custody generally can be attributed to increased diversionary schemes at different stages of the youth justice system. These schemes have been particularly successful in diverting girls and young women away from custody. The residual population is correspondingly more

likely to display an entrenched pattern of offending and have a higher concentration of complex needs to tackle during resettlement (Bateman and Hazel, 2014a).

There's evidence to suggest child custody numbers have stabilised. There are only 32 more children in custody now than there were in December 2015, when the prison population reached its lowest figure of 957. It is true that custodial figures have seasonal trends, so this 'bottoming out' may just be a blip. Nevertheless, figure 1 shows that the slight rise this year runs counter to the seasonal trends in recent years. This suggests further shifts in justice policy or sentencing policy may be needed to lower figures any further. We will continue to watch this trend carefully for future BYC literature review updates.

**Figure 1**  
Child custodial population: annual trends 2012-2015



Compiled from data provided in Youth Justice Board, 2015

### Young adults in custody

The young adult prison population has also fallen, but the trajectory has not been so marked as with children (Bateman and Hazel, 2014a). As we noted in the literature review, the number of young adults in custody aged 18-20 fell by 16% between 2008 and 2012. Since then, the decline has continued – even accelerating at times. As shown in table 1, the young adult prison population was 7% lower in March 2015 than it had been the previous year, and 20% lower than in June 2012. The reduction over the last year has been much greater for 18-20 year olds (13%) than for those aged 21-24.

**Table 1**  
**Young adult custody by age: June 2012-March 2015 (30<sup>th</sup> of each month)**

	Jun 12	Jun 13	Sep 13	Dec 13	Mar 14	Jun 14	Sep 14	Dec 14	Mar 15
<b>18-20 years</b>									
<b>Males</b>	7,156	6,084	6,044	5,727	5,759	5,533	5,306	5,030	4,993
<b>Females</b>	287	188	189	188	180	168	167	172	177
<b>Total</b>	7,443	6,272	6,233	5,915	5,939	5,701	5,473	5,202	5,170
<b>21-24 years</b>									
<b>Males</b>	13,460	12,361	12,293	12,014	12,136	12,021	12,037	11,614	11,601
<b>Females</b>	545	461	467	420	459	452	435	406	406
<b>Total</b>	14,005	12,822	12,760	12,434	12,595	12,473	12,472	12,020	12,077
<b>Young adults</b>									
<b>Total</b>	21,448	19,094	18,993	18,349	18,534	18,174	17,510	17,222	17,247

Compiled from Ministry of Justice (2014b) and Ministry of Justice (2015c)

One theory for these trends is that reductions in child custody have been filtering through to young adults. The fact that the decline in custody began earlier for those aged 10-17 would seem to support this. As they found with children, probation practitioners should expect to find entrenched offending behavior and complex needs amongst the remaining young adults in the prison population, which often leads to rising or resistant reoffending patterns.

### **Gender differences at the different age categories**

In the 10 year period to 2002, the number of women being sentenced to imprisonment increased by 175%. This was disproportionate compared to the numbers of men sentenced over the same period. They rose by just 54% (Ministry of Justice, 2014a). This is often attributed to the significant increase in the severity of sentencing (Prison Reform Trust, 2012) and specific key legislative changes associated with the 'war against drugs' (Bush-Baskette, 2000:2004). Gelsthorpe and Sharpe (2006:57) note that in 2002 the numbers of girls sentenced to immediate custody had increased by 365% compared with 68% for boys.

The following 10 years, from 2002 to 2012, saw a very different trend. The average number of women in prison decreased by 3%, while male numbers went up 24% (Berman and Dar, 2014). The decrease in the female prison population has been attributed to the success of early intervention and diversionary schemes (Prison Reform Trust, 2014b).

The custodial population for girls under 18 fell from 49 to 42 in the year to May 2015, which is more of a drop than there was amongst boys (their numbers reduced from 1042 to 947). This decrease amongst girls continues a longer-term trend. Since figures for children in custody were at their highest in May-June 2008 (n3072), there's been an 81% drop for girls and only a 66% drop for boys (calculated from data provided in Youth Justice Board, 2015).

The numbers of young adult women in prison have reduced over the last year by a similar proportion to young adult men: down by 9% for females (n56) and 7% for males (n1301). However, the trend has been different in the two young adult age categories. Amongst female 21-24 year olds, numbers went down by 12% (n53), compared with a decrease of 4% (n535) amongst men the same age. However, among 18-20 year olds, female numbers fell by just three women (2%) in contrast to 13% fewer men (766) (calculated from data provided in Ministry of Justice, 2015c).

