

**Beyond**  
YOUTH CUSTODY

**RESETTLEMENT  
OF GIRLS AND  
YOUNG WOMEN**

**RESEARCH REPORT**



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

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## Executive summary

This report addresses a worrying gap in the knowledge about the effective resettlement of girls and young women. Reviewing research literature in a number of relevant areas, it cross-references evidence of what works in the resettlement of young people with what we know about the wider need of girls and young women. This *iterative synthesis* approach thus provides a gender-sensitive approach to inform policy and practice development in resettlement for this specific group.

### Introduction: addressing the resettlement needs of an ignored constituency

- Recent years has seen an increasing focus on the resettlement of young people after custody, with a number of initiatives designed to address stubbornly high reoffending rates. However, the specific needs of girls and young women have received little attention in policy and practice. This is a worrying gap because research with adult female offenders consistently warns that what works with male offenders is unlikely to work with females.
- The resettlement needs of girls and young women have been ignored partly because they make up a small proportion of the custodial population, and partly because they usually offend less frequently and seriously than young males.
- Academics have also largely ignored the needs of this group in resettlement. This is reflective of relatively limited numbers of studies on women in the criminal justice system more generally, but with even less known about younger females, and less still around custody.
- This report provides gender-sensitive perspective of the established gender-neutral principles of what works in resettlement with young people. The report first considers the contemporary policy context for the resettlement of girls and young women, specifically in relation to *Transforming Youth Custody*. Literature searches then focused on reasons behind female youth offending, reviews judicial responses to this group, details the characteristics of young females in custody, and reflects on lessons from interventions with older females. Finally, the report draws on any resettlement studies or interventions that have previously included some focus on girls or young women's specific needs.

### Implications of the emerging policy landscape

- It appears that the government's proposed secure colleges would accommodate girls and young women, including most of those currently considered too vulnerable for YOIs. These large institutions may be less conducive to resettlement than the current small units in which girls are held, exacerbated by likely greater distances from home which strain supportive family relationships.
- Interim policy measures outlined in *Transforming Youth Custody* look more helpful, including an emphasis on the need to plan resettlement from the beginning of a sentence and more effective use of release on temporary licence. Funds have been provide for additional resettlement consortia to support these changes. However, there is again a lack of attention to the specific resettlement of girls.
- All adults leaving custody now receive a minimum of one year statutory supervision in the community, increasing both resettlement support and risk of recall for young women. It is intended new 'resettlement prisons' for adults will see better consistency of resettlement support by commissioning the same provider for custody and community services, and the government will also pilot an open unit for women due to be released in order to aid the transition to the community further.
- Some previous policy concern for gender-specific criminal justice support, through for instance the *Together Women* programme, has been underlined by new legal duties on the Minister of Justice to ensure that rehabilitation services meet the needs of females who offend.

- The *Transforming Rehabilitation* agenda may hold particular risks for women as there is limited evidence of 'what works' in order to set early outcome targets, numbers of women will be very small to show a significant improvement so gender-specific services become less attractive, and they may be disproportionately supervised by contract services.

### Existing lessons of effective resettlement of young people

- Gender-neutral principles for the effective resettlement of young people cannot be assumed to apply uncritically to females specifically, but provide a useful starting point for analysis.
- The first principle is to ensure a smooth transition of support custody to community. This means commencing the resettlement process from the point of sentencing – the custodial intervention should be about preparing for release. Planning should be individualised and forward-looking, while community support should build on process made in custody. All agencies need to be responsible for resettlement at all stages.
- The period immediately following release is critical for young people. An often increased determination to make changes presents engagement opportunities, but there are also enhanced risks of non-compliance if hopes are not met. The transition may also be traumatic.
- The second principle is the coordination of partnership agencies to deliver the wide range of services required to meet the complex needs of young people leaving custody. A resettlement intervention would focus on brokering such 'wraparound' support.
- The third principle is the early engagement of the young person in order to help them shift their personal identity to a more proactive member of society. Positive relationships between practitioners and young person is crucial to developing the self-image to promote desistance from crime.

### Explaining offending in girls and young women

- Although factors predicting delinquency for boys and young men tend to hold true for girls and young women, certain factors have a stronger association for females, such as problems of abuse, victimisation and health.
- Home relationships difficulties are frequent precursors of offending in girls and young women, including abusive relationships with parents or step-parents. Indeed, these is part of a wider pattern of past victimisation and trauma which might include abuse, perhaps in childhood or at the hands of partners.
- Unlike males, partner relationships and parenthood may trigger offending rather than desistance, perhaps because of the increased risk of coercion by male partners. Peer relationships is also an area of increased risk, both in the violent breakdown of friendships, but also forms of abuse and sexual exploitation in peer groups. Female violent behaviour is frequently a response to perceived victimisation in the family, partner or peer relationships.
- Female offending is also more likely to be associated with various mental health issues, including self-harm, depression, substance misuse and attempted suicide.
- Finally, it has been argued that expectations of femininity make girls and young women particularly susceptible to the relative deprivation, with more pressure to find legal or illegal means to live up to those expectations for sexual attractiveness.

### **Judicial responses to offending in girls and young women**

- Established research has suggested that females who offend are less likely to find their way into the criminal justice system, but that when they do, they are treated more harshly than males because they transgress gender expectations.
- Tools assessing risk factors for offending calibrated around the evidence for male criminality tend to inflate the risk of females who are much more likely to be victims of abuse. With a 'scaled approach' of responding risk, this can mean that females are more likely to receive stronger criminal justice interventions, with associated increased risks of breach and so further punishments.

### **The use of custody for girls and young women**

- Although the increase in the use of custody for girls and young women was greater than for equivalent males during the decade from the mid-1990s to mid-2000s, they have since seen a larger proportionate fall.
- Girls in custody are considered vulnerable enough to be held in Secure Training Centres or Secure Children's Homes. However, while boys turning 18 continue in Young Offender Institutions, female young adults are sent to adult prisons, with a corresponding lack of age-appropriate provision. If they turn 18 while serving the sentence, they can be transferred (along with a transfer to adult probation services), causing trauma and breaking trusting relationships with professionals that are an important to resettlement.
- Girls and young women in custody have higher levels of needs and vulnerabilities than males, including higher levels of home violence, sex abuse, care history, education deficit, mental health problems, poor self-image and self-harm. Smaller numbers in custody may see an even higher concentration of these complex needs, increasing the resettlement challenge.
- More girls and young women are being held further from home, making resettlement arrangements and maintaining supportive relationships more difficult.

### **Evidence of effective justice work with girls and young women**

- Given patterns of past victimisation, approaches relying on coercion, confrontation or overt challenges to anti-social behaviour tend not to work.
- Professionals' ability to engage is particularly important to effective delivery with this group, including understanding the woman's perspective, being optimistic that she can change and valuing the woman's own concerns.
- Given the importance of negative relationships to their aetiology, it is important to build girls' and young women's understanding of and capability to form positive relationships. Staff-young person relationships should be considered a model for this. Where appropriate, family relationships are also a key focus for effective support.
- Interventions should acknowledge and aim to mitigate the extensive levels of victimisation, violence and abuse. Staff recognition of this trauma (possibly aggravated transitions into and out of custody) is a prerequisite to helping girls and young women who offend take control of their lives and change their behaviour.
- Interventions should be anchored in the desistance paradigm, focusing on users' strengths and enhancing self-worth, resilience, agency, and maturation away from offending.

- Interventions for girls and young women should aim to provide a comprehensive and holistic service, and needs to be gender responsive. It is also important for interventions to take place in an environment that makes them feel at ease and safe, which may be helped by single sex provision.

### **Evidence of effective resettlement with adult females**

- Few interventions with adult women can demonstrate statistically significant impact on offending (partly for methodological reasons), but can show improvement in ‘softer outcomes’ that may eventually impact on recidivism. As in the Together Women programme, this may include being more confident in their ability to change their lives.
- Research with adult women supports lessons from gender-neutral research with young people, including the need for wraparound support to address multiple needs and a smooth transition to the community with planning from the start of a sentence.
- However, the particular vulnerabilities and pathways into offending for females who offend means an emphasis on certain aspects of resettlement support. A note of caution is that wider support for a complex range of needs should not mean setting women up to fail orders by increasing licence requirements.
- Women are less likely to live with their family on release, so face a heightened need for accommodation after release. Given the importance of relationships, rehousing women close to existing support networks can be useful. However, this may need to be balanced against feeling the need for a fresh start or finding safety away from an abusive relationships.
- Relationships are key to stability and desistance after release for women, and are central to any shift in identity towards desistance. The quality of relationships with partners and parents, and how they see their role as mothers, are all important to recidivism. These can be helped through more flexible use of release on temporary licence, not restricting family visits, and engaging families in reintegration.
- Gender-neutral disciplinary systems (in custody or community) that fail to take into account women’s increased likelihood of expressive displays of verbal or physical violence risk restricting early or temporary release and increasing breach of licence.
- The need for programmes inside or after custody that focus on helping women to forge positive relationships has been a consistent call in research literature. Mentors may be helpful in offering relational support.
- Considering the way that trauma and violence affects each experience in resettlement is important to desistance, as is the need to address such issues through interventions.
- Valuing women’s own assessments of the services they need to reduce offending helps reduce recidivism.
- There is debate over whether programmes in resettlement should be single-sex. Mixed initiatives may help develop healthy relationships with men, but reduce the chances to address past trauma and male dominance.
- Women benefit from less confrontational interventions that instead develop nurturing trust with staff and supporters.
- The skill and style of workers is a primary factor in women’s engagement. Central is their understanding and sensitivity about women’s abusive backgrounds and health needs. Specialism in female caseloads and training in gender-responsive strategies may improve licence completion rates.

- Women are particularly sensitive to the risks of support withdrawal at the end of licence, so exit strategies are important, including the need to identify networks of continued support through community partners.

### **Indicative research on the resettlement of girls and young women**

- Although there is no well-developed evidence-base of what works in the resettlement of girls and young women, studies are suggestive of important issues. Again, these are consistent with the lessons for resettlement of young people generally, but with emphasis consistent with the specific needs of girls and young women.
- Interventions were only perceived as effective by this group if they were understood to be relevant to them specifically rather than generic, emphasising the advantage of involving them in sentence planning and of voluntary activities.
- Recent research has shown girls critical of community agencies for failing to maintain adequate contact or making advanced arrangements for resettlement while they were in custody. Early awareness of resettlement plans promoted optimism that desistance was possible.
- The research also drew attention to the girls' perceptions that 'infantilising' behaviour regimes in and out of custody undermined the development of agency and so subsequent change.
- Some research suggests that mentoring relationships may contribute to effective resettlement for this population, particularly in offering personal and emotional support.
- Effective resettlement would appear to involve a shift in personal narrative focusing on increased assertiveness challenging the vulnerabilities from past victimisation. This might involve arrangements and supervision focused on future goals determined by the girls and young women themselves.
- Early development of trusting, consistent relationships with resettlement keyworkers is critical, including sufficient engagement while still in custody. Specialism in female caseloads may be beneficial.
- Recent research shows girls valuing staff who are perceived as listening to them and committed to a participatory approach, drawing on their strengths and interests and tackling self-identified needs. Reliability, consistency and proactively looking for opportunities were characteristics valued in staff.
- Young females who offend are not an homogenous group, and resettlement staff should be sensitive to cultural differences that may open up opportunities for developing personal narratives and identities that can aid desistance.

### **Synthesis to produce lessons for resettlement of girls and young women**

- This review is an important step in redressing the lack of academic attention on the resettlement of girls and young women. In the absence of a clear 'what works' knowledge-base for this group, it has still been possible to develop an iterative synthesis from research in related areas in order to inform the development of gender-responsive services to later evaluate. Four clearly discernible and consistent themes have emerged to provide principles for that development:
- 1** The lessons of 'what works' in resettlement with young people (gender-neutral) are still valid for girls and young women. As such, agencies should still ensure a smooth transition from custody to community, preparing the individual and the outside for release from the beginning of the sentence; coordinate multiple agencies to address multiple needs in wraparound support; and engage to promote positive shifts to non-criminal identities.

- 2 Resettlement interventions must address the vulnerabilities of girls and young women. Typical backgrounds of trauma and victimisation have significant implications for intervention approach, including the necessity for secure environments and the need for non-confrontational approaches to addressing offending behaviour.
  - 3 Past, present and future relationships should be a critical focus in resettlement. Past trauma, exploitation and victimisation in close relationships shape problems and impact on interventions. Developing trust in relationships is vital to engagement at present. Positive and supportive future relationships are key to promoting non-delinquent identities for future desistance.
  - 4 Empowering girls and young women to make positive choices should run through all resettlement practice. Countering the aetiology of vulnerability and subordinating victimisation will involve both structural support and promoting agency. This includes participation in planning and positive empowerment in supervision towards a non-offending identity.
- As such, interventions should be based on the still-valid gender-neutral lessons for the resettlement of all young people, but then be mediated through a 'gender prism' containing three lenses: vulnerabilities, relationships and empowerment (see figure 1 on page 52 of the full report).
  - The report concludes by presenting examples of gender-responsive practices that would result from passing gender-neutral lessons for resettlement through the gender-prism. Policymakers and practitioners should pass current interventions through this gender prism and develop future provision in such a gender-responsive way in order to meet the specific resettlement needs of girls and young women.



## Introduction: addressing the resettlement needs of an ignored constituency

The evidence base for ‘what works’ in resettlement (more commonly referred to overseas as ‘re-entry’ or ‘aftercare’) specifically of girls and young women is under-developed (Bateman et al, 2013a). The current review, undertaken as part of the work of *Beyond Youth Custody* to promote good resettlement practice, aims to interrogate the literature that is relevant to working with girls and young women in a resettlement context and begins to consider the implications for practitioners and policy makers. It is intended that this will provide a baseline for further thematic reports on this topic.

### A policy and practice need

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on resettlement amongst young people as a mechanism for addressing high levels of reoffending on release from custody. The resettlement agenda received a significant impetus in 2002 with the publication of a major report on reoffending by ex-prisoners, published by the Social Exclusion Unit (2002). Where children are concerned, the secure training order and the detention and training order that replaced it were devised to have a structured licence period after release built into the sentence. These new disposals accordingly emphasised the statutory responsibility for youth justice agencies to engage in resettlement activity as a core activity (Hagell et al, 2000).

The Youth Justice Board published a *Youth Resettlement Action plan* in 2004 (Youth Justice Board, 2004) which was subsequently superseded by *Youth Resettlement: a framework for action* two years later (Youth Justice Board, 2006). These strategic developments were accompanied by a range of practice initiatives, piloting different models of intervention. More recently one of these included the resettlement strand of *Youth in Focus* (YIF), funded by the Big Lottery. Under this, 15 voluntary sector projects provide a variety of forms of support to young people (up to the age of 25) leaving custody over a five year period.<sup>1</sup>

Despite these developments, recidivism rates, while showing some modest reductions, have remained stubbornly high. Whereas 74.8% of children released from custody in 2002 reoffended within 12 months, the equivalent figure for the period ending September 2011 was 72.6% (Ministry of Justice, 2013b). The data do not however show a continuous downward trend over that period, so it may be premature to conclude that a greater focus on resettlement accounts for the (small) decline. Indeed, there is little evidence to suggest that the policy emphasis on resettlement manifested much change in mainstream practice.

In spite of the increased policy activity around resettlement, the specific needs of girls in this context have received little attention. The Board’s strategic framework notes that:

“Resettlement must respond to the diverse needs of children and young people in custody, ensuring that the requirements of specific groups are properly addressed. This is particularly the case for girls in custody, and for young people from minority ethnic groups (who are currently over-represented in the youth justice system). This framework therefore encourages further regional and local developments aimed at identifying and addressing diversity issues. However, it is also designed to benefit all young people, as well as to improve outcomes for these specific groups.” (Youth Justice Board, 2006).

This, however, is the sole reference in this policy document to gender and resettlement. And the situation on the ground is unlikely to be any different. A Youth Justice Board mapping exercise of wider youth justice

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<sup>1</sup> Other initiatives included resettlement and aftercare provision, funded across 59 youth offending team areas by the Youth Justice Board in 2005 (subsequently rebranded as Integrated Resettlement Support), the RESET programme, which operated in three areas between 2005 and 2007 (one of which focused on provision for girls), the ‘Daedalus project’ based at Feltham YOI and the establishment of six resettlement consortia in 2009 by the Youth Justice Board. (For an overview see Bateman et al, 2013b.)

provision in 2004 showed that the majority (56%) of youth offending teams delivered 'generic' intervention programmes that they considered suitable for both boys and girls (Owers, 2004). This included any provision for resettlement support.

This is worrying gap in criminal justice policy and practice. A consistent warning from emerging research on effective practice with adult female offenders is that what works with adult male offenders in a gender-neutral manner is unlikely to work with women. That is because these models fail to take account of the different origins of the reasons that women come to the attention of criminal justice agencies (Blanchette and Brown, 2006; Berman, 2005; Boom, 2003). Indeed there is clear empirical evidence that interventions that have reduced reoffending amongst male offenders, such as cognitive skills programmes, may not work with their female counterparts (Cann, 2006).

The failure to develop gender-sensitive approaches may be even more problematic for girls and young women, where age represents an additional complication (Burman and Batchelor, 2009).

