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# Key lessons from the RESET programme: Recommendations for the resettlement of young offenders

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# **Key lessons from the RESET programme**

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**Executive summary**

**Neal Hazel, Mark Liddle and Fionn Gordon**

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## The evaluation team

### Centre for Social Research (CSR-Salford), University of Salford

The centre specialises in working closely with policy makers, practitioners and the wider community to produce relevant, engaged and influential research.

By combining a wide range of subject, methods and expertise, CSR-Salford brings a huge research knowledge base to bear on key social issues.

### ARCS UK

ARCS is a national team of professional researchers with long experience and training in community safety, social inclusion, economic regeneration, youth offending, resettlement of offenders, community development and partnership working. The team has a track record for producing high-quality research and evaluation, committed to informing and improving future practice.

[www.arcs-ltd.com](http://www.arcs-ltd.com)

## Foreword

The RESET initiative broke new ground when it was launched in 2005. It was an ambitious attempt to resolve the complex problems faced by young people coming out of custody. Rainer (now Catch22) used its experience in working with young people leaving care to broker multi-agency approaches to resettlement in the pilot areas. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) was a partner organisation and drew upon the experience of RESET in helping shape the government's Youth Crime Action Plan in 2008.

I welcome this executive briefing. Whilst it doesn't claim RESET to have been an unqualified success, it does present the complexity of the challenge and demonstrates that there are many ways in which significant successes can be achieved for young people trying to establish a positive lifestyle after being in custody. It is frank in its description of the project's limitations and provides us with some clear messages to inform the way we tackle resettlement into the future. It also provides a useful companion to the RESET cost benefit analysis published by Rainer (now Catch22) in 2008. This was instrumental in helping make the case for a new approach to resettlement following the Youth Crime Action Plan.

The emerging success of the YJB resettlement consortia pilots and Integrated Resettlement Support is undoubtedly part of the legacy of RESET, now attracting the attention of the new government. As a result of this continuous evolution, we are now able to articulate more clearly the wider benefits of getting resettlement right, as well as those issues affecting the lives of each young person we work with. We welcome this contribution from Catch22 as we enter a challenging and exciting period in this area.

### Frances Done

Chair, Youth Justice Board  
October 2010

## Introduction

Recognised in the *Youth Crime Action Plan*,<sup>1</sup> resettlement of young people after serving a custodial sentence is an issue of pressing concern in youth justice policy and practice. Despite research awareness and policy intention, problems are still persistent in ensuring that offenders return home to a supportive and structured lifestyle that's conducive to the prevention of reoffending.

The resettlement, education, support, employment and training (RESET) programme was a major experimental resettlement project run by a large consortium, led by Catch22's legacy organisation, Rainer. The programme ran from 2005 to 2007 and was funded by European Equal. The project was evaluated by the Centre for Social Research (CSR, Salford) and ARCS-UK on behalf of Rainer (now Catch22).

This executive briefing summarises the findings and messages from the evaluation report<sup>2</sup> and a subsequent seminar with key policy stakeholders, including key lessons for mainstream resettlement support.

The full version of this summary, *Evaluation of the RESET programme – Final report*, is available on the Catch22 website – [www.catch-22.org.uk](http://www.catch-22.org.uk).

## Resettlement as a problem

Reoffending rates for young offenders released from custody are high. Of approximately 6000 young people sentenced to custody each year, between 70% and 90% will reoffend within 12 months.<sup>3</sup> Reoffending can occur quickly after release, with previous research estimating that about a third reoffend within the first month.<sup>4,5</sup> Effective resettlement is crucial to achieving better outcomes for young people leaving custody.

It has been recognised that young people leaving custody are not treated in a consistent way.<sup>6</sup> Research has suggested that only a minority of young people are involved in education, training or employment (ETE) during the licence period of their sentence. Difficulties in inter-agency cooperation have been highlighted as leading to a breakdown in provision, resulting in support not being in place prior to release.<sup>7</sup>

*The Youth Crime Action Plan*<sup>8</sup> highlighted how important effective resettlement is in ensuring that young people released from custody are able to meet safeguarding and Every Child Matters outcomes. However, it also noted how delivering such provision is ‘complicated’.<sup>9</sup>

## About RESET

RESET was a major resettlement project, involving over 50 national partners who came together to innovate and improve provision for young people released from custody. Funded from 2005 to 2007, the project was led by Rainer, now incorporated into Catch22. RESET aimed to:

- raise awareness of the issues
- influence policymakers to adopt best practice
- reduce reoffending levels by improving resettlement services
- produce new guidance and tools on resettlement.