Women and girls remain in the minority in the prison system. They make up 4% of the children in custody and 3% of young adults in custody. As noted in previous BYC publications, the specific needs of girls and young women have received little attention in policy and practice, and issues like motherhood, past experience, sexual exploitation and trauma amongst women have largely been neglected (Bateman and Hazel, 2014b). Policies tend to be engineered towards the needs of boys and young men.

### **Developments in the custodial estate and implications for resettlement**

Since the last BYC literature review update, the government has announced the scrapping of plans to build a network of 'secure colleges' for children, intended to replace much of the existing juvenile secure estate. The colleges had been a central element of the government response to the green paper Transforming youth custody, aimed at putting education "at the heart of detention" (Ministry of Justice, 2013a).

The planned colleges were large compared to existing provision. The pilot secure college, which was to be opened adjacent to HMYOI Glen Parva in April 2017, would have held up to 320 children, equivalent to 30% of the current child custodial population. As we have previously noted (Bateman and Hazel, 2014a), this feature of the proposal had been particularly controversial and widely criticised by, amongst others, 29 relevant charities (Wanless et al, 2014) in an open letter to The Telegraph. Smaller units are considered to be more effective in providing a safer environment and in delivering a better experience for vulnerable children, particularly girls and younger children, both of whom would constitute very small minority groups within such large establishments (Brown, 2015; HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2014).

The March 2015 BYC literature review update outlined how the new Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 had established that secure colleges may be used for detention, although a late House of Lords amendment meant that approval by both Houses of Parliament was needed for them to hold girls or children aged under 15 (Bateman, 2015). In the end, the Treasury did not approve the build before parliament dissolved for the May 2015 general election (Travis, 2015). Following the election, the new government stated that the incoming Secretary of State, Michael Gove, was reviewing the project.

The eventual announcement that the secure colleges plan was not going ahead came in answer to a House of Commons question on 9th July 2015. According to Justice Minister Andrew Selous:

"The youth custody population has fallen from 1,349 in January 2013 to 999 in April 2015, a fall of 26%. A secure college could have been desirable with a larger population, but it would not be right to house one third of the entire youth offender population in one setting. It would also be a mistake to press ahead with such a development when resources are so tight."

(Hansard, Written question 5710).

Development of the project alone cost the taxpayer £5.6 million (Lord Faulks, House of Lords, 2nd July 2015, Hansard, answer to Written question HL624).

The secure college pilot plan to house almost a third of the child custodial population in one place is likely to have increased the average distance from home, making it harder for young people in custody to sustain positive relationships at home, or to plan for release. Even without the move to secure colleges, however, ongoing changes to the secure estate are moving us in this direction. The reduction in the population of children in prison has been associated with the restructuring of the secure estate in line with reduced requirement for custodial capacity. The Youth Justice Board has

been able to reduce the number of establishments where it commissions beds. With the decommissioning of HMYOI Hindley, there are now only five young offender institutions (YOIs), plus the specialist Keppel unit on the HMYOI Wetherby site. With the announced closure of the secure training centre (STC) at Hassockfield, there are now only four STCs, none of which are in the north of England.

Annual reports from the Chief Inspector of Prisons have repeatedly highlighted how the reduction in number of establishments and consequent distance from home has a detrimental impact on the ability of both boys and girls in custody to maintain family contact. It also increases feelings of vulnerability and undermines resettlement (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2013; HM Inspectorate of Prisons 2015). The issue was underlined for the inspectorate by recent prison surveys suggesting that only about a third of boys (35%) say that it is easy for their family or friends to visit them in custody.

Girls and young women are on average held 59 miles from their homes (Parliament, 2013). However, this average figure masks many variations and complications (Ministry of Justice, 2015a). Girls and young women who need specialist units are normally held even further from home because there are a smaller number of establishments for them to be placed into (Ministry of Justice, 2015a). Equally, young women are no longer held in YOIs. Instead, they are officially held in 'designated accommodation' within adult female prisons (Ministry of Justice, 2012).

Existing women's prisons are often in remote geographical locations, which creates many logistical and financial difficulties in visitation (Lockwood, 2013). The Corston Report, a review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system, recommended in 2007 that all women's establishments should be replaced with 'suitable, geographically dispersed, small multi-functional custodial centres' to protect family relationships during imprisonment (Corston, 2007). However, as the cost of producing and maintaining such units was considered too expensive, little headway has been made with this proposal (House of Commons, 2014).