## Why have the resettlement needs of girls and young women been ignored?

### They make up a small proportion of the custodial population

One reason that we know less about the resettlement of girls and young women is that compared with males, there are far fewer to resettle. One of the distinguishing features of the custodial population is that it is predominantly male. In January 2014 girls accounted for less than 5% of those detained within the secure estate for children and young people (Ministry of Justice, 2014a). Within the adult prison estate as a whole, females make up a similar proportion of the population. As indicated in table 1 however, the representation of young women aged 18-24 is slightly lower than either their younger or older counterparts (Ministry of Justice, 2014b).

**Table 1**  
The custodial population by age and gender

	Male	Female
Girls aged 10-17 years (Jan 2014)	95.1%	4.9%
Young women 18-20 (Dec 2013)	96.7%	3.3%
Young adult women 21-24 (Dec 2013)	96.5%	3.5%
Adult women aged 24+ (Dec 2013)	95.3%	4.7%

Given that the large majority of those imprisoned will be released and subject to some form of supervisory support in the community, the under-representation of girls and young women among those deprived of their liberty will inevitably be reflected in the caseloads of services providing resettlement, although there are no published data to support this. Moreover, females tend to attract shorter custodial sentences than their male counterparts. During 2012, the average length of a sentence of immediate imprisonment, for men/boys was 14.9 months compared with 9.6 months for women of all ages (Ministry of Justice, 2013a). As a consequence, boys and young men are subject to longer periods of post-custody supervision.

As noted later in the review, the fact that the vast majority of people being resettled are male means that there is a reduced focus on the needs and experiences of girls and young women.

### **Their patterns of offending are less problematic for policy makers**

A second reason why the knowledge base on 'what works' in resettlement with girls and young women is limited is because offending patterns in this group have demanded less attention from policy makers and practitioners. Put simply, their offending is less of a problem. Indeed, the lower custody figures above are simply a manifestation of the fact that gender is one of the most powerful predictors of offending frequency and type. Where youth crime is concerned,

'statistics for detected youth crime, as well as data from self-report studies, confirm that girls are significantly less likely than boys to commit offences or to come to the attention of the youth justice system' (Nacro, 2008:1).

The most recent data (for 2012/3) indicate that girls account for just 18% of detected youth crime (Youth Justice Board/ Ministry of Justice, 2014). The equivalent figure for young adult women aged 18-20 (for 2012) is similar (Ministry of Justice, 2013a).

Female criminal behaviour also tends to be less serious than that of males (Bateman, 2008a). In 2012, for instance, while robbery, sexual offending and violence against the person accounted for one in 10 of all detected offences committed by boys and young adult men, the equivalent proportion for females was 6.3% (Ministry of Justice, 2013a). Patterns of desistance – rates of criminality decline rapidly as young people mature – also vary according to gender (Flood-Page et al, 2000; Smith, 2006a). While a certain level of offending appears to be relatively normal among teenage girls, they appear to '*grow out of crime*' (Rutherford, 1992) more successfully and at an earlier age than boys.<sup>2</sup> The difference in law breaking between boys and girls is accordingly:

'not so much at the 'front end' or onset of offending ... but at the 'back end' of when and why young women desist from offending' (Worrall, 1999).

However, there have been considerable concerns in recent years about a perceived increase in the extent of violent offending by young females (Sharpe, 2012; Batchelor, 2005; Nacro, 2008; Gelsthorpe and Worrall, 2009; Young, 2009; Burman and Batchelor, 2009).

While there is some support for those anxieties in the data for detected offending, it is important to be cautious for a number of reasons:

- 1 Because the number of young women engaged in violent offending is very low, small numerical increases generate substantial rises in percentage terms (Burman and Batchelor, 2009).
- 2 As far as girls are concerned, there are good reasons for supposing that rises in detected crime shown in the official figures between 2003 and 2007 - which triggered much of the disquiet - were artefacts of a shift in policing of children's behaviour during that period to meet government targets (see for instance, Bateman, 2008b). With hindsight, it is possible to view the increase in the number of girls drawn into the system as a short term anomaly in the context of a longer trend of falling detected offending.
- 3 While there has been a slight rise for both boys and girls in violent offences (seen as a proportion of all detected offending since the early 1990s) figures have begun to fall again more recently as the 'net widening' impact of the government target has abated. Perhaps more importantly, the actual number of violent incidents has, as indicated in table 2, also fallen sharply.

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<sup>2</sup> One might anticipate accordingly that the proportion of young adult offences attributable to females would be lower than the proportion of youth crime attributable to girls. Until recently such a pattern was evident in the data. The fact that the proportions are now similar is an artefact of a more rapid decline in detected offending by girls, both by comparison with boys and with older females (Bateman, 2013).

Table 2

Violence against the person as a proportion of total indictable offending: girls and boys  
(Derived from Nacro, 2008 and Ministry of Justice 2013a)

Year	Girls		Boys	
	Violent offences	As proportion of total offending	Violent offences	As proportion of total offending
1993	3,700	12.6%	12,300	12.3%
2006	5,700	17.8%	19,800	19.8%
2012	1,140	14.9%	5,050	12.8%

It should not be assumed that where violence results in a formal criminal justice disposal, it is necessarily serious in nature. In 2012, for instance, well over half of violent offences committed by girls resulted in a pre-court disposal. This shows that the behaviour involved was below the threshold where the public interest requires prosecution (the equivalent figure for boys was 39.1%) (Ministry of Justice, 2013a).

- 4 Finally, young females are significantly less likely to reoffend than their male counterparts. While almost 40% of boys subject to a youth justice disposal committed a further proven offence in the 12 months ending September 2011, just one in four girls did so (Ministry of Justice, 2013b). For children leaving custody, the gender differential in terms of recidivism is more pronounced (as shown in table 3). Equivalent figures are not available for young adults.

Table 3

Further proven offending by children within 12 months of disposal by gender (2009 cohort)  
(Derived from Ministry of Justice, 2011: supplementary table A5)

Disposal type	Percentage reconvicted	
	Boys	Girls
Pre-court disposal	27.2	16.7
First tier penalty	47.3	36.2
Community sentence	69.0	55.9
Custodial sentence	73.1	58.1

### Lack of a research knowledge base

It is not just in policy and practice that the resettlement needs of this group have been ignored. Until recently, the relatively limited nature of female offending has been associated with a tendency for researchers to overlook the position of girls and women in the criminal justice system (Heilbrun et al, 2008). As one academic put it:

‘An excursion through the twentieth century’s developments in criminology is a journey through communities inhabited only by men, passing street corners and sea fronts occupied exclusively by male youth and into soccer stadia, youth clubs and rock venues where women and their experiences fail to register even a passing comment from the researchers. Where women are noted, they are viewed through the eyes, comments and reflections of men or male youth’ (Scruton, 1990: 17).

Worrall and Gelsthorpe (2009) have calculated that, over the past three decades, fewer than 30 articles (out of a total of 600) appearing in the *Probation journal* have been concerned with policy or practice

relating to women's offending. This lack of attention has, moreover, tended to be accompanied by the development of gender neutral models of service delivery (Worrall, 2001; Gelsthorpe and Sharpe, 2009). Women have suffered from being '*correctional afterthoughts*' (Ross and Fabiano, 1986, cited in Gelsthorpe and Hedderman, 2012: 375).

It is perhaps not surprising that the focus on male offending is more pronounced in relation to custody given that females account for a smaller proportion of the imprisoned population than of the offending population more generally. For instance, the Corston review of the vulnerabilities of women within the criminal justice system (Corston, 2007) points to the differential experience of incarcerated women but, for understandable reasons, is largely concerned with the prevention of short-term custodial sentences for this group. Similarly, female resettlement receives significantly less attention and is under-researched, compared with the literature on males. Nevertheless, there is an acceptance (albeit tacit from some academic quarters) that '*gender does make a difference*' in criminal justice processes generally and resettlement specifically (Berman, 2005:7; see also Bloom et al, 2003).

Burman and Batchelor (2009: 270) make the point that girls and young women are particularly disadvantaged in this context since they fall '*between two stools*' – their specific needs are ignored by both researchers considering gender and those considering age. While acknowledging an emerging awareness of the gender specific needs of female offenders, they nonetheless contend that this positive development frequently incorporates an implicit assumption of women who offend as a homogenous group. As such, '*the age-specific needs and deeds*' of girls and young women are often overlooked (Burman and Batchelor, 2009: 270). For instance, the Ministry of Justice's guide to working with women offenders (National Offender Management Service, 2012) contains just three paragraphs (out of 49 pages) on *young* women. Conversely, discussions of youth crime and offending by young adults, which do address issues pertinent to age, tend to ignore gender. The authors conclude that:

'perhaps even more so than adult female offenders, young female offenders are an invisible minority whose offending pathways and distinctive needs have gone largely undocumented and unaddressed' (Burman and Batchelor, 2009).

As noted above, the lower representation of girls and young women deprived of their liberty has tended towards an even lower visibility in the custodial context and so far as resettlement is concerned. For instance, a review of provision for imprisoned girls conducted in 2008 pointed to a limited evidence base and a lack of gender-specific interventions (Bateman, 2008a; for an American perspective, see Cooney et al, 2008). An extensive literature review conducted for *Beyond Youth Custody* established that there was a dearth of literature on the resettlement of young people generally and that the resettlement of girls and young women in particular was an area where further research was needed (Bateman et al, 2013b; see also Bateman et al, 2013a). It is a view shared by other reviewers (Fields and Abrams, 2010). For such reasons, the *Transition to Adulthood Alliance* has recommended that:

'there should be particular recognition of the distinct and specific needs of young adult women' (Transition to Adulthood Alliance, 2009).

### **How this report attempts to address the gap in knowledge**

The absence of an extensive literature specifically on girls and young women does not however mean that the current evidence base can provide no direction for the resettlement of this group. It would be possible to cross-reference evidence on resettlement of young people in general with what we know about girls and young women's wider needs in order to identify gender sensitive messages for policy makers and practitioners. Other researchers have argued for such an approach with adult female offenders, combining gender-neutral principles of effective resettlement with a gender-informed perspective to understand what

gender-specific good practice might look like (Blanchette and Taylor, 2009). The report will follow this *iterative synthesis* approach in order to look at resettlement of young people through a 'gender lens' (Berman, 2005:2).

The first part of the report below reviews in more detail the contemporary policy context for resettlement of girls and young women, specifically in relation to the government's *Transforming Youth Custody* agenda. The report recaps what we know about resettlement in general, drawing on the previous work of *Beyond Youth Custody* to identify general principles that underpin effective resettlement with young people, both in the England and Wales and in other jurisdictions (Bateman et al, 2013b). The principles themselves are, for the most part, at a sufficient level of generality to be helpful in application to the specific aetiology of youthful female offending.

The remainder of the body of the report considers factors relevant to a gender and age sensitive analysis, such as what the literature tells us about the needs of, and wider responses to, girls and young women who offend.

- First, we look at the reasons behind female youthful offending, and what is known about factors behind later desistance from crime.
- Second, we review the ways that the justice system generally has responded to girls and young women in the recent past.
- Third, the report considers in more detail the custodial picture, including available information about the background and needs characteristics recorded for young females in the secure estate.
- Fourth, we look at any lessons that may be evident from studies of interventions with female offenders, and particularly any relating to custody and aftercare.

Finally, the report reflects on the possibilities suggested by the very limited research or practice specifically on resettlement with our group. While there is no body of literature on what works with girls in resettlement, any studies or interventions that have looked at this issue may provide lessons that can be reviewed within the context of knowledge gained from the other areas outlined.

In the conclusion, we apply the lessons gleaned from our understanding of wider issues pertinent to females in the justice system to the established principles of effective youth resettlement after custody. We will use this iterative synthesis to suggest the implied shifts or reemphases of provision required for effective re-entry aftercare specifically for girls and young women.

### **How the study was conducted**

This report draws on research undertaken for a number of literature and scoping reviews by the *Beyond Youth Custody* team. The section on the 'principles of effective resettlement of young people' summarises findings of the literature on re-entry to the community after custody both in England and Wales and overseas (Bateman et al, 2013b). The section on 'implications of the emerging policy landscape' draws on observations made during analysis for a recent update for that publication, which focused on the publication of the government's response to the *Transforming Youth Justice* consultation (Bateman and Hazel, 2014).

The remaining sections, which look at issues faced by girls and women who come in contact with the justice system, are based on a new literature review undertaken for this report. The methods used in this desk-based review were identical to those developed successfully in the other recent scoping projects by team members (e.g. Bateman et al, 2013b; Hazel, 2008). Searches were made both of existing local and overseas studies focusing on key areas of interest, looking at both published and grey literature. The literature searches were conducted in three waves, with each wave decreasing in specificity for the target literature but increasing the scope of texts found:

- 1 Wave 1 aimed to find any literature solely concerned with resettlement of the exact target group (girls and young women resettled after custody). The primary combination of terms used in searching this wave is summarised in the table below:

**Table 4: Primary search terms used for resettlement literature**

Term 1:	<i>and</i>	Term 2:	<i>and</i>	Term 3:	<i>and</i>	Term 4:
Young		Justice		Resettlement		Female
<i>or</i>		<i>or</i>		<i>or</i>		<i>or</i>
youth		prison		after*		girl
<i>or</i>		<i>or</i>		<i>or</i>		<i>or</i>
juvenile		custod*		through*		wom*
<i>or</i>		<i>or</i>		<i>or</i>		<i>or</i>
child		crim*		wraparound		gender*
<i>or</i>		<i>or</i>		<i>or</i>		<i>or</i>
minor		delinquen*		re-entry		sex
<i>or</i>		<i>or</i>		<i>or</i>		
young adult		offend*		rehabil*		

Given the dearth of material found in this initial exercise, the search was widened in subsequent waves.

- 2 The second wave removed the specificity of terms relating to resettlement, so that texts with any justice intervention or related needs were included. In the table above, this corresponds to searching using term 1, term 2 and term 4.
- 3 The third wave dropped the terms relating to youthfulness in order to capture literature related to females of any age in the justice system, so dropping term 1 in the table above. Two searches were conducted for this wave. One focused on resettlement (including term 3) and the other on any justice intervention or related needs (excluding term 3).

The search for relevant literature and ongoing projects involved four main sources:

- a. **Literature database and web searches.** Systematic searches of the following type of databases:
- academic library databases (incl. University of Salford SOLAR, University of Bedfordshire), in addition to overall mapping of the field using the British Library database
  - academic journal and book databases
  - academic networks (incl. Academia.edu)
  - academic open access repositories
  - internet search-engines (incl. Google, Bing, Google Scholar) and subject specialist websites (incl. Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse [US])
  - research council and research funder websites from the UK and overseas (e.g. Economic and Social Research Council, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Nuffield Foundation in the UK).
- b. **Government literature.** The review included government reports from evaluations, inquiries, White and Green Papers and so on, from both European governments and beyond. This also included a search for any public guidelines or what works literature in this area. Particular use was made of the Youth Justice Board/Ministry of Justice publications databases and effective practice repository.

- c. Review of authors' previous reviews/studies.** We have written scoping and what works reviews on aspects of youth justice previously, including on resettlement. The texts used in these were re-examined.
- d. Reference trails.** Reference lists and bibliographies from each collected text were examined, and where relevant, were traced.

The review focused on more than 100 texts and guidance documents produced in the last twenty years. For reasons of policy and practice relevance, there was an emphasis in analysis on texts that were more recent and from England and Wales. However, we deliberately did not set strict criteria for inclusion. While being mindful of problems of direct comparison (Hazel, 2008), it is important to recognise that it is appropriate for a literature review with a scoping remit to look beyond the current and local policy context. Widening a search historically ensures that lessons from the past are not lost (there is a tendency for policy makers to try to reinvent the wheel and to repeat the same mistakes [Hagell and Hazel, 2001]). Extending a search geographically helps to challenge localised policy discourses, and both illuminates the uniqueness of home policies and suggests alternative ways of conceiving of problems and their potential solutions (Hazel, 2008; Muncie and Goldson, 2006). Although the search was not limited to English language studies (and databases searched included foreign language papers), all studies eventually cited in this report were written in English.



## Implications of the emerging policy landscape

### The development of secure colleges

The government has cited disappointing outcomes associated with child imprisonment as one of the main rationales for *Transforming youth custody*, a strategy for reconfiguring the secure estate for children and young people (Ministry of Justice, 2014c)<sup>3</sup>. The most significant proposal is that young offender institutions and secure training centres will be replaced by 'secure colleges'. These are a new model of custody, designed to put 'education at the heart of detention'. Instead of education being commissioned separately, a single lead provider will deliver all services within the establishment (Ministry of Justice, 2014c: 5).

Savings will be generated through economies of scale.

- A pilot secure college, to open in spring 2017, is projected to hold 320 boys and girls aged 12-17. These will account for approximately one quarter of the current custodial population (Bateman and Hazel, 2014).
- If the pilot proves successful, a network of secure colleges will be developed over the longer term, allowing withdrawal from YOIs and STCs.
- The feasibility of developing a secure college on the site of Feltham in West London is currently under consideration and a decision is expected in the summer of 2014 (Ministry of Justice, 2014c).
- Some specialist provision will remain in the form of secure children's homes to cater for a 'small number of the very youngest, most vulnerable and most challenging young people who will be unsuited to the mainstream provision in a secure college' (Ministry of Justice, 2014d: 10). It would appear however that the intention is to accommodate most girls within the new institutions.