## Three resettlement approaches

The RESET project operated locally in seven Youth Offending Team (YOT) areas across two regions of England (London and the North West), and an institution, Cookham Wood young offenders institute (YOI) for girls. This three-way split is important because each operated a different model for resettlement:

- The North West used a ‘**case management**’ model where the worker(s), funded by RESET, became a member of the casework Youth Offending Team, but took on more custody cases than normal.
- In London, the RESET worker did not manage individual cases, but took on a ‘**coordinating**’ role, responsible for arranging multi-agency resettlement support. They focused on developing partnerships with state, voluntary and private stakeholders in order to address the range of needs presented by offenders leaving custody (as identified by case managers).
- In Cookham Wood, resettlement activity was ‘**institution based**’, including outreach work after release. As such, planning for resettlement support after release was primarily coordinated and followed-up by RESET staff within the institution rather than the local YOTs.

The evaluation findings suggest outcome differences between these areas, indicating the importance of the resettlement model adopted.

## Evaluation of RESET

### Data collection

The evaluation of RESET ran from 2005 to 2007. The quantitative data collection included 208 information forms at the point of project entry and departure, and ongoing details of 150 activities, supplemented by 137 Asset forms.

Qualitative data included 90 interviews with key stakeholders and staff (50 at the start and 40 at the end), supplemented by seven focus groups with staff and four parent interviews.

Please see the full report<sup>10</sup> for details and methodological limitations.

## The cohort

In total, 208 young people ('beneficiaries') were involved with RESET, entering the project over a 27-month period between January 2005 and April 2007. After an initial trickle of entrants, most activity occurred in the year from autumn 2005 to autumn 2006. About half were in the North West region (51%), with 41% in London and 12% in Cookham Wood. They stayed involved with RESET staff for an average length of seven months, but three-quarters (75%) continued involvement beyond the end of their sentence.

The large majority of beneficiaries were male (81%) and half were at least 17-years-old. Slightly less than the wider young offender custody population were white (62%), with a quarter black, and a small number Asian (4%). Almost half (43%) were considered by YOT workers to be vulnerable. More than two-thirds (71%) had no qualifications (67% for those aged over 17), and the majority (56%) had not been involved with education, training or employment immediately before custody. Excluding the Cookham Wood group, over two-thirds (69%) were recorded as persistent young offenders, and the group had a mean average of 29.4 convictions.

## Custodial sentences

Those in London and the North West served sentences in 18 different institutions. Although two-thirds (69%) stayed in one institution throughout their sentence, more than a quarter moved at least once (28%). A minority (6%) moved more often, which would make planning and delivering a continuous sentence more difficult.

Important for trying to coordinate release and resettlement, two in five beneficiaries were serving the last part of their custodial sentence in an establishment more than 50 miles from their home.

## Beneficiaries' needs

According to RESET and YOT workers'

assessments, **the young people had multiple areas of need** that might hinder successful resettlement or prevent reoffending. The majority needed more constructive activities (61%), half needed more help with addressing offending behaviour (50%), about half had unemployment issues (46%), and two in five (39%) had low qualifications or skills affecting future employment. In addition, more than a third had substance misuse problems (39%) and/or family problems (35%), with a substantial minority having issues relating to anger management (27%) and homelessness (23%).

Given these multiple needs, it is not surprising that **the workers planned to involve multiple agencies for each case** (median average of four). Moreover, more than a quarter (29%) planned to involve six or more agencies and stakeholders. The most common intended partners were:

- Connexions
- other YOT staff
- other resettlement projects and schools.

## Offending behaviour and breachable actions

About half of the young people involved with RESET (48%) did something that was against their licence conditions during their supervision period, for example failure to attend supervision meetings or specified education; or offending. This is similar to previous figures for custodial sentences.<sup>11</sup> The majority first started to show problems by failing to attend a supervision meeting (52%) or getting into trouble (25%).

If a beneficiary was going to commit a breachable act, it usually occurred early in supervision – 50% of young people breaching did so in the first two weeks after release from custody. Navigating this early period was critical for longer-term success.

About a third of beneficiaries (30%) offended and were arrested during their supervision

period (offending rate). This is **significantly less than previous figures for custodial sentences**.<sup>12</sup> Of those arrested, approximately two-thirds were recalled to custody.