### **Recent focus on safety in custodial institutions**

Two reports published in July 2015 have highlighted concerns for the safety of young people in custodial institutions. The latest annual report from HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, Nick Harwick, noted particular concerns for the wellbeing of under 18s, while the independent Harris Review focused on self-inflicted deaths in custody of 18-24 year olds. Findings and implications from the two reports are considered in brief below.

### **HM Inspectorate of Prisons Annual Report 2014-5**

According to the Chief Inspector of Prisons (HM Inspectorate of Prisons 2015), as the population of children and young people in custody decreases, so does their sense of safety. Of the five recent YOI inspections referred to in the Inspectorate Annual Report, two were considered not good enough in relation to safety. Worryingly, this decrease in perceived safety is accompanied by an apparent increase in the vulnerabilities of children entering custody. The report noted a 5% increase in the number of children in custody who said they had been in local authority care and a 3% increase in the number of children who said it was their first time in custody.

Nearly a third of boys told the prison inspectors that they had felt unsafe in prison at some point during their sentence. 10% said they felt unsafe at the time of the inspection. Although more boys said that they felt safe on their first night than in 2013/14 (81% against 78%), only 63% of boys who

attended an induction said it told them what they needed to know. Personal officer schemes were not considered to always be effective: 25% of boys at Feltham said they didn't know who to turn to if they had a problem. Recommendations are for the specialist worker to take full responsibility for the overall well-being of the young adult within a close and effective relationship.

Consistent with previous inspections, fights and assaults were common. The Chief Inspector reported that levels of violence at Feltham and Cookham Wood were particularly high, with many assaults involving multiple assailants and single victims. Cookham Wood had recorded 169 acts of violence in the six months before the inspection. Fights between boys increased by 67% from an average of nine to 15 assaults per month. Incidents had also risen at two STCs, Medway and Oakhill, and remained high – despite falling at Hassockfield.

With 262 incidents, including 79 assaults on staff, violent incidents at Feltham were also greater than previously recorded. With ongoing 'unacceptably high levels of violence', Feltham YOI has been described by the Howard League for Penal Reform (2015a) as the most violent prison in England and Wales. The continued rise in violence has been reported after it emerged in January that the Youth Justice Board (YJB) are considering situating police officers in Feltham to tackle high levels of gang violence. Positive effects from police presence in custodial settings, in relation to violence and reoffending on release have been claimed from an early pilot (Hill, 2015).

The increase in assaults and fights and feelings of being unsafe were highlighted by the Chief Inspector alongside an increased use of 'restrictive physical interventions' (RPIs). The use of restraint had increased at three of the five YOIs and increased use of force was identified across all STCs (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2015). Despite latest YJB statistics indicating that the raw number of restraint incidents is decreasing with the smaller custodial population, the proportion of children being restrained continues to increase. YJB statistics identified a 39% increased use of RPIs from 2010/11 to 2013/14. In addition, the 2013/14 figures show that the proportion of girls and 10-14 year olds receiving an RPI was higher than for boys and 15-17 year olds. (Ministry of Justice, 2015a).

The use of physical restraint with children in custody has long been a source of widespread concern since the restraint-related deaths of two teenage boys in custody in 2004 (Gooch, 2015). Despite this, evidence of the continued use of 'pain compliance' techniques and strip search under restraint was highlighted in the HM Inspectorate report. Campaigners have repeatedly called for an end to the use of such techniques (INQUEST, 2014). Indeed, following a government-commissioned independent review of the policy and practice of physical restraint, the Minimising and Managing Physical Restraint (MMPR) policy was implemented.

Instigating widespread change, MMPR has been largely welcomed (Gooch, 2015). The new approach replaces 'control and restraint' in YOIs, which is an adult method of restraint deliberately inflicting pain. MMPR adopts a more child-centred approach to managing behaviour. This minimises the use of restraint through the application of behaviour management techniques, de-escalation and communication, and physical restraint is only used as the last option. Where restraint is used, staff must clearly demonstrate why this was necessary. The scheme has been introduced across all STCs and one YOI to date.

The aim of the MMPR to promote consistency and tighten governance and safeguarding arrangements is to be welcomed. However, Gooch (2015) suggests that further legislative and policy reform is required to ensure methods are fully compliant with human rights. He also suggests that the treatment of children in custody should be driven by the recognition that child prisoners are children first and foremost.