### Large versus small units?

It might be noted that the development of such large units is in tension with the expressed views of the House of Commons Justice Committee. Their 2013 report concluded that it would be:

'safer and more humane to detain young offenders in small, local units with a high staff ratio and where they can maintain links with their families and children's services' (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2013: recommendation 12).

More recent research has lent further credibility to that view. By comparison with those resident in larger YOIs, residents in STCs were more likely to report that they had a personal officer/key worker, that staff treated them with respect, that they had a sentence or remand training plan, and that in the event of them having a problem, they would have someone to turn to. While one in three of those held in YOIs had felt unsafe at some point during their stay, the equivalent figure for children in STCs was one in five (Ellwood, 2013; Kennedy, 2013).

The Justice Committee also expressed the view that smaller establishments were likely to be conducive to more effective resettlement. Given that all girls in custody are currently detained with significantly smaller establishments (STCs and SCHs), the move towards larger institutions has been regarded as a retrograde step by some commentators, at least where girls are concerned (see Bateman and Hazel, 2014). With a smaller number of large institutions, girls are likely to end up further away from their families. Given the importance of family relationships, this is seen as a potential barrier to successful resettlement (Berman, 2005).

### Interim proposals for resettlement

Since no secure college will open for at least three years, the government's plans for transforming youth custody also make provision for changes in the interim period.

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<sup>3</sup> The other main rationale cited is a desire to reduce costs (Ministry of Justice, 2014c).

From a resettlement perspective, the proposals explicitly acknowledge that planning for resettlement from the beginning of a custodial episode is essential to effective practice. Relevant provision to support the child on transfer to the community must be in place prior to release. To this end, the government proposes that a greater emphasis will be placed on requiring custodial providers to *'instil in young people a commitment and desire for continued engagement in learning'* (Ministry of Justice, 2014c: 11). In part, this will involve a *'more effective use'* of release on temporary licence to improve preparation for children to return to the community (Ministry of Justice, 2014c:11). This may be particularly significant, given that a reluctance to take risks in this regard has posed an obstacle to effective resettlement (Bateman et al, 2013b) in the past, particularly in the case of girls (Bateman et al, 2013a).

In high custody areas, these changes will be supported by four additional resettlement consortia, each with £250,000 funding per annum (Ministry of Justice, 2014d). These will aim to build on the experience of the six consortia previously funded by the Youth Justice Board (Ministry of Justice, 2014c). Again the specific resettlement of girls appears to have received little attention and there is no reference to females in the government's response to consultation that lays out the plans (Ministry of Justice, 2014c).

### Developments in young adult resettlement

The government's concern with resettlement also extends to adults, although arguably in a less focused manner. Two years after the publication of the Social Exclusion Unit's 2002 report on reducing reoffending by ex-prisoners (noted above), the Home Office outlined 'seven pathways to resettlement'. In its 2004 *Reducing offending: national action plan*, it noted that provision of accommodation was a particularly important issue for women<sup>4</sup>. In her 2008/09 annual report, the Chief Inspector of Prisons indicated that while resettlement could in most custodial establishments in 2002 be described *'as an add on'*, it was now regarded as a core part of a prison's function (HM Inspector of Prisons, 2010: 6). In 2011/12, 84% of resettlement performance was regarded as 'good' or 'reasonable'. (That compares with 68% in 2005/6.) However, just a year later in 2013, the figure declined to 64% (HM Inspector of Prisons, 2013). Moreover, by focusing on activity within the prison, it might be argued that such measures tend to report on a single moment in the resettlement process.

Whatever progress has been made, the current administration has identified adult resettlement as a priority. High rates of reoffending on release from custody, albeit lower than those for children (in the 12 months ending September 2011, 46.9% of adults reoffended following release from custody, compared with 72.3% of juveniles (Ministry of Justice, 2013b)), are again cited as grounds for the shift in focus (see Ministry of Justice, 2014e). Two developments in particular are worth noting, both which form part of the government's *Transforming Rehabilitation* agenda (Ministry of Justice, 2013d).

#### 1. Statutory supervision in the community

*The Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014*, which received Royal Assent on 13 March, provides that all prisoners over the age of 18 who leave custody will receive a minimum of one year statutory supervision in the community. This will have a significant impact on resettlement provision for young people sentenced to short-term sentences of less than 12 months, although the precise implications will vary according to the age of the young person. Current post-custody arrangements are age dependent (see Bateman et al, 2013b).

- Adults, aged 21 or over, serving less than 12 months are currently released at the mid-point of their sentence unconditionally with no licence conditions or statutory supervision. Following implementation of the act, this group will be subject to licence until the end of their sentence and then receive a period of statutory supervision until one year after their release.

<sup>4</sup> The pathways identified were: accommodation; education, employment and training; mental and physical health; drugs and alcohol; finance, debt and benefit ; children and families of offenders; and attitudes, thinking and behaviour (Home Office, 2004).

- Young adults, aged 18 – 20, serving short term sentences of less than 12 months, are currently released half way through the order subject to a licence of three months duration. The legislative amendments will align arrangements for this group with those for older adults. They will accordingly be released on licence until the expiry of the sentence and this will be supplemented by a period of statutory supervision until they have been back in the community for a year (Great Britain, 2014).

Children who are subject to a detention and training order are, by default released at the halfway point of the sentence and serve the remainder in the community subject to supervision.<sup>5</sup> The legislative changes will not affect those arrangements except where the child turns 18 while still in custody. Where that occurs, the new provisions will apply and the young person will be subject to a period of supervision from the end of the order until one year after release (Great Britain, 2014).

The underlying intention of the legislative changes, which apply to girls and young women in exactly the same way as to males, is to ensure that young people (and adults) serving short term custodial sentences receive a minimum period of resettlement support.

A recent study confirms that supervision post-release can contribute to reduced levels of offending. The research looks at one and two year recidivism rates amongst adult offenders either side of the 12 month threshold for custodial sentence supervision. It allows a comparison of a sample of offenders who received statutory supervision with a similar sample of those who did not. The study found that for offenders with one or no previous convictions, probation supervision was associated with a reduction in reoffending of between 14- 17 percentage points one year after release and between 16 -20 percentage points after two years. The differences were statistically significant (Lai, 2013).

However, the extended requirements for statutory supervision are compulsory. Where a court is satisfied that a young person has breached the conditions of supervision, it may impose a fine, a supervision default order requiring the young person to undertake unpaid work or to be subject to an electronically monitored curfew, or commit him or her to custody for up to 14 days. In some cases the new arrangements will place young people at risk of proceedings for non-compliance, with the prospects of a return to custody for significantly longer periods.

The *Beyond Youth Custody* literature review noted the prevalence of breach of licence conditions as a challenge for resettlement providers and pointed to a tension between providing additional support to this vulnerable group and an increased risk of breach as the number of required contacts with resettlement agencies rises (Bateman et al, 2013b).

Such concerns have been echoed by penal lobbying groups in relation to the new statutory provisions. The Prison Reform Trust (2013), for example, has welcomed the principle of focusing on rehabilitation and extending support to short term prisoners, but questions whether the mechanisms proposed are the most appropriate. Their briefing on the bill argues that one effect of the reform will be to extend the period that young people spend subject to oversight by the criminal justice system and increase the risk of breach and recall. As a consequence, '*a measure intended to be rehabilitative could end up reinforcing the revolving door of prison, breach and recall back to custody*' (Prison Reform Trust, 2013:4). The extent to which such fears are realised in practice remains to be seen.

## **2. The creation of a network of resettlement prisons**

The second significant development around adult resettlement is the creation of a network of 'resettlement prisons'. This was announced by the government in July 2013 (Bateman and Hazel, 2013c).

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<sup>5</sup> There is provision for early or late release where the order is for eight months or longer. Since 2002, there has been a presumption of early release at the earliest point permitted by the legislation, subject to electronically monitored curfew, other than cases where the index offence is violent or sexual (Nacro, 2007).

It is intended that short term adult prisoners will serve their entire sentence in a resettlement prison close to the area in which they will be released. It is anticipated that the majority of those serving longer sentences will also be transferred to such an establishment for the last three months of their sentence. This will mean that the required services are all available on transfer to the community. In the re-designated establishments, which are aligned with 21 contract areas, the same provider will be commissioned to deliver resettlement services both in custody and in the community to encourage a planned transition.

The implications of the development of resettlement prisons for young adult males aged 18-21, who are accommodated separately from older prisoners, is currently unclear. In November 2013, the government announced that it intended to abolish the distinct sentence of detention in a young offender institution and relocate this group into mainstream adult provision (Ministry of Justice, 2013e). However, following consultation, the decision has been put on hold, pending an independent review of suicide by young people aged 18-24 in custody (Grayling, 2014).

As noted below, young adult women, despite being subject to detention in a young offender institution, are often not provided with specialist accommodation in practice. Given that 12 of the resettlement prisons announced to date hold females (Ministry of Justice, nd), there would appear to be no obvious reason why young adult women should not also have access to this form of provision.

The government is committed to ensuring the accommodation of all female prisoners in resettlement prisons and anticipates that all women will be provided with ‘through the gate’ support on release (Ministry of Justice, 2013f), although with the current configuration of the adult female estate, distance from home will inevitably remain an issue. Perhaps in recognition of this difficulty, a review undertaken by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) (Robinson, 2013) has endorsed a principle, originally to be found in a recommendation of the Corston report on vulnerable women in the criminal justice system, that existing women’s prisons should be replaced by *‘suitable, geographically dispersed, small, multi-functional custodial centres’* (Corston, 2007: 35). To date, little progress had been made against that recommendation, but the NOMS review proposes that an open unit outside of the existing women’s estate should be established, as a pilot, so that female prisoners from the region can work in the community prior to release. The government has accepted the proposal and confirmed that a pilot will be developed on a new site that will enable an evaluation of the impact on reoffending post-custody (Ministry of Justice, 2013f).

### **Gender specific provision**

The welcome recognition by policy makers of the importance of resettlement, understood as a process, has accordingly been accompanied by some awareness of the different resettlement needs of women, even if that response remains somewhat underdeveloped. This awareness might be seen in the context of a growing acknowledgement of the necessity of gender sensitive planning and provision in the wake of *‘decades of feminist and reformist activism and research’*. It has led in the more recent period to an apparent consensus among practitioners, penal reform groups and organisations – such as the Women’s Institute and the Confederation of British Industry – from outside traditional criminal justice circles, that far reaching change is required in the treatment of women who offend (Corcoran, 2011:26).

The *Women’s Offending Reduction* programme, established in 2004 by the Home Office, was arguably a milestone in this respect, aiming to halt what was then a rapidly rising female prison population through *‘improving community based interventions that were better tailored to the needs of women’* (Worrall and Gelsthorpe, 2009: 340). The impetus was maintained by the publication of the Corston review (2007: 79) which concluded that female offending is a complex phenomenon, requiring *‘a distinct, radically different, visibly-led, strategic, proportionate, holistic, woman-centred, integrated approach’*. While the main thrust of the review’s recommendations was centred on reducing the use of women’s custody, it nonetheless endorsed two gender specific pathways in addition to those identified by the Home Office: support for women

who have been abused, raped or who have experienced domestic violence; and support for women who have been involved in prostitution. The National Service Framework for working with women who offend, published in 2008, acknowledged the importance of support in these two areas (Ministry of Justice, 2008b).

While these strategic initiatives will no doubt have impacted in various ways on practice, the most obvious concrete manifestation of this emerging concern to deal differently with women's offending was the *Together Women* programme. Drawing on the experience of the Asha women's centre in West Mercia (Ministry of Justice, 2008b), the programme was established at five centres in 2006/7, with £9 million government funding. The initiative aimed to provide an 'end to end model' of support to complement offender management and other criminal justice services in the community, including the provision of resettlement. The programme also aimed to develop and disseminate good practice and to encourage increased diversion from court and custody (Jolliffe et al, 2011). At the current time, *Together Women* also operates a drop in centre within HMP New Hall that ensures all women are seen prior to release to aid their release plan and provides a 'though the gate' service to short term female prisoners released to Leeds and Bradford areas.

More recently, the *Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014* has placed a statutory duty on the Minister of Justice to ensure that arrangements for the provision of supervision and rehabilitation services for people convicted of offending comply with the public sector equality duty in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 as it relates to women offenders. It also obliges the Minister to identify elements of that provision intended to meet the specific needs of that group (Great Britain, 2014: section 10).

A central feature of the government's *Transforming rehabilitation* agenda is the introduction of 'payments by results' whereby providers are rewarded in terms of outcome and run the risk of financial loss where they fail to deliver against targets (Ministry of Justice, 2010). While it is too early to be certain as to the impact of such measures on the criminal justice population as a whole, commentators have expressed concern as to the implications for women who offend. Gelsthorpe and Hedderman (2012: 387) for instance, point out that the less robust evidence base for 'what works' with women 'raise[s] serious questions about how feasible it will be to set outcome targets for a payment by results scheme'.

Many women are first time offenders, and the risk of recidivism by comparison with their more prolific male counterparts is low. Demonstrating that a particular intervention has reduced that risk, is accordingly problematic '*because there is no "counterfactual"*' (Gelsthorpe and Hedderman, 2012: 387). Moreover, the numbers involved in any local scheme that aims to deliver a specific service for females will be small. Proving impact to a statistically significant standard will be difficult, thereby making it less attractive for potential providers.

In organisational terms, it is proposed that all but the highest risk offenders will be supervised by contracted out providers rather than the probation service. Since women generally represent a lower risk of harm and reconviction, they are accordingly likely to fall disproportionately into this category and may accordingly be supervised by staff with fewer qualifications and potentially lower levels of skills (Gelsthorpe, 2009). Although payment by results is less well advanced in the youth justice system, the consequences for children have also been questioned. Providers required to demonstrate results against targets will tend to prioritise short-term outcomes rather than focusing on support to promote longer-term maturation processes that are associated with desistance in most young people (National Association for Youth Justice, 2011).

While it would seem then that concerns raised over the failure of the criminal justice system to treat women in a gender sensitive manner continue to be legitimate, awareness of the fact that female offenders are different has improved significantly in the recent past. Nonetheless, recognition of the particular status of girls and young women – a group that requires attention both because of their age and gender – remains limited and resettlement provision is seriously underdeveloped.

## Existing lessons of effective resettlement of young people<sup>6</sup>

While the evidence base in respect of the resettlement of girls and young women is sparse, there is a limited but growing literature on the resettlement of young people (James et al, 2013). From this, it is possible to derive lessons or principles that ought to inform the development of effective interventions in this area. As noted above, while such principles cannot be assumed to apply uncritically to young women, and gender sensitive implementation is required, they nonetheless provide a helpful starting point within which to locate what direct evidence is available.

### A smooth transition from custody to community

Resettlement is best understood as a process that commences from the point of incarceration. Where assessments or pre-sentence reports have implications for addressing longer-term community needs, it starts even sooner. Intervention within the custodial environment should focus on what needs to change if offending is to be reduced on release. Planning should be individualised and forward looking – rather than reflecting institutional concerns with behaviour management and availability of particular programmes. This would ensure that the requisite provision is in place in advance of a young person leaving custody.

Conversely, resettlement provision in the community should build upon the progress that has been made within custody. It is frequently asserted that the transition from one setting to the other ought to be as seamless as possible. This requires all agencies responsible for resettlement (within the custodial estate and outside of it) to be engaged in joint sentence planning that seeks to deliver an integrated programme of intervention spanning the entry into custody, the period of imprisonment and the transition to the community (Bateman et al, 2013b; Hazel and Liddle, 2013).

This latter transition is critical for effective resettlement. Because it offers a point at which young people may be determined to make changes to their previous lives, it represents a window of opportunity for successful intervention (Bateman and Hazel, 2014). However, the period immediately following release is also one of enhanced risk. It is associated with high rates of non-compliance with statutory resettlement requirements and extensive reoffending, often as young people's hopes that things will be different start to fade (Bateman et al, 2013b; Hazel et al, 2010). The return to the community is also frequently experienced as traumatic. The trauma stems from the disorientation associated with the abrupt move from a highly structured environment to a freedom where young people have to renegotiate relationships with family and acquaintances, re-establish a role for themselves in an environment that may have changed, while paradoxically coming to terms with how much has remained the same (Hazel and Bateman, 2013).

### Coordinating wrap around care for complex needs

For many young people leaving custody, the resettlement process is hampered by a range of difficulties that increase the risk of reoffending. While such factors are relatively common amongst the youth offending population as a whole, they are more likely to be present amongst those deprived of their liberty (Jacobson et al, 2010). Moreover, the custodial experience frequently operates to exacerbate disadvantage (Storey, 2014). In this context, a resettlement intervention that focuses on addressing the practical, social, and welfare needs of young people leaving custody, while simultaneously aiming to improve thinking skills and challenge anti-social attitudes as part of the overall programme of support, has a better prospect of facilitating desistance than deterrence and punishment (Lewis et al, 2003).

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<sup>6</sup> The material in this section of the review is drawn largely from the much more extensive review of the literature produced by *Beyond Youth Justice* (Bateman et al, 2013b).