Interestingly, the offending rate differed greatly by RESET area, and therefore seemed to suggest and influence the different approaches to resettlement. The North West area (largely case management model) had a reoffending rate of 41%, almost equal to previous custodial figures. However, **the London area (coordinating model) cut that reoffending rate by almost half (22%)**. Further research is needed to explore the factors involved in this relationship. Cookham Wood (institution-based model) only had a 5% reoffending rate, although this was a very different demographic group.

## Needs actually addressed

For each type of need that workers intended to address in order to reduce reoffending, **only a minority of cases saw the problem actually tackled**. However, substance misuse (46%), offending behaviour (42%) and homelessness (40%) were the areas most commonly tackled.

Areas receiving support in less than a third of intended cases included unemployment (32%), anger management (29%), employability (22%), low qualifications or skills (19%) and mental health issues (1 in 10). This indicated substantial problems with engaging other stakeholders to meet the needs of the young offenders.

According to Asset data, the proportion of young people with housing problems at the end of their involvement with RESET was almost identical as those with housing problems when they first joined the project (23% to 24%) – no improvement was evident.

On average, the RESET workers managed to involve **only half the number of intended agencies** to address beneficiaries' holistic needs (median of two, instead of the

planned four). In contrast to workers' plans for a quarter of cases, only 7% actually involved six or more stakeholders.

However, the success rate for RESET workers involving partners in addressing beneficiaries' problems varied greatly among the different stakeholder groups. As a percentage of those intended to get involved with RESET, the most successful partnerships were with other social support agencies, for example other resettlement projects (79% of cases) and social services (70%). There was less success involving other agencies from the state sector, including the local education authority (40%), schools (43%) and training providers (36%). There was notably low engagement with the voluntary sector (1 in 11) and local employers (7%). These difficulties would affect beneficiaries' engagement in ETE.

Tackling offending behaviour was **hindered by poor information flow between institution and resettlement workers**.

No information on offending work that had been undertaken in custody was received by resettlement workers in half of cases (49%).

Only in about two in every five cases (38%) did resettlement workers feel that they had enough information to form a continuous programme of support for addressing offending behaviour.

## Education, training and employment

Just more than half of beneficiaries (57%) were involved in any form of ETE at any point during the supervision period of their sentence. Although there may have been reluctance on the part of individual young people, there was clear evidence that **system breakdown prevented more ETE activity**. For example, full information on education or training carried out in custody was only received in 60% of cases, and in just over half of cases (53%) was it considered by resettlement workers that a

continuous programme in ETE could possibly have been arranged. These figures are similar to previous research.<sup>13</sup>

### Cost–benefit analysis

The financial costs and benefits of rolling-out RESET enhanced resettlement across all custodial placements were analysed by Judy Renshaw.<sup>14</sup> The results showed that the RESET package cost £8,074 a year for a young person with a medium level of need. However, when the likely reductions in frequency and seriousness of offending were factored in, there was an **annual net saving of at least £12,333 for every offender**. Considering that approximately 6,500 young people are given Detention and Training Orders (DTOs) each year in England and Wales, rolling-out enhanced resettlement practice would bring total annual savings to the public purse of over £80million.

- It was flexible enough to allow local variation – allowing some local autonomy to address local needs.
- It developed and disseminated national guidance and practice tools – developed in partnership with young people.
- It facilitated new partnerships at local and national levels – with an enthusiasm by stakeholders to engage with the issues and support interventions.
- It brought stronger links between service providers – the crux of the RESET success depended on good working relations between agencies and stakeholders.
- Mainstreaming was evident – the resulting recognition of the importance of resettlement saw innovations and improvements incorporated into everyday practice.
- It showed that a focus on resettlement support, particularly in areas where there was a focus on coordination, seemed to have an impact on reoffending rates. However, further longer-term reconviction research is needed.

**‘There have been great changes in the links we have with other agencies now and the RESET worker was very involved in that. We have better links with training agencies and with the secure estate.’**

Local YOT manager

## Conclusions

### Project successes

As a resettlement policy and practice project, RESET could count a number of successes.

- It raised policy awareness at local and national levels – resettlement was acknowledged as a key issue.
- Committed staff tried different resettlement approaches – given the space to think strategically.
- It provided extra resources for local innovation, highlighting the importance of funding for trying out promising ideas, although still costing a lot less than custody.
- It built local expertise in resettlement – ensuring better understanding and services to address the problems.