Owing to increasing violent incidents and reduced staffing capacity, many YOIs were on 'restricted regimes' with increased use of solitary confinement. The report identified that 28% of boys at Cookham Wood and over 25% at Feltham were on some form of restricted regime. Within all YOIs, time out of cells and time in fresh air was considered insufficient and varied widely across the estate. Only Parc achieved the expectation that children should be out of their cell for 10 hours a day. Even this was only largely achieved on weekdays.

The use of segregation was also raised as a concern. The report suggests that segregation is not a suitable response to the complex needs of many of the boys held in custody and may have significant mental health ramifications. Despite this, over a quarter of boys reported having spent a night in segregation – one spending 133 days at Cookham Wood. Conditions in these units were often poor and segregation was often used without clear or justifiable reasons being recorded.

According to figures released in parliament, the increased regime restrictions noted by HM Inspectorate of Prisons have been matched by restrictions to the nature of prison visits. There was a 26% increase in the use of 'closed visits' between 2013 and 2014, and figures from the first part of 2015 indicate a 69% increase in the 12 months from 2014 (Puffett, 2015). These visits are closely scrutinised and therefore particularly restrictive, impeding the free flow of communications and preventing any physical contact. Prison visits are often considered a potential threat to security by prison staff (Dixey and Woodall, 2012) and closed visits can be imposed to secure good order, discipline and the prevention of crime (Puffett, 2015). However, the lack of privacy is a major inhibiting factor to any prison visit and often leads to visits being rejected by prisoners and their families. This is a great concern – visitation is recognised as significant in adjustment to prison life, rehabilitation and support for resettlement (Lockwood, 2013; Dixey and Woodall, 2012; Raikes and Lockwood, 2011). The increased use of closed visits has the potential to impact negatively on the quality and quantity of supportive contact.

Despite these restricted regimes, the inspectorate report noted that engagement in activities, education and training were considered good in most establishments. Furthermore, good educational progress was linked with improving success rates on courses and better employability. Areas of good practice were identified, including effective joint work by the provider and establishment at Werrington. Concerns were still raised about the strategic planning and co-ordination of attendance on education courses in some YOIs.

The HM Inspectorate surveys revealed other familiar concerns in relation to resettlement. Uncertainties about where young people would be living upon release was one. 63% of young people in young offender institutions reported that they needed resettlement or accommodation support and 7% of young people do not have suitable accommodation on leaving custody. Suitable and sustainable accommodation plays a key role in successful resettlement and reduces re-offending (Youth Justice Board, 2006). However, some boys were still placed into hostel or bed and breakfast accommodation. At Werrington, 20% of children were released to non-sustainable accommodation. Boys going to unsuitable and non-sustainable accommodation were often concerned that they would be recalled if they left the accommodation.

### **The Harris Review and young adults in custody**

In February 2014, the Justice Secretary announced an independent review into self-inflicted deaths of 18-24 year olds in custody in England Wales. This was led by Lord Toby Harris. The review panel commissioned analysis of a wide range of evidence, including existing literature and case studies of 87 young people (four children and 83 young adults aged from 18 to 24) who died in custody between April 2007 and December 2013.

The review addressed an issue that has been of increasing concern to prison reformers, commentators and researchers. The evidence indicates that the suicide rate in prisons is almost 15 times higher than in the general population. The Howard League for Penal Reform (2015b) notes that 82 prisoners took their own lives in 2014. 14 of these were young adults.

Over 30 children have died in YOIs and a further two in STCs since 1990 (Willow, 2015). Examining the deaths of children and young people in prison between 2003 and 2011, the Prison Reform Trust (2012) highlights that five out of the six deaths of children in custody were self-inflicted; that's 85% of the 163 deaths amongst 18-24 year olds and 92% of 18 to 20 year olds. While only 3% of the population of young adults aged 18-20 are women, women made up 10% of the self-inflicted deaths over this period. According to Lord Harris, 101 people under 24 have died in custody between April 2007 and December 2014 (Harris Review, 2015).

The Harris Review (2015) indicated that the behaviour and ability to cope with a custodial environment for young adults is impeded by their developmental stage. Along with chronological age, the review recommended that maturity be a primary consideration in making decisions relating to diversion, sentencing, and appropriate custodial accommodation. The review recommended that more needs to be done to support young adults and moderate the impact of the custodial experience. Identifying the “disturbing vulnerabilities” of young people in custody (2015), the review concluded that all young adults in custody are vulnerable. Their particular existing vulnerabilities are often exacerbated by separation from their families. Existing interaction between the prison and families was considered inconsistent, often inadequate and sometimes inconsiderate. While families should be able to play a supportive role in the rehabilitation of young people, this is impeded by the increasing distance of placements from their homes – a recurring theme in this BYC literature review update.