So, while many young people who come to the attention of criminal justice agencies have chaotic home lives and lack stable accommodation, the disruption associated with incarceration frequently worsens accommodation status (Hazel et al, 2012). Educational underachievement is associated with delinquency and, where that behaviour leads to deprivation of liberty, a custodial record makes it harder to access education, training or employment on release. When young prisoners are asked about what could be done in custody to prepare them for release, and upon transfer to the community to assist resettlement, they most commonly refer to support in accessing education, training, legitimate forms of income and a stable address (Glover et al, 2012). In the current context, it is important to note that young women prisoners report the highest levels of unmet need (Hamlyn and Lewis, 2000).

Such factors are not independent of each other, of course, but they are connected in complex ways. Young people with an unstable home life are less likely to be able to sustain education or employment. Conversely, a consistent source of income and a structured lifestyle may increase the prospects of finding and maintaining a suitable place to live. A secure base may also be a prerequisite of young people addressing other issues such as problematic drinking or substance misuse (Thomas, 2013). In this context, research has suggested that among other activities, resettlement providers should be able to act as a 'service broker', co-ordinating a partnership of relevant agencies capable of delivering the wide range of necessary services (Hazel and Liddle, 2013: 10).

### Engagement and shifting personal narrative

As noted above, engagement is critical to effective practice with young people because intervention is unlikely to have the desired outcome without the participation and commitment of the young person (Smith, 2006b). It is also because active involvement with resettlement activity can be understood as a process that allows movement, on the part of the young person, towards '*adopting a changed identity or an altered understanding of who they are and what they would like to be*' (Bateman and Hazel, 2013a: 6). Successful engagement requires meeting young people on their own territory, encouraging participatory approaches, fostering motivation so that the young person complies with the expectations of the intervention because he or she recognises the benefits for themselves rather than because non-compliance can result in a return to custody (Bateman and Hazel, 2013a). Positive relationships between practitioners and young people underly each of these pre-requisites. Indeed, it has been argued that they '*are at the centre of effective engagement*' (Mason and Prior, 2008:12).

It is clear from the evidence that approaches to resettlement that rely on punishment and deterrence are unlikely to be effective (Sherman et al, 1997; von Hirsch et al, 1999). A focus on criminal justice sanctions, rather than the provision of interpersonal support, is particularly ineffective with women (Dowden and Andrews, 1999). This is in part because young people who consider that they have already been punished for their wrongdoing may respond with defiance to interventions that they perceive as excessive or unfair (Tyler, 1990). Engagement, one of the key requirements of effective resettlement, can thereby be undermined (Bateman and Hazel, 2013a). Moreover, there is evidence that punitive approaches are particularly inappropriate in dealing with the needs of girls and young women for whom resettlement services are provided (Trotter et al, 2012).

This focus on the importance of relationships can also be found in the literature on desistance. This explores why and how young people make the journey towards a law abiding lifestyle rather than focusing on the 'risk factors' that predict the onset of crime. Such an approach, it has been suggested, operates on the basis of a future orientation, '*valuing people for what they could become, not who they have been or what they have done*' (Farrall, 2010:12) (emphasis in the original).

An important insight of this literature is that it highlights the role of subjective considerations as well as objective, external, factors in determining whether a young person will give up or persist in their offending

(McNeill, 2006). There is accordingly an interplay between individual choices made by young people at different points in time and wider social forces including location in the social structure, institutional responses, and societal reactions to those labelled as adjudicated offenders. The young person may not be able to influence these factors but they may nonetheless function to constrain what decisions he or she can make (Farrall and Bowling, 1999).

This explicit acknowledgment of the interplay between structure and agency is useful from a practice perspective because it provides a mechanism for explaining why outcomes for two young people, subject to the same interventions, displaying similar histories of adversity and facing comparable challenges, may be markedly different.

In this context, Maruna's research is instructive. It suggests that those who continue to offend may be more likely to regard themselves as trapped by their circumstances. Conversely, those who desist from offending, in spite of the considerable objective barriers which confront them, tend to see themselves as in control of their own destinies. They have a sense of 'hope' as to what the future holds, even if that optimism may, on occasion, understate the obstacles that they face in leaving offending behind them (Burnett and Maruna, 2004).

Such a subjective interpretation allows the development of narratives that enable young people to explain past transgressions of the law while distancing themselves from their previous offending behaviour. They are able to refer to lifestyles as not being indicative of who they 'really are'. The adoption of a positive self-image is augmented by a sense of purpose, or agency (Farrell and Calverley, 2006) which ensures that individuals are more inclined to take advantage of the opportunities for rehabilitation that present themselves (or are presented). Accordingly, effective resettlement provision will aim both to provide access to appropriate services such as education, employment and accommodation, and work to encourage plausible narratives of desistance, promote personal resources, and provide strategies that will better enable those leaving custody to surmount the obstacles that might prevent them from taking advantage of opportunities that exist (Raynor, 2004).

Significantly the subjective states which promote desistance in girls and young women may be different in certain respects from those of their male peers. While boys who successfully give up offending tend to cite utilitarian explanations such as the adverse effects of involvement in the criminal justice system or the negative impact on opportunities for future advancement, girls and young women are more likely to offer moral, emotional or relational rationalisations. These include the damage that criminal behaviour causes, the impact on others, and their responsibilities for family, friends or broader acquaintances (McIvor et al, 2004).

If, as noted at the start of this section, principles of effective youth resettlement are likely to apply to girls and young women in a mediated form, it is also important to consider evidence in relation to what constitutes effective practice with that particular population.



## Explaining offending in girls and young women

The distinctive pattern of offending in girls and young women noted in an earlier section of the report is indicative of the fact that explanations of the origins of male delinquency are unlikely to give an adequate account of female criminality. As Hedderman (2004) points out, gendered differences in upbringing, lifestyle, opportunities and expectations are likely to be reflected in different pathways into and out of crime (see also Batchelor et al, 2001; Gelsthorpe, 2004; and Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 1992).

Factors tending to predict delinquency for boys and young men are relevant to understanding female offending (Dowden and Andrews, 1999), but – in part because of the lower prevalence of the latter – the relationships are often attenuated (Smith and McAra, 2004). As with boys and young men, low educational achievement is associated with an increased risk of involvement of serious offending among young females (Outdekerk et al, 2012). Conversely, some socio-economic indicators, such as low family income, inadequate housing and large family size (which can itself exacerbate the other two difficulties) appear to be more important in explaining why females come to the attention of criminal justice agencies (Farrington and Painter, 2004). But perhaps more importantly, as this section will demonstrate, focusing on girls' and young women's offending uncovers serious problems of abuse, victimisation and health in particular. These have implications for resettlement provision.

### Home relationships

While the literature on desistance more widely indicates the importance of relationships, personal interactions in various guises have been identified as central to understanding female offending (Burman and Batchelor, 2009). Data derived from OASys, the assessment tool used by the probation service, indicates that 62% of women subject to statutory supervision, experienced relationship difficulties that contributed to their offending. That compares with 40% of men (Ministry of Justice, 2008a).

The family context and experience of conflicts within the family in particular, are frequently precursors of offending in girls and young women. Girls in trouble routinely report poor relationships with parents or step-parents, often manifested in violent victimisation (Sharpe, 2012; Williams, 2008). Girls whose offending is at a level of seriousness or persistence that leads to them being deprived of their liberty are accordingly more likely to have a history of public care than their male counterparts (Kennedy, 2013; Douglas and Plugge, 2006). More than half of girls who come to attention for offending have had previous contact with children's services (Arnull and Eagle, 2009). In the United States, girls who offend are more likely than their male counterparts to report violence in their family home, a lack of family support, and a fear of staying in the home (Alemagno et al, 2006). Girls who run away because of family problems, abuse or being in care (Ambrose and Simkins, 2001) are also more likely to become involved in drug misuse, be susceptible to violent relationships and other risky situations that are either criminal in themselves or associated with a heightened risk of offending (Greene, Peters and Associates, 1998).

### Past victimisation and trauma

Violent victimisation within the home, loss and bereavement compound the risk of family discord and breakdown, and they are also associated with the onset of offending by girls and young women (Burman and Batchelor, 2009). Those who come to the attention of the criminal justice system commonly have experiences of being victimised, *'let down or given up on by adults'* (Sharpe 2012: 94). Studies in the United States have suggested that the 'vast majority' of girls and young women within the criminal justice system have experienced trauma and victimisation (Beyer et al, 2003:52), including child sexual abuse (Siegal and Williams, 2003). More than three-quarters of girls may have a history of abuse (Calhoun et al, 1993), with some estimates closer to 90% (Ariga et al, 2007; Greene, Peters and Associates, 1998; Ambrose and Simkins, 2000; Carrion and Steiner, 2000). Perpetrators are most often family members, close friends or someone else who was trusted by the girl (Greene, Peters and Associates, 1998).

Conversely, family relationships remain important to girls and young women even if they are fraught with difficulty. Females are more likely to have strong attachments to family whereas young men are more likely to look to peers for social support (Cobbina et al, 2012). Outside of the home of origin, relationships are also significant. Whereas desistance among young men is sometimes triggered by the entry into a stable relationship and the prospect of becoming a parent, for young women the opposite effect has been noted, particularly where the partner is a delinquent male (Barry, 2006; Cobbina et al, 2012).

### Early motherhood

Early motherhood is also associated with an increased risk of offending, although this may reflect the fact that young women who break the law have experienced significantly higher rates of previous sexual abuse, which is itself associated with an earlier age of first intercourse and a reduced use of contraception (Mason et al, 1998). As girls make the transition to adulthood, these factors continue to exercise an influence. More than two thirds of female adult prisoners are mothers to children below the age of 18 and more than one third of these explain their offending as necessary to support their children (Caddle and Crisp, 1997). Young women who offend are frequently forced into independent living at an early age (Sharpe, 2012). There is evidence too that coercion by male partners is one of the pathways into offending for women (Corston, 2007; Walister and Dearing, 2006). Women in custody are more likely to report offending to support another person's drug habit than men (48% against 22%) (Light et al, 2013).

### Problems in peer relationships

Relationships within friendship groups more generally assume greater significance for girls than boys (Griffiths, 2005). They are also critical to understanding the circumstances in which young women may get in trouble, since they frequently provide the context in which episodes of personal violence are triggered (Nacro, 2008). Where home circumstances are strained and disrupted (Hey, 1997), the primary locus of care is undermined and peer relationships take on an added importance for women as potential sources of support, status and identity. But this heightened dependence also increases the risk of disappointed expectations and altercations may arise *'over boys, defending personal reputation, as a response to name calling, or being the subject of gossip'* (Nacro, 2008: 4). Such disputes are more likely to have violent consequences where they occur between young women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds since the perceived need to present a tough exterior may be greater (Bachelor, 2005; Casaro et al, 1990). In this context, recent research has revealed the extent of child sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse and victimisation suffered by girls and young women within their peer groups. This helps to shed light on the relational contexts within which female offending may occur (Beckett et al, 2013).

### Reacting against relationships

Where young women display violent behaviour, the evidence suggests that it is frequently a response to the circumstances in which they find themselves, often as victims of abuse and neglect (Batchelor, 2005). As noted above, violence is often targeted against other family members or acquaintances (Williams, 2008; Coleman et al, 2006). American research confirms that girls are more likely than boys to come to the attention of the criminal justice system for fighting within the home (Franke et al, 2002). Researchers have suggested that this can be partly attributed to a normalising effect of witnessing abuse and violence in the home (Schaffner, 2007). Alternatively, it may be thought of as the victim trying to regain some control or power in her life, but doing so in a negative manner (Wolfe and Tucker, 1998; Morton and Leslie, 2005).

As far as young adult women are concerned, of those aged 18-25 who reported having been involved in offences of violence, almost half (48%) indicated that the victim was their partner. Slightly more than a quarter of victims were described as siblings and 21% as friends. Just 23% of young women committed offences involving violence towards 'someone else', compared to 41% of men in the same age group (Coleman et al, 2006).

### **Mental health problems**

Relationships wherein girls and young women seek support can accordingly also be experienced as sites of victimisation, abuse and violence. Young females are more susceptible than their male counterparts to post-traumatic stress disorder and depression in response to such experiences and research confirms that girls in conflict with the law are more likely to have problems of mental ill health (Hennessey et al, 2004; Dixon et al, 2004). One study conducted for the Youth Justice Board found that 71% of females within the secure estate for children and young people had some form of psychiatric disturbance (Douglas and Plugge, 2006). Such findings are reinforced by a thematic inspection which reported bouts of severe depression in about half of girls serving detention and training orders and extensive histories of self-harm (Ofsted / HM Inspector of Prisons, 2004).

External manifestations of such high levels of internalised distress frequently include an excessive use of alcohol and self-harming behaviour. Females are more likely to report that they use drugs to alleviate emotional pain, for instance, whereas males tend to cite hedonistic reasons (Hollin and Palmer, 2006). According to Corston (2007: 19) more than two thirds of females entering the custodial estate *'require clinical detoxification'* compared to just half of men. Similarly where women commit alcohol related offences, these are commonly a reflection of psychosocial difficulties. For men, anti-social attitudes and criminal associations are more significant (McMurran et al, 2011). Among girls in contact with the youth justice system, *'regular intoxication [is] commonplace'* (Sharpe, 2009:70). 15% of this population have attempted suicide and more than one third report having self-harmed (Arnull and Eagle, 2009).

### **Relative deprivation**

A further relationship may also be important. Sharpe (2012) contends that girls' relationship with the market also plays an explanatory role in accounting for their criminal behaviour. The rise of a consumer culture in contemporary society encourages girls and young women to see themselves as consuming subjects to a greater degree than males. A gendered focus on fashion and beauty, and making oneself sexually attractive, is increasingly central to expectations of femininity. As a consequence, *'consumption is embodied'* for young women in a way that it is not for their male counterparts (Sharpe, 2012: 95). In this context, in circumstances of relative deprivation (Lea and Young, 1984), any 'strain' (Merton, 1938) between normative expectations of consumption and the potential to find legitimate mechanisms for living up to those expectations is likely to be felt more sharply by economically disadvantaged females (Greene, Peters and Associates, 1998).

## Judicial responses to offending in girls and young women

If pathways into crime differ in terms of gender, criminal justice responses to female offending have often not developed in a manner that promotes evidence informed practice (Worrall and Gelsthorpe, 2009; Gelsthorpe and Sharp, 2006). This is not however to assert that responses to troubled or troublesome behaviour by girls and young women necessarily mirror those meted out to boys and young men. Until recently at least, females who came to the attention of the youth justice system were less likely to be charged, to receive a community penalty or to be sentenced to custody (Nacro, 2008). While the relatively less serious and prolific nature of female offending goes some way to explain such differentials, there is evidence that in many instances, a more lenient response for an equivalent transgression of the law might be expected in cases involving girls and young women.

This more 'lenient' approach has frequently been explained as representing a paternalistic gender stereotyping that seeks to regulate female behaviour according to expectations associated with women's traditional role in society (Worrall, 1981; Gelsthorpe and Sharp). Ideas of female vulnerability, concerns with moral welfare, and anxieties about 'inappropriate' sexualised behaviour have meant that social care, rather than criminal justice, agencies have traditionally been more likely to intervene earlier in girls' lives. This has led to overrepresentation in children's residential establishments and secure units on grounds of welfare, while allowing higher levels of diversion from the criminal justice sanctions (McIvor, 1998; Bateman, 2008a).

Conversely, where young women are criminalised, they may on occasion receive harsher treatment than their male counterparts if they are perceived to have transgressed gender norms as well as the criminal law (Hudson, 2002; Carrington, 2010; Chesney-Lind, 2004). Research with adult women has suggested that sentencers tend to distinguish between defendants who are 'troubled' and those who are 'troublesome' (Gelsthorpe and Loucks, 1997). Male offenders are more typically allocated to the latter category so that acquisitive crime is constructed by the court as being motivated by reasons of personal gain. Women by contrast tended to be viewed through a 'troubled' lens so that theft, for instance, is typically understood as a survival offence, necessitated by a lack of resources or a need to care for children. Such perceptions allow a more lenient approach to women's sentencing. Where however, women's law breaking is construed as 'troublesome' – so that a female defendant is regarded as having 'crossed over' to align herself with stereotypical male offending and committed for reasons of personal acquisition – there is a corresponding risk that she may receive harsher treatment than a male convicted of an equivalent offence.

Females who offend because they are under the influence of drugs, or in order to sustain a drug habit, tend to be denied the status of victimhood that can sometimes accrue to women in trouble. Instead, they are 'responsibilised' for their substance misuse and represented as *'irresponsible, hedonistic, polluted ... and incompetent mothers'* (Malloch, 2004). A similar dynamic appears to operate in the youth justice arena where girls whose offences are considered to transgress gender expectations and norms as well as the criminal law – those who use violence for instance – might expect to be sentenced more harshly (Gelsthorpe and Sharp, 2006). This dynamic according to which offending girls are construed as aggressive and unrepentant may also help to explain a widely held perception among practitioners that young females are more difficult to work with than young males (Chesney-Lind and Belknap, 2004).

While such dichotomous attitudes still appear to influence criminal justice responses to girls and young women, there is evidence too of something of a recent shift. Worrall (2001), for instance, has detected a tendency associated with something of a moral panic about female alcohol-fuelled violence and anti-social behaviour. This has been exacerbated by media coverage of the growth of a 'ladette' culture towards a more *'straightforward criminalisation'* of female offending where fewer young female defendants are considered to be 'at risk' and more are subject to punitive sanctions. Indeed, research conducted for the Youth Justice Board in the early 2000s found that girls were 20% more likely to receive a restrictive

community sentence than boys when the seriousness of offending and other relevant characteristics were taken into account (Feilzer and Hood, 2004).