### Project limitations

As with all innovations, RESET suffered some limitations, many of which suggest lessons for future resettlement projects and practice.

- There was a lack of clarity about the respective roles and responsibilities for partners – a crucial lesson for multi-agency partnerships necessary in resettlement.

- There was a lack of clarity about the precise aims and nature of RESET – a reminder of the common problem with partnership projects from large funding bids.
- RESET work bowed to other priorities such as statutory demands. In a sector with limited resources, resettlement may be squeezed unless underpinned by policy prioritisation/targets.
- The time-limited nature of funding meant that the project was only fully operating for 15 out of 27 months, after set-up and before winding down – a lesson about the limitation of short-term funding that combines with staff and client uncertainty.
- Although staff in a national or local partner agency signed up to the aims of RESET, they did not necessarily receive the necessary support or resources from chief executives – highlighting the importance of senior-level support.
- There were problems with engaging local stakeholders – forming local partnerships was highlighted as a complex process that will take time. On average, only half of intended partners were engaged on any one case, resulting in only the minority of young people having any particular need met.
- Effective resettlement depends on engaging and coordinating these stakeholders. This is problematic, and **resettlement support fails because of a lack of engagement with stakeholders.** Potential partners need to understand the importance of resettlement to preventing reoffending and the long-term cost-effectiveness of their input. Local authority agencies should understand the relevance of resettlement for the safeguarding and well-being of this vulnerable group and their families. Committed and sustainable partnerships need to be formed early in any resettlement process.
- This partnership coordination is not an easy task and needs to be well resourced. **Resettlement should be a priority area** for sustainable funding in youth justice.
- Local youth offending services need a dedicated resettlement manager whose role should **focus on partnership coordination rather than casework.** Results suggest that having an effective coordinator may halve reoffending rates, although further research (including full reconviction studies) is needed.
- The **transition period between custody and community is crucial**, and if licence conditions are going to be breached, it often happens in the first few weeks (or days) after release. Currently, **support is often not arranged for this period** prior to release, particularly in relation to ETE and housing. This needs to be set up early, with all partners on board before release.
- There is rarely a continuous programme of support from custody to community in any area – ETE, addressing offending behaviour or mental health support. Indeed, there are problems with information flow across these settings. If the DTO intention of a continuous sentence is to be met, and effective

## Main messages for mainstream resettlement support

- RESET reminded us that young **offenders leaving custody have complex multiple needs** that need to be addressed to prevent reoffending. These needs cannot be met by one agency alone and **need input from various stakeholder groups**, both within and outside of the youth justice system. These groups include those from the private and voluntary sectors.

resettlement support achieved, **there needs to be better coordination of intervention between the two phases.**

- If enhanced resettlement was rolled-out across all secure custodial placements, there **could be annual savings to the public purse of over £80million.**

## Developments since RESET

Since RESET, the YJB has underlined the importance of resettlement by supporting a number of aftercare initiatives, many of which begin to respond to some of the concerns highlighted by RESET.

- In February 2006, the YJB published its action plan, *Youth resettlement: A framework for action*<sup>15</sup>, highlighting the need for attention in this area.
- The *Youth Crime Action Plan 2008*<sup>16</sup> reflected the policy support for resettlement found by RESET by stressing its importance in breaking the cycle of offending. It supported the need for greater involvement of local authority Children's Services departments. It repeated the RESET conclusion that adequate plans and provision should be in place prior to release from custody. Further, it reflected the importance of having a lead professional responsible for resettlement in each local youth justice service.
- Integrated Resettlement Support<sup>17</sup> (IRS; 2009–10), supported by Ministry of Justice funding, indicated a change in emphasis to the integrated partnership working central to the RESET conclusions.
- Two resettlement consortia<sup>18</sup> (2009–10), delivered by the YJB, are piloting innovative approaches to resettlement in North West and South West England. They are responding in particular to the RESET concern for greater collaboration between youth justice and other types of statutory and non-statutory agencies. They are also

to address concerns highlighted here with continuity and information sharing through the custody–community transition.

- In Wales, Resettlement Support Panels<sup>19</sup> have been established in six pilot areas. This is a further approach to coordinating local multi-agency delivery of resettlement support, similar to the Youth Inclusion and Support Panel (YISP) model.
- The Resettlement Service Finder<sup>20</sup> supports the need to engage with a wide variety of service providers to meet the diverse needs of this vulnerable group.
- A YJB-Foyer Federation partnership<sup>21</sup> attempts to tackle some of the housing issues highlighted, by providing learning and accommodation centres for those leaving custody.