In light of increasing public service reforms, delivering a safe and supportive service for young people in custody continues to be a challenge. While not specifically addressing resettlement needs, the review concluded that the environment of prison or YOI is not conducive to rehabilitation. In particular, Lord Harris argued that young adults in prison are not sufficiently engaged in purposeful or valuable activities in a way that might help with rehabilitation. This situation is clearly not compatible with the concept of ‘continuous service’, where support on release builds on interventions that were begun in custody (Hazel, 2004; Bateman et al, 2013).

The review went on to suggest that much more needs to be done to support young adults both during and after their custodial sentence and called for young adults to be a distinct group. The review argued that to address the safety and behaviour of prisoners, urgent steps need to be taken to provide sufficient numbers of adequately qualified staff who can alleviate the “undue pressure on an already stretched workforce”. It also recommended that the personal officer scheme is replaced by the role of Custody and Rehabilitation Officer, with smaller caseloads.

According to the review, the objective of penal policies for 18-24 year olds “must be to assist them to become productive citizens, to desist from crime and to keep them safe”. To achieve this, there needs to be a change in the aim of prison, the report concluded, where the primary purpose is clearly rehabilitative.

On July 21st, 2015, in response to the Harris Review, the House of Commons Justice Select Committee announced a major inquiry on the treatment of young adults in the criminal justice system (Parliament, 2015).

The wide remit for the inquiry includes the following questions, with clear implications for the custody and resettlement of young people:

- Should sentence to detention in a young offender institution for 18-20 year old offenders be abolished? If so, what should replace it?
- Is it appropriate to try to divert more young adults from custody and the criminal justice system, and if so, how would this best be achieved?

## Research findings

### **Gang-involved young people in custody and beyond**

The extensive literature on gangs has largely neglected the issue of gang-involved young people in custody and their return to the community. A new Beyond Youth Custody report synthesized what is known from the international literature with empirical data from interviews with policy-makers and practitioners in the field. The aim of this was to infer implications for resettlement policy and practice (Factor et al, 2015).

There are a number of resettlement challenges for gang-involved young people. These include practical emotional difficulties that stem from not getting the right support after safe relocation. Similar support difficulties existed where licence conditions prohibit either access to certain areas or associations with certain support networks. Financial hardship on release can also encourage young people to return to a gang to secure money from illicit activities.

The report concluded that the key principles of effective resettlement (Bateman et al, 2013) hold true for gang-involved young people, but that there are additional considerations for policy and practice. These include an appropriate screening tool to identify needs early on in custody, as part of the institution's prison violence and self-harm reduction strategy. The authors also recommended the development of a comprehensive gang intervention programme, although this would require effective inter-agency working.

### **Exposure to suicide related behaviour**

The focus of concern on the vulnerabilities and safety of young people in prisons highlighted in reports above was also reflected in a new journal article on the psychological impact of exposure to attempted suicide. As the suicide and attempted suicide rates amongst prisoners are significantly higher than in the general population, the exposure to someone else's completed suicide, attempted suicide or self-harm is likely to also be high. However, prior to a new study by Hales et al (2015), little was known about the psychological impact of such exposure.

Drawing on a survey of prisoners aged 16-21 in South East England, the authors found that 15% of participants had experienced the completed suicide of another person and nearly half had experienced suicide-related behaviors by others.

The authors identified significantly higher levels of emotional and psychological problems in the witness group. The findings differ from previous research with adult prison populations, which found no effect of being exposed to other people's suicide related behaviour. The authors conclude that those who witness another's suicide-related behaviour at a young age are more vulnerable to suicide related behaviour themselves later.

The authors highlight several implications for practice after a young person has been exposed to someone else's suicide. These include clinical interventions, monitoring mental and emotional health more, using situational-specific assessment tools, and spending more time with peers outside of their cells. While the authors do not identify any specific links to resettlement, previous BYC research notes that "the effects of previous trauma can narrow the scope for generating positive resettlement outcomes with young people and young adults" (Wright and Liddle, 2014). While it is important to develop trauma-informed approaches that consider the effects of previous trauma, this research highlights the significance of also understanding the traumas experienced during custody when developing resettlement approaches.