One factor that may have encouraged such a shift in attitudes towards young women's antisocial behaviour is an increased female visibility in public space by comparison with earlier periods. This is associated with a heightened risk of adversarial contact with the police and other authorities (Pearce, 2004). Paradoxically, this expanded presence on the street might be seen as increasing the potential for criminalisation, in some instances it renders young women more vulnerable to exploitation and victimisation (Pearce, 2004).

In any event, it is not clear whether the changing nature of criminal justice responses has necessarily been to the benefit of girls and young women or that it represents an evidence-based accommodation to improved understanding of the differences between male and female offending. Whereas the 'welfarist' model that dominated policy and practice until 20 years ago acknowledged differences in the aetiology of young men and women's problematic behaviour, it did so by legitimating intrusive social care interventions that were not warranted by that behaviour. In this sense girls and young women tended to experience both the advantages and disadvantages of welfarism to a greater extent than boys (Gelsthorpe and Worrall, 2009). While this welfare focus has, in large part, been superseded by a justice model that responds more directly to female infringements of the criminal law, Sharpe's (2012) study found evidence that girls were still more likely to be referred to youth crime preventive services because of their vulnerability, rather than for any risk that their offending posed to others.

Conversely, a more formally equal approach, with differentials in treatment gradually eroded, has dictated that female offending and the risks that it poses should be assessed by standards and modes of intervention developed on the basis of evidence about male criminality (Bateman, 2008a). One difficulty with this development is that it tends to understate the importance of physical and sexual abuse as a precursor for female offending since women are much more likely than men to be victims of such abuse (Hollin and Palmer, 2006).

This is particularly problematic given that actuarial assessment tools which underpin youth offending team and probation practice have been shown to inflate 'risk' in the case of female service users, as welfare need is redefined in terms of 'criminogenic' risk factors for offending (Shaw and Hannah-Moffatt, 2000; Bateman, 2011; Phoenix, 2009; Pitts et al, 2007; Carlen, 2003). Since young women and girls engage in offending behaviour significantly less frequently than their male counterparts, even where they have similar risk factors, any risk assessment exercise deploying tools that have been validated using data primarily derived from male offenders is likely to over predict risk. This is particularly concerning given that levels of interventions are determined by that assessment process, leading to more intensive and intrusive intervention than would otherwise be justified.

Within the youth justice system for instance, the 'scaled approach' (Youth Justice Board, 2010) dictates that the minimum contact with the youth offending team should be four times higher for children who have been assessed as representing a high risk of reoffending than for those deemed to pose a low risk (Youth Justice Board, 2013). In this context, the criminal justice system can become a mechanism for dealing with young women's welfare problems that might be more appropriately supported outside it, but within a punitive framework. Moreover, since compliance with intervention is a statutory requirement, and the burden of keeping appointments is highest for those girls with the greatest levels of need and the most chaotic lifestyles, the risks of breach and return to court are thereby enhanced for the most disadvantaged girls and young women (Bateman, 2011).

Such problems arise from an undifferentiated application of a model of understanding based on male studies of offending. The risk factor paradigm (or 'risk, needs, responsivity model' as it is otherwise known)

tends to prioritise addressing 'criminogenic need' through the use of cognitive and social learning types of intervention (see Bonta and Andrews, 2010, for instance). But the appropriateness of such approaches for females has been challenged. Not only does the posited link between offending behaviour and individual cognitive deficit downplay structured and gendered influences on female delinquency. It diverts attention from the influence of victimisation (Shaw and Hannah-Moffat, 2004). It is for these reasons that some writers have preferred to refer to '*crime related and desistance*' – rather than criminogenic – needs when discussing the origins of female offending (see for instance Gelsthorpe, 2009: 27).

## The use of custody for girls and young women

Children who have been deprived of their liberty are accommodated in one of three distinct secure estates for children and young people: young offender institutions (YOIs), secure training centres (STCs) and secure children's homes (SCHs) (Bateman et al, 2013b). A long term government target to remove all girls below the age of 17 from YOIs was achieved in 2004 (Bateman, 2008a) and in the following year five small dedicated units were opened in YOIs to hold 17 year olds. Since then, the number of girls in custody has fallen sharply and the capacity of this discrete provision has been reduced. In July 2013, it was announced that the Youth Justice Board would withdraw from the remaining three units (Hill, 2003). As a consequence, all girls in custody are currently detained within STCs or SCHs.

Young women aged 18-21 are subject to sentences of detention in a YOI, but unlike for young adult males, there are no distinct YOIs for female young adults.. Instead, this group is officially held in '*designated accommodation*' within adult female prisons where, dependent on risk assessment, they mix with older women during activities (Ministry of Justice, 2012). In practice, the extent to which such distinctions are maintained is questionable. At the time of writing, all three of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons most recent reports on custodial establishments that accommodate young adult women have been critical in this regard.

A report on HMP Eastwood Park, published in April 2014, noted that young women aged 18-20 '*were accommodated within the general population. They were allocated to particular cells but were not formally recognised as having specific needs within the equality protocol*'. Moreover, '*there was a 'lack of any differentiated strategy for the young adults*' (HM Inspectorate of Prison, 2014: paragraph 2.49 and 4.2).

Outcomes for this group were more negative in terms of reduced educational attainment and involvement in self-harm and assault than for the older population. A report published on Downview prison in November 2013 similarly indicates that no special arrangements were made for young adult women who were integrated with the rest of the prison population. Yet this younger group was overrepresented among those subject to the 'basic' level on the incentives and earned privileges scheme (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2013a). A generally positive inspection of HMP Bronzefield, published in same year, also found that there was no specific provision for young adult women and that their needs '*were not adequately considered*' (HM Inspectorate of Prison, 2013b: paragraph s17).

So, although girls are rightly considered vulnerable enough to be kept out of prison-style YOIs, custodial allocation policy affords young women less protection than young men, with no separate age-specific institutions. The situation is worse for some girls who turn 18 during a longer detention and training order, or other custodial orders involving long term detention. They face the possibility of being transferred to adult prison directly from an STC or SCH - both regimes designed for vulnerable young people. This is a transition that involves greater changes for young women than for young men. It is not difficult to see how this transfer may make resettlement of young women more problematic in a number of ways:

- Firstly, placing this group in an environment that is not age-sensitive may add to the trauma
- Secondly, it disrupts trusting relationships with institutional staff, thereby undermining the potential opportunity to cement engagement.
- Lastly, YOTs may pass young people over to probation services at this point, even if they only have months remaining before release. And this has the same implications for staff-client relationships. Given the recurring theme of the importance of relationships to girls and young women seen throughout this report, this may have serious implications for the reoffending of this group.

There are no further age related distinctions in terms of placement. Young women aged 21-24 are held within the thirteen prisons in England and Wales that cater for female adult prisoners more generally. The absence of any legal distinction inevitably impacts on the availability of data for this particular age group.

While adult imprisonment has tended to rise progressively in the past few decades, levels of youth incarceration have been subject to substantial fluctuations (Bateman, 2013). Those shifts have been particularly sharp for girls.

Following substantial reductions in child imprisonment during the 1980s, the use of custody for girls was so low that a white paper which outlined the proposals that would be incorporated in the Criminal Justice Act 1991 considered the option of abolishing detention for girls other than in cases involving 'grave crimes' (Home Office, 1990). In the event, however, youth justice policy took a punitive turn (Muncie, 2008) and from 1990 onwards there was a pronounced rise in the number of children deprived of their liberty.

As a consequence of the shift towards a more straightforward criminalisation of girls, females were particularly affected by increased punitivism. Between 1993 and 2006, while the number of custodial sentences imposed on all children below the age of 18 grew by 54.6%, the equivalent rise for girls was 297% (Nacro, 2008). Since then, there has been a sharp reversal in those trends. Between January 2007 and January 2014, the male population of the secure estate fell by almost 57%. The equivalent female decline was 71% (Ministry of Justice, 2014a).

### Women over the age of 18

Figures for young women over the age of 18 are not so readily disaggregated by age. For the adult custodial population as a whole, the 1990s was also a period during which female imprisonment rose more sharply than that of males.

- Between 1995 and 2002, the proportion of prisoners who were women increased from 3.6% to 6.1% (Berman and Dar, 2013).
- Between 1997 and 2009, the number of young adult women sentenced to custody rose by 21% while the figure for young adult men increased by just 11% (Transition to Adulthood Alliance, 2009).

The subsequent period has seen some decrease in the number of women incarcerated, while the male population has continued to grow. However, the decline for adults is nowhere near as pronounced as for girls. In 2002, there were 4,299 women in prison. By 2012 that had fallen to 4,124 (Berman and Dar, 2013). It is not clear how many of those women were below the age of 25.

More recent data does allow a better disaggregation by age, however, as shown in table 5.

**Table 5**  
**Number of women in prison by age: December 2011 to December 2013**

Age	December 2011		December 2012		December 2013		Change: Dec 11 to Dec 13
	Number	% of women prisoners	Number	% of women prisoners	Number	% of women prisoners	% difference between numbers
18 –20 yrs	292	7.2%	236	6%	188	4.9%	-35.6%
21-24 yrs	562	13.8%	504	12.9%	420	11%	-25.3%
25 yrs +	3,176	78.2%	3,167	80.8%	3,199	84%	0.7%



While the overall female prison population reduced by 6.2% between 31 December 2011 and December 2013, the equivalent figures for young women aged 18 – 20 and those aged 21 -24 were 35.6% and 25.3% respectively (Ministry of Justice, 2013c; Ministry of Justice, 2014b). It could be speculated that the earlier, and sharper, decline in the use of custody for children has filtered progressively through to older groups (Bateman and Hazel, 2014).

From a resettlement perspective, these welcome falls in the use of custody for girls and young women present a number of challenges. As numbers decline, the provision of age appropriate specialist services becomes more problematic.

There is evidence too that the female prisoner population is more vulnerable on a range of indicators than the male equivalent. While research has confirmed that the child custodial population is distinguished by having a high concentration of disadvantage (Jacobson et al, 2010), it seems likely that their previous experiences, prior to incarceration, renders girls even more vulnerable than their male counterparts. One influential review, for instance, noted that two out of five female and one in four male young prisoners report having suffered violence at home. Young women were also three times as likely to have been the victim of sexual abuse (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

More recently, research confirms that on a range of measures, girls might be considered to have higher levels of need than their male peers.

- In 2011/12, girls in YOIs (the research was conducted before the closure of these units) were almost twice as likely to have spent time in local authority care prior to incarceration.
- 37% of boys in the sample said they were 14 or younger when they last attended school, compared with 65% for girls.
- All girls reported having been excluded from school compared to 86% of boys (Kennedy, 2013).

Unfortunately, a survey of children in STCs does not consider gendered differences of this type (Elwood, 2013).

### **More complex needs**

Although there is limited information that pertains specifically to young adults, an analysis conducted by the Cabinet Office confirms that younger adult women in custody are most likely to suffer a range of complex needs (Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force, 2009). Within the adult estate as whole, findings suggest a higher level of vulnerability among women than men (Earle et al, 2014; Light et al, 2013; Plugge, et al, 2006). 40% of female prisoners report having sought help with mental health problems prior to admission. That's twice the rate for males (Corston, 2007).

An American study with adult women found that, largely as a consequence of previous adverse experiences, women in prison typically have a 'nebulous concept of self' that is often negative. During the custodial episode they frequently struggle (and require assistance) to reshape their identity (or identities) in a pro-social manner in preparation for release (Hunter and Greer, 2011). Other studies have suggested that this struggle persists after the return to the community, and is made more difficult by the social reactions of others. As one participant put it, *'you feel like everyone knows you're a jailbird'* (McIvor et al, 2009: 353).

Although women make up less than 5% of the prison population, they account for more than half of all self-harm incidents. In 2008, for instance, the rate of self-harm for women in prison was 333 per 100,000 compared to an equivalent figure of 62 for men (Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Taskforce, 2009). While in the community men are more likely to commit suicide than women, in custody that position is reversed. One explanation for this is that women's relationships with their children generally act as a protective factor. Once in custodial environment where contact is disrupted, and in some cases lost altogether, that

protection no longer has the same purchase (Corston, 2007). Women released from custody are 36 times as likely as the general female population to kill themselves (Ministry of Justice, 2008b).

Moreover the custodial experience impacts disproportionately on females because of the central role they play within the family. As indicated above, many young female prisoners are mothers. Across the prison estate as a whole, 160,000 children per year are affected by the incarceration of their parents. The majority of children whose mothers are taken into custody are forced to leave the family home (Transition to Adulthood Alliance, 2009). Considered from another perspective, there is evidence that females' previous experiences make it harder for them to adapt to the prison environment. 'Maladaptation' is particularly evident among those who report mental ill health, substance misuse and problematic or abusive interpersonal relationships prior to incarceration (Wright et al, 2012).

It has been suggested that one consequence of the decline in custody is that already high levels of vulnerability and disadvantage are exacerbated. This is because young females whose offending is less serious or persistent are diverted into various forms of community provision (Bateman and Hazel, 2014). The obstacles to desistance that young women face on release are accordingly more intractable, increasing the challenge for providers of resettlement provision.

### **Relocation and the strain on relationships**

The reduction in custodial capacity for girls and young women inevitably means that, on average, the distance between the custodial institution and the community to which they are released has risen.

- In March 2010, 24% of children held in the secure estate were accommodated more than 50 miles from their home. 7% were more than 100 miles away.
- By March 2011, those figures had increased to 30% and 10% respectively (Summerfield, 2011).

Since then, more custodial units for children have closed, so one would accordingly anticipate a rise in the proportion of children detained far from home (Bateman and Hazel, 2013b). Separate figures are not available for girls, but given that females account for a smaller proportion of the population of the secure estate for children and young people, and that this proportion has shrunk more rapidly, one would anticipate that distance from home is likely to be more of an issue.

For adult women in prison, the average distance from home address, or court of committal, is 60 miles (Gullberg, 2013). Detention so far away from family and friends makes it more difficult to maintain relationships during a period of incarceration and this has a direct impact on whether young women are likely to be able to give up offending. Research suggests that the risk of recidivism is 39% higher for prisoners who have not received a visit while in custody, compared with those who have (May et al, 2008).

It also poses problems for resettlement providers since, as outlined in the section on lessons for resettlement of young people generally, planning for release to ensure that the sentence is as seamless as possible is a key element of effective resettlement practice (Bateman et al, 2013b).

## Evidence of effective justice work with girls and young women

While the evidence base is as yet under-developed, there is nonetheless a considerable consensus in the literature on the sorts of principles that ought to underpin effective practice with girls and young women who offend. To a large extent, the themes described are simply a logical extrapolation of the picture painted by research in relation to female delinquency, outlined earlier in this review. It is possible to discern four over-riding considerations that emerge from the evidence (Bateman, 2008).

### The relationship with professionals

First, there is an overwhelming unanimity that relationships are fundamental to effective service delivery. This should be understood in two different, but complementary, ways.

For many girls and young women, the predominant experience of relationships is of subordination, exploitation and abuse. It follows that any interventions that reinforce or mirror such relationships are likely to be unhelpful. Because of this, approaches that rely on punishment or coercion tend to be particularly counterproductive with female offenders. One study, for instance, found that while mainstream criminological literature points to the importance of challenging offenders' anti-social attitudes, women were less responsive to workers who operated on that basis (Trotter et al, 2012). Research has also suggested that women's compliance with statutory intervention is based on *normative* considerations, involving an investment in the programme and its goals. By contrast, males who comply are more likely to do so for *instrumental* reasons. They tend to weigh the practical advantages and disadvantages of cooperation and might, for instance, attend supervision sessions because they regard such attendance as preferable to a custodial sentence (Martin et al, 2009; for a typology of different forms of compliance, see Bottoms, 2001).

To turn around the negative perceptions held by girls and young women about interpersonal interactions, it is essential that there is mutuality between participants and staff delivering services. (Worrall, 2001). Indeed, where such relationships are established, particularly in a single-sex setting, the otherwise adverse effects of gender-neutral programmes can to an extent be mitigated (Barnett, 2011). An understanding of the importance of the staff-service user relationship in this context is also consistent with the experience of both practitioners and those at whom services are targeted. A review of 17 promising programmes working with incarcerated women in the United States established that the ability of staff to engage with service users was ranked as the most important factor in effective delivery by respondents, both workers and the women prisoners (Koons et al, 1997).

This understanding raises the question of what kinds of relationships are effective and the qualities of staff required to establish them. Previous work by *Beyond Youth Custody* (Bateman and Hazel, 2013a) has suggested that realistic expectations, empathy with young people, and flexibility are particularly important practitioner characteristics in terms of engaging young people of both genders. In large part, these findings mirror research on aspects of service provision that female service users perceive to be most strongly related to reductions in reoffending. These include staff:

- understanding the women's perspective
- having an optimistic view that women could change
- adopting a focus on the issues that were of concern to the women (Trotter et al, 2012).