## Key recommendations

### Coordinating resources and staff

- Custody makes a continuous programme of support and rehabilitation of a young offender more difficult. Policymakers should renew their **commitment to reducing custody.**
- Resettlement agencies should be given resource space in this vital area to consider local issues strategically, operationalise what works, and form innovative partnerships and practice. **Funding for effective resettlement** costs a lot less than the inevitable alternative – more crime and a return to custody.
- Enhanced resettlement work lends itself to new models of financing, such as the **Social Finance**<sup>22</sup> model of social impact bonds. Policymakers should explore a way of reconfiguring existing service delivery so that new approaches can demonstrate effectiveness (including

‘soft measures’, such as increased civic engagement) and attract additional finance.

- Policy and projects on resettlement should balance the need for very clear aims and added value, with the need to retain some **local flexibility to address local issues**.
- Each youth offending service should have their own **resettlement specialist**, to ensure better understanding of key issues, address local needs and make the most of local resources.
- Recruitment and training should **focus on skills for coordinating** local partnerships – a management role different from other youth case work.
- Consideration should be given to a **role for custodial institutions** in managing support after release to ensure a smoother transition. At the very least, this may mean custodial staff attending case meetings after release.

## Local partnerships

- Local resettlement specialists should **focus on developing and coordinating partnerships** with local stakeholders, rather than just adopting a caseworker role. Committed partnerships with a range of different stakeholders are the key to effective resettlement support.
- A **wide range of partnerships** is needed (nationally and locally) in order to address the holistic support needs of this complex group. Resettlement workers should be encouraged to seek outside agency help.
- Effective partnerships are challenging to develop and maintain. Potential **local stakeholders should be engaged early** in any resettlement service development.
- Particular attention should be given to engage **partners beyond youth justice** providers, including voluntary sector and

local employers. These groups are difficult to engage, but can meet widespread needs for offenders.

- Other **state sector agencies**, including a range of local authority children’s services, housing and health services are crucial to meeting the needs of these vulnerable young people. National and local policymakers should take steps to ensure that these agencies understand the cost-effectiveness of resettlement work and the links with safeguarding the well-being of the young people.
- National policymakers should develop **more guidance** and best practice in developing local partnerships.

## Preparation for release

- Agencies should focus **particular support on the early period after release**. This is critical to avoiding breaching. Arrangements should be made for a clear supervision meeting schedule, but with flexibility from workers.
- Arrangements for **ETE should already be in place** in time for release from custody. This should be a key target. Alternative activities should be arranged for those released out of school term time.
- Particular attention should be paid to ensuring **immediate housing provision** for young people coming out of custody, both to prevent homelessness and staying with offending peers.
- Policymakers and practitioners should prioritise developing ways to dovetail custody and community phases. Custodial institutions should emphasise **preparing young people for release**, focusing on the impact of transition and readjustment.
- There needs to be careful planning and preparation relating to the eventual release. This will include communication with a range of stakeholders as well as

requiring the opportunity to visit home on day release. This is reliant on more **placements being closer to a young person's home.**

## Communication and information flow

- **Information about work done in custody must be passed to the community** in advance of release, for example education, addressing offending behaviour, psychological assessment and development.
- Communication and planning would be helped by **reducing the number of times a young offender is transferred** between custodial establishments.
- Attention should be paid to trying to fulfil the DTO's intention of a continuous programme of intervention through custody to community. **Support and training in both settings should be coordinated** to ensure continuity of provision.
- Further steps should be taken to ensure the **consistent completion of Asset forms** (or alternative) to monitor young people's needs, and support them throughout their sentence. This may mean work on ensuring a **common recording system** in custody and community agencies.

## In short...

Successful resettlement requires:

- Widespread partnership coordination to address offenders' multiple needs.
- Effective cooperation between custodial institutions and community agencies to ensure preparedness for release.

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RESET was a major resettlement programme that ran from 2005 to 2008. Led by Catch22, RESET involved over 50 national partners who came together to innovate and improve practice for young people released from custody.

This publication presents the outcomes of RESET and summarises the full report, *Evaluation of RESET programme – Final report*.

Catch22 is a local charity with a national reach. We work in over 150 towns and cities, with tens of thousands of young people every year – supporting young people with tough lives who are facing difficult situations.

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