That said, the research had a number of limitations. The sample was small and the research was only conducted with men. As such, the results could not be generalised to women, even though there are higher rates of suicide behaviour reported by women prisoners than either women in the general population or male prisoners. The Harris Review (2015) notes that this pattern has changed recently, "with a higher rate of self-inflicted deaths among male prisoners compared to female prisoners"; however, the pattern is still different between young adult males and young adult females. Between 2002 and 2013 the average rate of self-inflicted deaths decreased with age for female prisoners (with the exception of 15-17 year olds), suggesting that a higher proportion of young adult women took their own lives than older females. This indicates the need for gender-specific and trauma-informed treatment and services for women and girls in custody.

### **Sexual abuse as a predictor of juvenile custody**

Researchers in the United States, led by the Human Rights Project for Girls, have published a report describing "The sexual abuse to prison pipeline: The girls' story" (Saar et al, 2015). The report summarises what is known about sexual abuse as a criminogenic factor associated with girls entering custody. The findings echo issues identified in BYC research on resettlement of girls and young women – that vulnerability and abuse are often precursors to their offending behaviour and that this has significant implications for intervention approach (Bateman and Hazel, 2014b).

They noted that the proportion of girls, especially from black and minority groups, are increasing in the US justice system. They confirmed that the way girls react to sexual abuse and trauma is criminalised and that the justice system usually not only fails to address this trauma, but often worsens it. They focus in particular on the 'pipeline' for girls from the foster system, girls criminalised for status offences, and victims of sex trafficking.

Recommendations include developing training for criminal justice staff on how to respond to children who have been abused, and training for foster parents on mitigating the risks of child sexual exploitation. They propose that there should be specific protocols for assessing girls with needs relating to abuse, and there should be appropriate treatment plans, including referrals out of the criminal justice system. They also propose policies to prevent welfare providers from calling in the police and justice system "to manage the trauma-related behavioural challenges they have been hired to handle" (Saar et al, 2015). Suggestions include prohibiting child welfare agencies from taking girls off their books when they run away. This only serves to create instability at a time when these episodes are indicative of violence and abuse.

### **An integrated arts therapy for girls in custody**

Arts-based programmes have often been used in custodial settings, as well as in community interventions in rehabilitation, particularly in relation to young offenders. These programmes have been shown to have a positive outcome on mental health, emotional literacy, behaviour, relationships, and recidivism rates (Kõiv and Kaudne, 2015). A new journal article reports on the outcomes of introducing various arts-based therapies into a high security custodial setting for girls in Estonia.

Girls aged 14-17 participated in two 90-minute sessions held twice a week over a five-week period. These were aimed at improving self-concept and self-esteem, the ability to express and regulate emotions, and promote positive relationships – all key elements to the successful resettlement of girls and young women, as identified in a recent BYC report (Bateman and Hazel, 2014b).

The programme was designed to engage with the most resistant girls and young women, and significant changes with both behavioural and emotional problems were observed. The young women who had taken part in the integrated arts therapy project showed improved behaviour and increased compliance, which may help them to be more receptive to resettlement services and make and sustain changes in their future.

### **Resettlement within a desistance framework**

A summary of BYC's first three years of research into effective resettlement of young people leaving custody was published in July 2015 (Beyond Youth Custody, 2015). The report placed the policy and practice good practice that BYC has highlighted within a desistance framework. As such, effective resettlement is seen as “a process that enables a shift in a young person's identity, helping to move them away from crime towards a positive future”. In such a process or journey, the key principles of effective resettlement highlighted in the original literature review (Bateman et al, 2013) and developed in subsequent reports are about engaging with young people to promote that identity shift (Bateman and Hazel, 2013), and making sure there's structural support to help them do that.

The following were reaffirmed as key principles of effective resettlement.

1. **Continuous service focused on resettlement.** This involves preparation for release starting at the point young people enter custody, sentence planning focusing on resettlement throughout, and recognition that the transition period from custody to community needs additional support.
2. **Coordination of services.** This involves partners working collaboratively to meet multiple and complex needs. These should be provided in a wraparound package of support, and coordinated by a broker capable of establishing partnerships across sectors. The support also needs to extend beyond the life of the sentence in order to sustain resettlement.
3. **Engaging the young person for positive change.** This involves recognising that the shift in identity requires a guided engagement process, and that relationships lie at the heart of successful engagement.

The report states that BYC will focus on developing these principles into a more detailed framework to help redesign resettlement services.

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