This latter concern may be particularly relevant to girls and young women whose experiences are likely to have instilled a perception that their views and interests are of limited importance. Such perceptions may well be reinforced by traditional modes of youth justice practice in which participatory approaches are

underdeveloped (Hart and Thompson, 2009; Bateman and Hazel, 2013a). Listening to girls and young women and tailoring programmes to the issues that they prioritise is both an essential part of relationship building, and an integral element of effective work since incorporating girls' and young women's own insights into any intervention may be a prerequisite of influencing behaviour (Worrall, 2001).

But the significance of relationships for effective practice goes beyond the programme itself. Since much youthful female offending is linked in one form or another to chaotic or violent family dynamics or the nature of peer group associations, it is important that young women are given opportunities to understand how their behaviour is influenced by interactions with others and to explore alternative, more positive, ways of developing and maintaining interpersonal connections that embody mutual respect and understanding.

Promoting this understanding should inform the content of intervention, but it also has implications for the form. Positive staff-young person relationships are not simply pre-cursors of effective engagement. They also allow the potential for mirroring healthy interpersonal relationships as a learning experience that facilitates the teaching of interpersonal skills. Girls and young women are often mistrustful of adults and authority figures and the establishment of positive relationships can allow young women to explore options for replacing harmful relationships with positive ones (Patton and Morgan, 2002).

At the same time, effective programmes should consider whether it is appropriate, and if so how, to reach out to families, given that for most girls and young women, the family of origin remains an important site of potential support. Dowden and Andrew's (1999: 449) meta-analytic review confirms that what they refer to as '*family process variables*' is an integral part of effective practice. This may be particularly crucial for resettlement provision given the strain that incarceration places on such relationships (Cooney et al, 2008). As Gelsthorpe et al (2007) note, personal care both within the context of the intervention and beyond it may be as important to effective practice as formal input to address offending behaviour directly.

It is sometimes argued that one consequence of the above considerations is that interventions aimed at girls and young women should be single gender to provide girls with a space within which they can reflect on a value system that frequently prioritises interactions with men over other forms of relationships, even where the former are harmful (Patton and Morgan, 2002). Gelsthorpe et al (2007) contend that female-only environments are also more conducive to fostering a sense of safety and community, while allowing the development of staff expertise.

### **The importance of victimisation**

The second theme in research on effective practice discernible in the literature is that intervention should acknowledge, and aim to mitigate, the extensive levels of victimisation, violence and abuse in the lives of girls and young women who offend (Batchelor, 2005).

Trauma is a central narrative in the histories of many young females who populate the criminal justice system (Sherman, 2005; Wright and Liddle, 2014). Recognition of the violent context that has framed a significant proportion of female offending is a prerequisite of fostering empowerment, enhancing self-esteem and helping girls and young women to take control of their lives and change their behaviour (Worrall, 2001; Gelsthorpe et al, 2007). As noted earlier in the report, it is important to acknowledge that the transition back to the community is itself a traumatic experience for many girls and young women (Hazel and Bateman, 2013).

'Activities such as talking to people, shopping at the supermarket and doing other 'normal' things [become] a source of personal stress (McIvor et al, 2009: 353).

### A strengths-based approach

Thirdly, interventions with girls and young women should be firmly anchored in the 'desistance paradigm'. This focuses on service users' strengths – rather than cognitive and attitudinal deficits – and aims to enhance the natural process of maturation away from offending (Trotter et al, 2012). A strengths-based approach to working with a female service user '*has the short-term benefit of improving ... her sense of self-worth and the long-term benefit of promoting autonomy and self-sufficiency*', enriching natural resilience and encouraging agency (Sherman, 2005: 5). For example, instead of focusing on the negative connotations of peer pressure, intervention might stress the potential for female friendship networks to provide the contexts in which it is possible to make change and resolve conflict (Worrall, 2001).

### Holistic and gender responsive care

Finally, there is a clear consensus that interventions for girls and young women should aim to provide a comprehensive and holistic service that addresses the complexity and multiplicity of their crime related needs, including emotional and practical support with the difficulties that may pose obstacles to desistance (Gelsthorpe et al, 2007; Cooney et al, 2008). However, to maximise effectiveness, comprehensive provision must also be explicitly gender responsive (Spjeldnes and Goodkind, 2009). The Oregon guidelines for the implementation of effective gender-responsive practice, for instance, suggest that taking account of the environment which young women inhabit will require intervention on at least three levels (or within three circles).

- 1 The circle of *relationships*. This includes family, friends and other significant individuals with whom the young women have regular interaction.
- 2 The *circle of systems*. This considers young women's relationships with a range of relevant agencies or systemic frameworks. These include education, employment, criminal justice, social care, health, finance and providers of emotional and other relevant forms of support. Intervention at this level should aim to improve access, help overcome barriers, reduce the impact of labelling or stereotyping of system involvement and enhance the capacity of young women to successfully negotiate, and engage positively with, systems to their advantage.
- 3 The *circle of society*. This includes, most significantly, young women's awareness and understanding of structural and cultural factors – often refracted through the media and interactions with others – on the formation of their identities. These in turn influence their behaviour and may, if not constructed positively, limit their achievements (Patton and Morgan, 2002).

In addressing this array of interlocking circles, issues of space and place take on a particular significance. The environment in which interventions are delivered must be one in which girls and young women – many of whom will have previous experience of abuse, bullying and violence – feel at ease. In some cases, this can – as noted above – be facilitated by having single sex provision. But there are other considerations:

- Meetings should take in premises that are not readily accessible to external, potentially threatening, outsiders.
- The numbers in any group should be kept at a manageable level so that participants are confident in staff's ability to deal with any potential conflict.
- While assuring safety and security is paramount, it is also important that the project environment conveys a sense that females should be valued, with books, posters and displays that recognise girls and young women as independent, autonomous, beings and celebrate women's achievements and contributions to history and present day society (Patton and Morgan, 2002).

## Evidence of effective resettlement with adult females

Most of the limited literature on resettlement of females after custody is derived from programmes that focus on adult women. The average age of these women puts them outside of the concern of the current review.

In this sense, the research is again inferential, and subject to considerations of age. It should be noted, for instance, that certain features of an older group of women prisoners, like motherhood and entrenched substance addiction, are less likely to be an issue for younger females. However, findings from this research can still provide a context for understanding how gender may affect resettlement support needs of girls and young women.

The lessons about 'what works' in resettlement is limited further by the difficulties in achieving significant improvement in offending outcomes. Since female crime is far less prevalent than male offending, the risk of reoffending is significantly lower by comparison. The natural process of desistance, where women grow out of crime at an earlier age, magnifies this difference (Flood-Page et al, 2000; Smith and McAra, 2004). It follows that demonstrating an impact on recidivism is likely to be harder (Gelsthorpe and Hedderman, 2012).

This might help to account for the fact that a review from the United States of provision for girls in trouble with the law (which included gender sensitive and gender specific custodial projects) found that few interventions could demonstrate an impact on reoffending, even though many were able to show improved outcomes on a range of 'softer' outcomes (Bateman, 2008a; Le, 2012). Of course, it may be argued that the high levels of need and vulnerability associated with the female custodial population means that an exclusive focus on reoffending might obscure other important potential outcomes for women and for society (Bateman et al, 2013b). Nevertheless, within England and Wales, reduced reoffending is regarded as a key indicator of success.

### Together Women programme

The *Together Women* programme, referred to earlier in the report, provides empirical confirmation of the difficulty of demonstrating a positive impact on reoffending – even where other outcome measures might appear promising. The project was established to '*model best practice*' in providing support to women who were former offenders, current offenders or, because of social exclusion, assessed as being 'at risk' of offending (Hedderman, 2012).

Established at five centres in the North of England, it aimed to provide holistic support to women who self-referred, or were referred by the police, probation, the court or other agencies (Hedderman, 2012). While the target group was adult women, some of these were young women under 25 years of age. Some had recently been released from custody, so the findings of evaluation have greater relevance to the constituent group of the current review than many adult programmes.

In keeping with established principles of best practice, the programme offered individually tailored interventions and accordingly offered a broad range of services (as well as referring on to a wide range of agencies). These included training on issues such as parenting, managing mental health, life skills, thinking skills and offending behaviour. Each centre also held regular surgeries on particular issues relevant to women, such as accommodation or finance, and functioned as a drop-in so that women could access support and activities without an appointment (Hedderman et al, 2008). Importantly, key workers engaged with service users to identify their needs so that plans reflected women's own assessment of the difficulties they faced, rather than a pre-determined programme of work.

'This empowerment of service users is an explicit element of Together Women's strategy for encouraging women to take control and responsibility for their own lives. This is particularly important for female offenders who are often disempowered by their experiences of sexual abuse and violence' (Hedderman et al, 2008: 2).

Involvement in the programme was voluntary and there was little appetite among staff or relevant stakeholders to make it enforceable. This would have robbed service users of choice and undermined the relationship with between women and key workers – something that was seen as central to the model of change adopted (Hedderman et al, 2008).

Action research commissioned by the Ministry of Justice confirmed that stakeholders considered that the programme bridged an important gap in provision by:

'linking up what was already available more effectively and by adding to the range of services available. Separate 'women-only' provision was regarded as a vital element because so many women were viewed as vulnerable and unassertive, often because of a history of abuse but also because of current or very recent domestic violence' (Hedderman et al, 2008).

Female service users valued the fact that the projects were women-only spaces and reported that experiences of their relationships with staff were positive by comparison with their contact with other agencies. Moreover, while making progress was clearly challenging for those with substance abuse difficulties, the majority of service users:

- considered that the intervention was beneficial
- reported being more confident about their ability to tackle their problems, and
- were able to articulate particular examples of how things had improved (Hedderman, 2008).

Given findings from the literature that desistance is more likely where individuals are more confident in their ability to change their lives, the project would appear to offer a promising model.

A subsequent reoffending analysis of the *Together Women* programme, however, found that it had no significant impact on reoffending against a matched sample of women (Jolliffe et al, 2011). The evaluators note that differences between the projects, which were locally managed, posed problems of aggregating data and this limited the sample size for testing outcome impact.

A large number of service users were excluded from the evaluation because, while they might be considered 'at risk', they did not have a recent conviction and a suitable comparison group was not available. Perhaps more significantly in the current context, the broad range of services offered to women who were adjudicated offenders and those who had not offended but were socially excluded (including mentoring, counselling, addressing self-esteem, support of tackling domestic violence and practical assistance with finance, employment and accommodation), meant that not all the provision had:

'a clear theoretical basis to support [its] potential to reduce re-offending... Given the range of services offered it is questionable whether [Together Women] can be appropriately evaluated using only official measures of proven re-offending. Again, this raises issues around what interventions are designed to achieve, and the expected impact which will require thoughtful consideration with the emergence of 'payment by results' initiatives (Jolliffe et al, 2012: 26).

Despite this, much of the existing literature within England and Wales and beyond that looks at resettlement for adult women does identify a range of principles that are considered likely to impact positively on reoffending. The messages from this research are consistent with research dealing with effective

resettlement more generally. However, it accords a greater weighting to particular aspects of intervention that are not highlighted in the same manner in the generic literature on resettlement of young people.

### **Wraparound support for complex needs**

A key point to note when considering gender responsiveness in resettlement support is that research suggests that the lessons from gender-neutral research noted for young people above should not be lost.

Females face many of the same obstacles as males when they are released, and the same lessons apply (Berman, 2005). So, resettlement provision ought to address the wide range of needs that anyone leaving custody would have, including practical assistance with education, employment and accommodation (Gelsthorpe et al, 2007). The corresponding policy message is still that in order to meet all the needs for this complex group, wraparound care is required through a system-wide approach. It also supports planning for resettlement from the start of a sentence and smooth transition with the active involvement of community providers while a woman is still in custody (Berman, 2005).

However, the particular vulnerabilities and pathways into offending outlined earlier in the report mean that certain elements of re-entry provision are emphasised in the literature on women. In particular, a noticeable difference between resettlement literature for young people more generally and for female offenders (including adults) is the emphasis in the latter on ensuring that this aftercare focuses on physical, mental and emotional health. This is, of course, in order to address the corresponding issues noted earlier when discussing girls' and young women's particular needs. These include

- drug and alcohol use
- mental health provision
- dealing with victimisation
- abuse and trauma
- a focus on healthy relationships (Wright et al, 2012).

Some of these issues are looked at in more detail in the sections below.

A note of caution, however, should be sounded since there are dangers involved in attempting to providing wraparound that are sensitive to the needs of girls and young women, given that females in the justice system tend to be more vulnerable. Berman (2005) warns that addressing the particularly complex range of women's needs can lead to over supervision after release, with their level of obligation to a variety of different agencies disproportionately exceeding their risk of reoffending. This is particularly relevant given the finding in the evaluation of the North West Resettlement Consortium (Hazel et al, 2012) that increased agency contact – to address higher levels of need – led to higher levels of failure to comply with licence conditions. Berman (2005) accordingly suggests that in order to reduce the risk of breaches, attendance at health and social care interventions could be made non-statutory.

### **Accommodation and neighbourhood**

Because women are less likely to live with their family on release, they face a heightened need for accommodation after custody (Opsal and Foley, 2013). Evidence from Ireland suggests that this is partly because women are more likely to receive custodial sentences if they are homeless (Maycock and Sheridan, 2013). Good practice would accordingly require that resettlement providers ensure that accommodation is available at the point of release and that girls and young women know where they will be staying long in advance of the transition back into the community. While the most appropriate provision will clearly depend on individual circumstances, American research draws attention to the importance of neighbourhood (Leverentz, 2006).



Girls and young women in custody tend to be drawn disproportionately from disadvantaged communities with high levels of crime, ready availability of drugs and fewer opportunities for education and employment. The likelihood of re-arrest is greater where females are released to areas that have high rates in inequality (Baumer et al, 2003, cited in Leverentz, 2006) and a corresponding lack of neighbourhood resources to promote desistance. Because of this, there may be an argument for relocation when seeking appropriate accommodation to which girls or young women can be released.

Alternatively, given the importance of relationships in understanding patterns of female offending and desistance, maintaining and re-establishing links with existing communities will frequently be important to the young women themselves. Research with adult women in the United States suggests that the important factor in determining whether or not a female prisoner should return to the same neighbourhood is how the alternatives are perceived (Covington and Bloom, 2007). Where relocation is seen as an opportunity to make a fresh start, then such an option should be explored. Some women were able to maintain existing positive relationships across geographical boundaries. More frequently however, relocation is seen as placing further strains on relationships that have already been worsened by the process of incarceration and can lead to isolation. In that event, release to the home community should be facilitated, with sufficient resources deployed to ensure appropriate levels of resettlement support.

On the other hand, another relatively unique challenge for women is to find accommodation safe from an existing abusive relationship. In this situation, there may be a difficult choice to be made between being close to an existing support network or away from where a previous abuser lives (Covington and Bloom, 2007).

More frequently, choice of neighbourhood is limited by available accommodation. In that event, the form of accommodation is important. Research conducted in Ireland indicates that of prime importance is that women should feel safe in any accommodation that they are provided with. High levels of support, combined with flexibility are likely to be needed where girls and young women are moving into an unfamiliar home environment. The role of practical help should not be underestimated in this context, particularly as the experience of imprisonment may undermine confidence to make arrangements in the community that would otherwise be handled relatively easily. The provision of such help is also seen as indicative of the fact that resettlement providers care about the young women with whom they work. This issue is considered in more detail below (Morris, 2012).

### **The importance of relationships**

Literature on the resettlement of adult females focuses on the importance of relationships to their stability and desistance, as much as it does on addressing offending more generally with girls and young women. Berman (2005) in her review of gender responsive approaches to women offenders leaving prison in the United States relates the importance of relationships not just to issues of abuse and trauma but to women's roles in society. She argues convincingly that unless we take into account their core social roles as partners, mothers and family members, we undermine women's understanding of themselves, and set them up to fail. Similarly, Herrschaft et al (2009) have noted that while men's shift in personal narrative towards desistance tends to be status-related (e.g. working man rather than street-kid), women refer to relationship-related factors. It follows that whereas most re-entry paradigms rely on a male model of change, interventions aimed at shifting identity will need to take account of these gendered nuances.

The focus on the importance of relationships in promoting desistance is confirmed by an American study that demonstrated having '*a good-quality relationship with an intimate partner or ... strong ties with their parents*' was significantly more closely associated with a reduced risk of recidivism in women than in men, even among females with an extensive criminal history. Conversely, although both male and female samples had similar levels of delinquent peer involvement, ties to criminal peers were much more closely related to reoffending among men (Cobbina et al, 2012). In part this finding was explained by the fact that

men, particularly when they are younger, experience greater pressure from peers to conform with group expectations, whereas young women can often obtain support from such relationships without necessarily being expected to conform with risk-taking group activities. This is because friendship groups are more focused on personal interaction than collective action (Cobbina et al, 2012).

There is also evidence – again from America – that young women who are themselves mothers, may be motivated to give up crime for their children (Michalsen, 2011). The research involved a qualitative study with mothers who had experienced imprisonment once they had been released into the community. All the participants – whether or not they had been reunited after the custodial episode – spoke of the importance of their relationship with their child in determining whether they continued to offend or gave up criminal activity. Those who had desisted most commonly attributed their behavioural change to the fact that:

- they had responsibilities towards their child
- they wanted their children not to be ashamed of them
- they wished to provide an appropriate role model, or
- they recognised that change was a prerequisite of being reunited with their offspring.

Frequently the enforced separation of incarceration had provided a space for reflection on the kind of mother they wished to be. This had led to a commitment to *'make up for lost time'* on release (Michalsen, 2011: 361). Motherhood was not, however, completely unproblematic from the point of view of resettlement. The transition to the community was complicated by the need for *'re-acquaintance'* with their child (Michalsen, 2011: 361). Moreover, many women reported that they struggled to fulfil parental responsibilities while simultaneously trying to address other obstacles to desistance such as finding accommodation, accessing a legitimate income and staying sober or clean from alcohol.

Such findings suggest the importance of maintaining and promoting relationships between girls or young women and their families or significant others (including their own children) while in custody and following the transition to the community. These can play a significant role in helping to reduce reoffending. As noted earlier, researchers have highlighted the consequent importance of placement close to home so that resettlement intervention can more readily support such relationships.

As a result, there are two key elements to effective resettlement: more flexible use of release on temporary licence, and improved support for family members and friends to visit and maintain contact during the custodial period (Bateman et al, 2013a; Hazel and Liddle, 2013).

Research has also suggested that institutions should avoid practices that treat family contact, whether through correspondence, telephone or visits, as a 'privilege' that can be taken away as part of a disciplinary scheme. It should be encouraged as much as possible (Berman, 2005).

The point has also been made in the literature that women, more than men, tend to expressive displays of verbal or physical violence within the custodial environment. Where disciplinary systems operate in a gender neutral fashion, or are administered by staff used to working with men, this can lead to over-reactions. This has implications for resettlement. Females may be more likely than males to receive adjudications that restrict opportunities for smoothing the transition to community. And sanctions reduce opportunities for release on temporary licence or early release (Berman, 2005; Hardyman and Van Voorhis, 2004). Similar considerations apply post release. In the event that such expressive manifestations are directed at resettlement providers, the risks of breach or recall are potentially increased.

Supporting relationships following release is equally important. Indeed, it is suggested that effective resettlement practice should strive to engage families and peers in the process of reintegration in to the

community where this is likely to be beneficial. Such findings are supported by research looking at women in related interventions. Identified principles for effective intervention addressing substance misuse for women in prison, for instance, includes activities that foster bonding among family members (Stevens and Gilder, 1994).

Research confirms that many women leaving custody experience debilitating feelings of isolation and loneliness. Without support, these feelings can undermine their determination to cease offending (McIvor, 2009). Given the finding, outlined earlier in the report, that a central element of successful desistance for girls and young women is to forge a clear, pro-social, identity, any work that aims to assist girls and young women develop a clear sense of where, and how, they fit into their network of relationships might also be beneficial (Hunter and Greer, 2011). Indeed, programmes in custody and afterwards that focus on helping (and empowering) women to forge more positive relationships has been a consistent call in literature in recent years (c.f. McClellan et al, 1997; Covington and Bloom, 2007; O'Brien and Young, 2006).

An Australian study with adult women leaving custody explores the extent to which engaging in a relationship with a mentor might improve 'social capital'. This is understood as including '*individuals' social connectedness and social ties, their embeddedness in a set of relations of trust, their participation in civil society and so on*' (Brown and Ross, 2010: 38). The research draws on Farrall's (2004) suggestion that effective interventions cannot abstract individuals from their environment. There is a need not only to build personal capacity to change but also impact on the social context in which that capacity is exercised.

Despite a large attrition rate, where a relationship was established between mentor and mentee, it was frequently long lasting. In some cases it lasted for more than a year. Where this occurred, it was because the women valued the relational supports that the mentor offered and their lifestyle meant they were able to maintain contact on a voluntary basis. Women with serious drug problems, or suffering mental ill health, were accordingly less likely to engage. The research concludes that mentoring did, in at least some cases, make a positive difference to women who were seeking to develop a non-offending identity though enhancing social capital. However, this impact owed less to the mentor providing a role model and more to the potential to develop a relationship with a trusted, non-judgemental individual, with no connection to an offending lifestyle, who could offer relational support and provide alternative ways of looking at problems (Brown and Ross, 2010).

### **Addressing trauma and violence**

Trauma and violence in the lives of girls and young women was a recurring theme when considering the explanations of offending earlier. It is important to note that researchers have stressed that unless this is addressed through the resettlement process, the chances of desistance are reduced:

'We cannot underestimate the role of trauma and violence in the lives of women offenders, how it impacts their experience within the correctional system, and how it will impact them when they return to the community. Trauma and violence affect their substance use, mental health, family relationships, ability to earn a living, and ultimately, their ability to live a crime free life.' (Berman, 2005: 37)

### **Matching self-identified needs – engagement and promoting agency**

Research has consistently highlighted the importance of personal agency and '*self-efficacy*' in predicting whether women will reoffend or not (McIvor et al, 2009: 357; Berman, 2005; Trotter et al, 2012). Women's own assessments of the types of services that would help them to reduce offending were to a large degree accurate. Where they were offered such provision, recidivism tended to fall. If resettlement provision did not match their self-identified needs, the opposite was true (Trotter et al, 2012).

This link between self-identified needs and recidivism is important for a number of reasons:

- Firstly, it helps to validate research that looks to the perceptions of participants. (This is useful considering the nature of the limited research on girls and young women below). This re-orientates the focus of what works in resettlement practice towards considering the features of services that are valued by girls and young women, and which are in turn associated with falls in reoffending.
- Secondly, it underlines the importance of listening to women who have some control over provision of services, as it may help to ensure effective services.
- Thirdly, it again emphasises the importance of the nature of services, and the benefit from interventions that promote agency:

‘it is the **individual characteristics** of services rather than the **type** of service that is associated with increased effectiveness (Trotter et al, 2012: 17).

### **Project characteristics**

One of the most central issues in the individual characteristics of services that cater for women in the criminal justice system is extent to which whether interventions should be mixed- or single-sex. This has already referred to several times above.

The debate is nicely encapsulated in an evaluation of a day release programme to help with substance misuse and resettlement in the United States. The evaluation report found that most women (although not all) felt safe and unthreatened by the presence of males in their programme, and staff felt that the co-educational aspect did not impact on effectiveness. Many women found that having men present helped them develop healthy relationships and behaviours towards men. Despite this finding, the research team itself recommended that the programme be made single-sex in order to reduce the potential for hostility between participants and to allow for issues related to past trauma and male dominance to be touched upon more comfortably (Delaware Criminal Justice Council, 2002). Such a recommendation is consistent with much of the literature, which as noted earlier, points to advantages of single gender provision (Patton and Morgan, 2002; Gelsthorpe et al, 2007).

Some research in related fields, including substance misuse (Berman, 2005), has suggested that gender should dictate the qualitative way that an intervention package addressing negative behaviour should be delivered. Women appear to benefit from a less confrontational model, where exercises or situations are less overtly challenging. For women with a past history of reviving abuse and aggression and problems of trust, an approach that challenges head-on is considered to reduce their likelihood of engagement (Haslett, 2001; Stevens and Gilder, 1994). Conversely, an environment or culture within any intervention that is considered nurturing and affirmative is likely to increase the chances of longer term engagement because it helps increase a sense of trust. This is particularly true for a group activity where there’s a potential for developing a sense of supportive ‘family’ (Stevens and Gilder, 1994). However, it should be noted that female participants of programmes disagreed that confrontation is a problem (Delaware Criminal Justice Council, 2002).

Of course, this also suggests that any methods involving confrontation are problematic (Delaware Criminal Justice Council, 2002). It also suggests that there may be risks with one-to-one victim mediation and other similar interventions where girls or young women are required to ‘face-up’ to the responsibilities or consequences literally.

The literature also provides evidence that addressing substance misuse among adult female offenders in a supportive rather than a challenging manner enhances the prospects of success. For example,

programmes that attempt to deal with past sexual and physical abuse, and programmes that provide positive support in developing trusting relationships are more likely to engender positive change and reduce offending and destructive behaviour (Stevens and Gilder, 1994; Zankowski, 1987; cited Delaware Criminal Justice Council, 2002: 18).

### **Staff characteristics**

*Beyond Youth Custody's* report on engagement in resettlement (Bateman and Hazel, 2013a) found that the characteristics and behaviour of staff as perceived by young people was an important factor in young people's participation and 'buy-in' to a programme.

Research into women's participation in interventions in prisons and substance misuse has put a similar emphasis on staff qualities, and has linked this with recidivism rates (c.f. Koons et al, 1997). The skill and style of workers is a primary factor in women's engagement and therefore in their self-efficacy (Trotter et al, 2012). For instance, among staff working with women who have been emotionally and psychologically abused, expertise in women's health needs, has been found to be important (Lockwood et al, 1997; Stevens and Gilder, 1994).

In a custodial and resettlement situation, the most basic requirement for staff is to act and speak in a way that is sensitive to women's likely trauma background. This may involve taking on established professional cultures (Berman, 2005).

In Australia in 2012, Trotter et al also noted the importance of the relationship between women and the resettlement staff member. Of particular importance was whether the staff were considered caring and understanding. There is evidence to suggest that probation services where staff specialise in female caseloads, or who are especially trained on strategies and practices most effective with women, may improve licence completion rates (Berman, 2005).

### **Beyond the end of the licence**

*Beyond Youth Custody* has previously identified that the association of resettlement support with a statutory licence period can pose challenges for young people and responsible agencies alike (Bateman et al, 2013). The evaluation of the North West Resettlement Consortium (Hazel et al, 2012) noted that reoffending rates rose once support was withdrawn. This may be a particular risk for females who offend for two reasons:

- Firstly, since low self-esteem and confidence is more prevalent for this group, women may be less well equipped to cope without continued support, or unable to elicit support from other avenues once statutory provision has come to an end.
- Secondly, the importance of relationships may mean a heightened risk of dependency on supervisory staff, or other women encountered during the resettlement process.

Consequently, studies have recognised the importance of identifying networks of support through community partnerships. These can continue beyond the end of the licence period as part of the resettlement provision to allow proper planning for the transition once statutory intervention comes to an end (Berman, 2005).

## Indicative research on the resettlement of girls and young women

The lack of a well-developed evidence-base for what works in the resettlement of girls and young women has already been noted. As argued above, drawing appropriate lessons from the literature requires an iterative synthesis. There are nonetheless a few studies that have focused specifically on resettlement provision for young females within England and Wales, and while the findings could not be considered definitive, they are nonetheless suggestive.

One of the three pilot schemes operating and evaluated under the support of *RESET* (Resettlement, Education, Support, Employment and Training) involved project based in a young offender institution accommodating girls. They provided support during the period of detention and outreach work on release. While reoffending rates for the cohort of girls with whom the scheme worked was impressively low, the sample was very small and the group demonstrated a very different demographic profile from other young people engaged in the pilots. This made any comparative analysis difficult (Hazel et al, 2010). Currently, three of the *Youth in Focus* projects also work exclusively with girls and young women and evaluation of this programme is ongoing (Beyond Youth Custody, nd).

A recent qualitative study conducted in England and Wales (Bateman et al 2013a) explores the views of girls in custody in England and Wales as to their resettlement needs and the extent to which they had been met in the custodial environment.

The researchers noted that participants had very clear ideas about what was effective from their perspective (Bateman et al, 2013a). By and large these were consistent with the established principles that inform effective resettlement for young more generally:

- a seamless continuum of care from custody to community
- wraparound support to cover complex needs, and
- care beyond the end of the licence period (Greene, Peters and Associates, 1998; Owens and Bloom, 2000).

However, it was clear that these principles required adaptation to meet the specific circumstances of girls and young women.

### Perceived as relevant

One of the most important findings from Bateman et al (2013a) was that resettlement interventions were considered by the girls to be effective when they were perceived to be *relevant* to their needs. Relevance was, in turn, assessed in terms of whether provision was seen as helpful in changing the way that the girls thought about themselves or others, or would be of benefit to them in one way or another on release.

Accordingly, responses to interventions were mixed. Sessions on alcohol and substance misuse, for instance, were regarded as valuable by those girls who considered that these were issues of relevance to them, but not by the others. Some girls found offending behaviour work beneficial because it allowed them to think about, and discuss, issues associated with their own law breaking or because it provided practical information about legislation and processes that would be useful to them on release. In this context, it was important that, to enhance the prospects of effective resettlement, interventions within custody should be relevant. They should also be perceived by the girls to be relevant to their particular circumstances, hopes and fears for the future, previous experiences, and stage of development (Bateman et al, 2013a).

Where activities met these criteria, girls engaged in them enthusiastically. The study points to the importance of finding ways to elicit the perceived needs of girls and young women and actively involving them in the sentence planning process. It also highlights the significance that young females attach to interventions being sensitive to individual difference.

Assessed against these criteria, there was considerable dissatisfaction with educational provision. This was not an indication of a failure to appreciate the importance of qualifications and attainment, but reflected the girls' assessment that the restrictions on the curriculum limited its usefulness in terms of preparing them for release. There was resentment too at the compulsory nature of educational sessions. This derived from a sense of unfairness in that girls of their age (17 years) would not be required to enter education if they were not in prison. This clearly has implications for the government's plan for secure colleges, to put education at the heart of resettlement. Conversely, girls who had opted to participate in voluntary activities, such as counselling sessions, were generally positive about them (Bateman et al, 2013a).

### **Clear and empowering plans**

As with many other studies of resettlement, Bateman et al (2013a) found limited evidence of a consistent linkage between what happened within the establishment and the provision that would be available to girls when they were released. While there were exceptions, most girls were critical of agencies responsible for supporting them on release for:

- failing to maintain adequate contact while they were in custody
- making the necessary arrangements for their return to the community. Many, for instance, did not know where they would be living until close to or at release (Bateman et al, 2013a).

An American study, which presents a similar picture to the one painted here, suggests that such '*welfare inaction*' is in part made more likely by cuts to welfare provision. It is also a consequence of a neo-liberal ideology that tends to 'responsibilise' young people for their past mistakes and imputes ideas of self-sufficiency that imply that girls should make their own arrangements (Myers, 2013).

By contrast, the UK study drew attention to girls' perceptions of a tension in the way that they were treated (particularly within the custodial environment). On the one hand, they considered that they were 'infantilised' (or 'babyfied' as they put it). In particular, rules that related specifically to their status as juveniles were resented as failing to recognise that they were fast approaching adulthood. They were also interpreted as demonstrating a lack of respect on the part of the institution. This perception also tended to undermine the girls' agency, giving rise to a sense that they were unable to take control of their own lives. In that sense, the research suggests, it was unlikely to promote change.

At the same time (and paradoxically), the girls considered that their treatment frequently failed to provide a sufficiently nurturing environment and did not acknowledge the fact that they were as yet not fully adult. Where they felt that their needs were not met, girls lacked confidence in their ability to give up offending on release (Bateman et al, 2013a).

A resolution to this dilemma is suggested by the study. From the girls' perspective, it was important that where restrictions were in place that appeared to be age related, these should be designed to safeguard them or address their welfare needs rather than to facilitate behaviour management within the institution. The reasons for rules should be transparent and discussed – and, where the constraints of custody allow, negotiated – with the girls.

Conversely, in those cases where custodial and resettlement providers had liaised to put in place

comprehensive plans for the transition to the community consistent with the girls' expressed views and interests, this was understood as by the girls as demonstrating an appropriate concern for their welfare. It was also understood to be understanding of the fact that they were in some respects still children, albeit in a process of transition to adulthood, who required support. Significantly, where this had happened and where the girls knew what they would be doing in the community from an early point in their sentence, there was a palpable impact on how they saw their future. As one put it:

'I'm excited about leaving, I think about it every day. I'm thinking about going on a course, my YOT worker's arranged, it's a childcare and youth work course. I'm going to start it in here, and then finish outside (Bateman et al, 2013a: 66).

Clarity brought with it a sense of optimism that trumped feelings of infantilisation and powerlessness, which may themselves not be helpful in an already vulnerable group. It promoted a belief that desistance was possible.

### **Mentoring?**

As noted above, the resettlement element of the *Transforming Rehabilitation* agenda involves a commitment that all those leaving custody will receive 'a through the gate' resettlement service. There is an assumption that in many cases, volunteer mentors will play a key role in enabling providers to meet that commitment. Yet the evidence base for the effectiveness of mentoring in reducing offending is at best inconclusive (Dubois et al, 2002). For instance, research conducted for the Youth Justice Board into mentoring projects funded through the Board's development fund, found no positive impact on reoffending (Tarling et al, 2004).

The results of '*the largest British study of mentoring to date*' also indicated that while programmes involving mentoring increased young people's involvement in various forms of positive activity such as education and work, it did not achieve significant reductions in offending (Newburn and Shiner, 2006: 23). However, Lewis et al's (2007) evaluation of seven resettlement pathfinders noted positive outcomes associated with help to address welfare needs. Two of the projects that used volunteer mentors and prisoners who had maintained post release contact with a mentor did significantly better than any other group of prisoner. The authors conclude that:

'ex-prisoners may benefit particularly from contact with people who have more time to pay attention to individual needs and whose distinctive contribution is often the provision of personal and emotional support (Lewis et al, 2007: 47).

Given the particular importance recorded in the literature of such support to girls and young women who offend, these findings raise the prospect that mentoring relationships might contribute to effective resettlement for this population.

### **Supporting a shift in agency**

Research conducted with girls in prison discerned a difference in attitudes among participants in their attitudes to their future. Some girls conveyed a clear impression of optimism, bedded in a sense of agency, about what would happen when they left custody. Others were fatalistic about their prospects (Bateman et al, 2013a). For the former group, this was not simply a case of expressing good intentions about not getting into trouble in the future (nearly all the girls did that). Rather it was a powerful determination that they would take a different course from the one they had pursued hitherto, in spite of the obstacles that they were able to articulate.

By contrast other girls conveyed a much greater sense of fatalism and their hopes for the future were



overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenges they faced. While the study was not designed to look at outcomes, in the light of the relationship between agency and desistance attested by the literature (c.f. Maruna 2001), the authors were persuaded that the prospects for reduced offending were greater for the former group of girls (Bateman et al, 2013a). In this context, effective intervention to support desistance would appear to involve helping girls and young women to develop an appropriate personal narrative that allows them to shift from seeing themselves as a 'young offender' to a more positive gender-identity. Doing so can allow them to take more control over their future rather than being passive and vulnerable to their the influences of past adverse experiences of victimisation (Greene, Peters and Associates, 1998).

Importantly, the distinction between agency and fatalism was not an absolute one, and some young women could shift from one position to the other relatively quickly. It was clear from the research that resettlement provision could play a role in helping to affect shifts in a positive direction. For instance, as noted earlier in the report, ensuring that arrangements for release, orientated on future goals as determined the girls themselves, were in place was associated with increased optimism and a sense of being able to overcome challenges. As one girl put it, where opportunities were made available to them, *'Nothing's really that hard, you can do it!'* (Bateman et al, 2013a: 68).

### **Empowering relationships with staff**

The early development of trusting relationships with keyworkers is seen as particularly critical in services established specifically for the resettlement of girls and young women. Researchers have stressed the importance of workers engaging the girls sufficiently while they are still in custody in order to build that trust and rapport (Greene, Peters and Associates, 1998; Cowles, Castellano and Gransky, 1995). An important feature of the GROWTH programme in the United States, for instance, was that each girl maintained the same caseworker throughout the two-year programme, and that this relationship was started in earnest well before release (Gies, 2003). After release from custody, the weekly supervision meetings are referred to specifically as 'empowerment meetings', in which counsellors focus on the teenage girl's personal growth and attitudinal resilience (Gies, 2003). In the United States, some probation services have reorganised their caseloads. All girls are supervised by a single team that is trained to work exclusively with that specific group in order to increase the prospects of developing appropriate relationships (Greene, Peters and Associates, 1998).

The girls in Bateman et al's study (2013a) also stressed the importance of their relationship with the staff responsible for providing resettlement support. Most participants in the research made a clear distinction between staff that 'cared' for them and those who did not. The latter were characterised as coming to work for material reasons. Staff in the former category were those perceived as showing compassion and understanding and those who listened to the girls concerns. On the one hand, listening was construed as demonstrating concern about what the girls were feeling, but it was also construed as demonstrating a commitment to a participatory approach to rehabilitation. This approach drew on the girl's own strengths and interests and provided support that would allow them to make progress against the needs that they had identified themselves, rather than reflecting agency priorities or a standardised form of intervention.

Practitioners who conveyed a belief in the young person's capacity to change, however inauspicious previous experiences, were also regarded as demonstrating that they cared. Reliability, consistency and the provision of useful and accurate practical advice and information were also characteristics that the girls identified as indicative of 'caring'. Participants valued staff who:

- came to see them regularly
- had delivered on what they had previously undertaken to do
- were proactive in identifying opportunities that were consistent with the girls' expressed preferences (Bateman et al, 2013a.).

As described earlier in this section of the report, where there was early planning for release and clear arrangements in place for the return to the community, girls were more likely to have a positive outlook on their future chances of avoiding reoffending. But provision of practical support, and engaging young women in a participatory manner, were also interpreted as the worker demonstrating concern for the girl's wellbeing, which was in turn more likely to engender a sense of agency. As the authors argue:

'It was possible ... for a virtuous circle to develop, whereby caring professionals promoted a sense of agency and engaged in forward planning, in partnership with the girls, to facilitate the transition back into the community. The associated increased certainty about what the future holds in turn enhanced a sense of optimism in the young women that it was possible to overcome the obstacles which impeded their paths to desistance' (Bateman et al, 2013a).

One rationale for provision focusing on improving girls' and young women's sense of self and strengthening their place within network of relationships in the community is that resettlement services are inevitably time limited in line with statutory requirements or by constraints of resources. As previous work by *Beyond Youth Custody* has argued, successful resettlement engagement involves moving through a three stage process that culminates in the young person engaging with the wider society, whereby a positive shift in identity

'is no longer dependent on the relationship with particular services, but enables him or her to develop a constructive engagement with a broader range of agencies and wider society' (Bateman and Hazel, 2013a: 29).

In this context, the importance of agency becomes apparent.

### **'Intersectionality'**

Reference has already been made to the danger that girls and young women tend to fall between two stools. Much of the literature on interventions with young people who offend is gender neutral while that which focuses on gender sensitive provisions is largely concerned with adult women (Burman and Batchelor, 2009). Owen and Bloom (2000) warn of another problem of 'intersectionality' that may have implications for resettlement of young females. Their study of the needs of young females who offend in the United States noted that girls from minority ethnic groups had different interactions with the juvenile justice system from white girls and may have different needs in relation to power relations. Such findings serve as a powerful reminder that girls and young women in the justice system are not a homogenous group, and that cultural differences may well open up opportunities for developing personal narratives and identity in various ways.

## Synthesis to produce lessons for resettlement of girls and young women

### Informing an important gap in policy and practice

*Beyond Youth Custody's* comprehensive literature review on resettlement for young people highlighted considerations of gender as one of the key gaps in the literature. In common with issues of race and culture, what works in resettlement with girls and young women was identified as a question for urgent investigation given the lack of a clear knowledge base:

'very little is known about the resettlement of girls and young women and how services might best be delivered to take account of gender' (Bateman et al, 2013b).

The current review began by highlighting the need to fill this gap. It noted that the resettlement or re-entry of young people in the community after custody had been recognised by researchers, policy makers and practitioners over the last decade as crucial in addressing high levels of recidivism. As part of this, policy makers and researchers have in various ways understood the importance of addressing the specific needs of girls, but progress to date has been limited. For the most part, these needs remain invisible in resettlement practice that has been built around gender-neutral models. Given that emerging research on adult male offenders has been shown not to necessarily work with female adult offenders, this failure to develop gender-specific practice is worrying.

The opening chapter went on to suggest why the resettlement needs of girls and young women had been ignored. It was argued that this group had been seen as less of a priority for those working in criminal justice because they make up a smaller proportion of the custodial population and generally commit less serious offences. Policy development in this area has also suffered from a lack of criminological research on female offending. Girls and young women moreover have fallen between two stools. Their specific needs are not being met by either literature looking at females (which focuses on adult women) or young people (which mainly samples boys).

This review is, accordingly, an important initial step in redressing the lack of academic attention on girls and young women to inform resettlement policy and practice development. It comes at a time of growing interest in understanding the needs of women in criminal justice more generally – including reports due from the joint inspectorates (on all females) and the T2A Alliance (on young women) – and it is hoped that it will accordingly contribute to a momentum that focuses attention on gender-specific issues within the criminal justice system. The report is the first of a number of *Beyond Youth Custody* publications on this issue that will include briefings aimed at both policy makers and practitioners, drawing on findings from this review and the experiences of Youth in Focus projects.

Given the relative lack of a 'what works' knowledge-base in resettlement with girls and young women, it has not been possible simply to summarise the evidence for existing studies that address that specific issue. Instead, we have sought to develop an iterative synthesis of what is known about:

- resettlement of young people generally
- the reasons that girls and young women offend
- wider established principles for work with this group in criminal justice, and
- evidence of what is important for resettlement of adult women.

The synthesis has also drawn on contextual knowledge from

- the policy landscape and changes
- the current position of girls and young women, and
- recent research that has looked at the experiences of young women in custody.

This final chapter of the report reflects briefly on the major themes identified in this synthesis that are relevant to the resettlement of girls and young women. It then considers what resettlement might look like when viewed through a 'gender lens'.

### **Principles in approaching the resettlement of girls and young women**

Through the process of iterative synthesis a number of themes that are consistent across the range of different domains considered in the review are clearly discernible. That consistency allows the identification of some overriding principles for effective resettlement with girls and young women. This can be understood with a degree of confidence as being research informed, in the absence of more focused evidence. These general principles are:

#### **1 The lessons of 'what works' in resettlement with young people (gender-neutral) are still valid for girls and young women.**

There was nothing in the literature that contradicted the lessons or principles established in previous youth resettlement guidance in England and Wales. This was recounted briefly in the earlier section in this report and found more fully elsewhere (e.g. in Hazel and Liddle, 2013; Bateman et al, 2013b). Resettlement with girls and young women should, as a consequence, aim to ensure a smooth transition from custody to community, meaning that work on preparing for release needs to start from the beginning of the sentence. It is also important for the multiple and complex needs of this group to be addressed through close coordination of partnership agencies to deliver wraparound support. Finally, engagement with young people to help promote shifts in personal narratives towards a more positive non-criminal identity and to facilitate social inclusion is central to effective intervention. The specific circumstances and experiences of girls and young women who come to the attention of the justice system are, however, sufficiently different from those of their male counterparts to require that general lessons are adapted and refined to ensure that they are gender sensitive. What this means in practice is unpacked below.

#### **2 Resettlement interventions must address the vulnerabilities of girls and young women.**

The backgrounds of girls and young women who end up in custody are typically characterised by trauma, victimisation or abuse of different kinds (often from men) to an extent that is not experienced by most boys and young men. This has significant implications for resettlement policy and practice which include the development of non-confrontational approaches, the provision of safe and secure environments, addressing high levels of vulnerability both in custody and on release, an understanding of how previous victimisation can impact on future behaviour, and the engagement of staff.

#### **3 Past, present and future relationships are a critical focus in resettlement for girls and young women.**

Relationships play a particularly important role for this group. From the past, family discord and trauma in childhood, relationships characterised by exploitation and violence with partners or other males, and volatile relations with peers frequently feature in any understanding of why offending has occurred. In the present, establishing trust in relationships, while difficult, is critical for engagement in interventions. It is also central to the provision of appropriate support and a prerequisite of promoting non-delinquent identities in the process of desistance. For the future, ensuring that girls and young women are more resilient and able to sustain positive relationships of different kinds is key to longer term social inclusion.

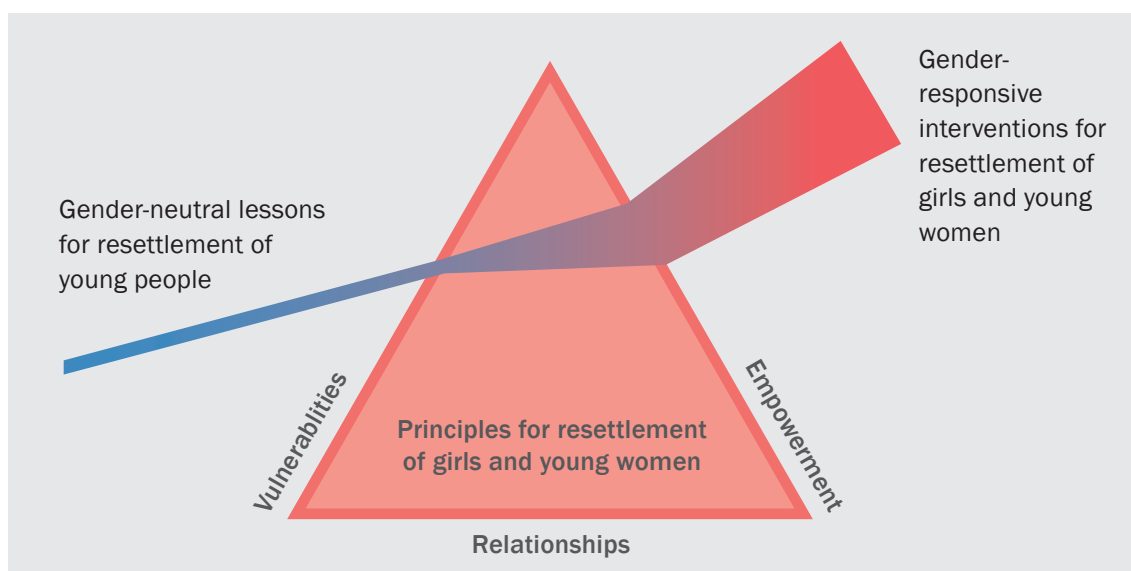
#### **4 Empowering girls and young women to make positive choices should run through all resettlement practice.**

Given that vulnerability and subordination defines the background and pathways to crime for this

group, balancing out this characteristic through interventions that empower them should help ensure a more constructive future away from crime. Part of this empowerment might be structural (e.g. job opportunities for avoiding monetary reliance on abusive partners) and part would be focused on agency - helping build personal strength to counter negative influences. The latter can be enhanced by positive relationships with resettlement staff, as well as addressing relationships and past trauma. They are also important for participation in planning. Empowerment should be a central focus of supporting shifts in identity that promotes a sense of self-esteem, optimism and agency.

The above is a 'one plus three' model of resettlement for girls and young women. The central principle is that the lessons for resettlement for all young people remain the basis for support. However, there are three related gendered dimensions that shape how those lessons are delivered in policy and practice terms. In this context, it may be more appropriate to think in terms of subjecting resettlement to a 'gender prism' (rather than a 'gender lens' (Berman, 2005:2)) consisting of three lenses: vulnerabilities, relationships and empowerment. In the gender prism model, the still-valid gender-neutral lessons for the resettlement of young people are mediated by the other principles that have particular resonance for girls and young women in order to develop gender-responsive interventions (see figure 1).

**Figure 1: The gender prism to ensure appropriate resettlement for girls and young women**



### **Applying existing lessons for resettlement of young people through the gender prism**

The above gender-prism model incorporates our overall principles and offers a broad guide for developing interventions in resettlement. This takes account both of what is known about best practice for young people in general and girls and young women in particular. Our iterative synthesis of all that is known in this area and related areas suggests that these gender-responsive principles need to be considered through this prism if the needs of this group are to be met. As such, each element of current gender-neutral resettlement practice can be assessed in relation to these principles, and ways found to emphasise the particular gender-specific characteristics identified. Where it is found that particular needs are not met by existing practice, policy makers and senior practitioners should consider ways to develop new interventions that will meet them – for instance specific help in empowering girls and young women in relationships.

Table 1 below presents examples of the kind of gender-specific emphasis that might be produced using the prism model, borrowing from evidence/ideas identified in this report. The table is divided into the gender-neutral lessons of resettlement for young people, as summarised broadly under the first principle in the previous section.

**Table 6: Examples of gender-responsive resettlement emphasis if gender-neutral lessons for young people pass through the gender-prism**

Summary of lessons for young people's resettlement	Gender-responsive emphasis/intervention
Smooth transition from custody to community, with resettlement work starting from the beginning of the sentence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on maintaining family and other positive relationships while in custody</li> <li>• Contacts maximised and not restricted as part of discipline</li> <li>• Videoconferencing is used to maintain contact with family and friends</li> <li>• Placed in custody close to home to encourage relationship maintenance</li> <li>• ROTL used regularly to maintain relationships</li> <li>• Community interventions go into custody to help build trust early</li> <li>• Early assessment for trauma and abuse</li> <li>• Clients are involved early in sentence planning and meetings</li> <li>• Plans for community are put in place early</li> <li>• Highly supported accommodation near support networks, or another area away from abuse</li> <li>• Young women are not placed or transferred to adult prisons</li> </ul>
Partnership coordination for wraparound support to meet multiple needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on mental and emotional health need</li> <li>• Address trauma and past abuse</li> <li>• Teach finding and building positive relationships, and avoiding negative ones</li> <li>• Emphasise the role of family and friends in support networks</li> <li>• Interventions are in a 'safe place', either single-sex or empowering women</li> <li>• Work includes families and partners, building on attachments</li> <li>• Interventions are based on need rather than (gender-neutral) risk levels</li> <li>• Extra resettlement support is not compulsory nor breachable</li> <li>• Emphasis is placed on ensuring support networks sustainable beyond the licence</li> </ul>
Engagement to shift personal narratives to constructive identities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervision focused on positive empowerment rather than challenging or confronting behaviour</li> <li>• Consistency of supervision to help build trust</li> <li>• Staff are trained in female needs and vulnerabilities</li> <li>• Female mentor to build trust, be non-judgemental, and offer relational support</li> <li>• Clear explanations and managing expectations, negotiated if possible, to help build trust</li> <li>• Desistance work is relationship based rather than status based, with strong self/role in relationship network</li> </ul>

The *Beyond Youth Custody* team are currently conducting further work looking at this issue and hoping to expand the consideration/intervention ideas in the right hand column of Table 1 above, as informed by the principles contained in the prism model. Research is being undertaken with practitioners, girls and young women themselves to understand more about their perceptions of what makes good and bad resettlement practice. We also hope to work closely with the *Youth in Focus* projects working with this group in order to understand their outcomes, and the enabling factors and barriers to positive outcomes that they encounter. This programme of research will be considering how principles can work in practice, and will culminate in the publication of guidance briefings for policy makers and practitioners on developing resettlement interventions appropriate for girls and young women.

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