



RESETTLEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING CUSTODY

LESSONS FROM THE LITERATURE

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

Continued falls in the imprisonment of young people and challenges for resettlement

The literature review noted that, following a rapid rise in the use of custody for young people from the early 1990s onwards, there had more recently been a substantial decline. In December 2012, the under 18 population of the secure estate in December 2012 stood at 1,372, representing a 49% fall from the equivalent month in 2008. This downward trend has continued. By May 2014, there were fewer children detained in custody than at any date since April 2000 when the Youth Justice Board (YJB) began to collect figures in their current form. At 1,091, the population of the secure estate was almost 64% below that in May 2008 (Ministry of Justice, 2014a).

The young adult prison population has also fallen, but the trajectory has not been so marked as that for children. As noted in the literature review, the number of young adults, aged 18-20, in custody fell by 16% between 2008 and 2012. In the year from March 2013, the custodial population for this age group declined by a further 10%, from 6,563 to 5,939. There was a reduction over the same period for young prisoners aged 21-24 but this was considerably smaller at just 3% (from 13,049 to 12,595). By contrast, the number of adult prisoners aged 25 and over has continued to rise. As indicated in table 1, the increase has been sharpest for those aged 50-59 (Ministry of Justice, 2014b).

Table 1
Custodial population by age group March 2013 and March 2014

Age group	March 2013	March 2014	Percentage change
10-17 years	1,279	1,177	-8%
18-20 years	6,563	5,939	-9.5%
21-24 years	13,049	12,434	-3.5%
25-29 years	15,332	15,789	4.3%
30-39 years	23,043	23,707	5%
40-49 years	14,862	15,003	1.2%
50-59 years	6,639	7,019	8%
60 years and over	3,381	3,536	5.8%

One possible way of understanding these different trends for the imprisonment for older and younger groups is to see the modest decline for young adults as a consequence of the sharper reductions in relation to children in custody filtering through to young adults. Such an account would be consistent with the fact that the decline in custody began earlier for those aged 10-17.

The reduction in the imprisonment of children has been accompanied by a fall in the number who are resentenced to custody for offences committed within 1 year of release. While such a trend might be anticipated as a consequence of the decline in the numbers released, there has also been a corresponding drop, as shown in table 2, in the proportion of prisoners who return to custody (Ministry of

Justice, 2014c). This pattern can be explained in part by a slight reduction in reoffending following release, but it might also suggest a greater willingness on the part of courts to impose non-custodial sentences. No separate data is available for young people aged 18-24, but there has been a reduction for the adult prisoners as a whole, albeit less pronounced than that for children.

Table 2
Number and proportion of prisoners resentenced to custody for offences committed within 12 months of release

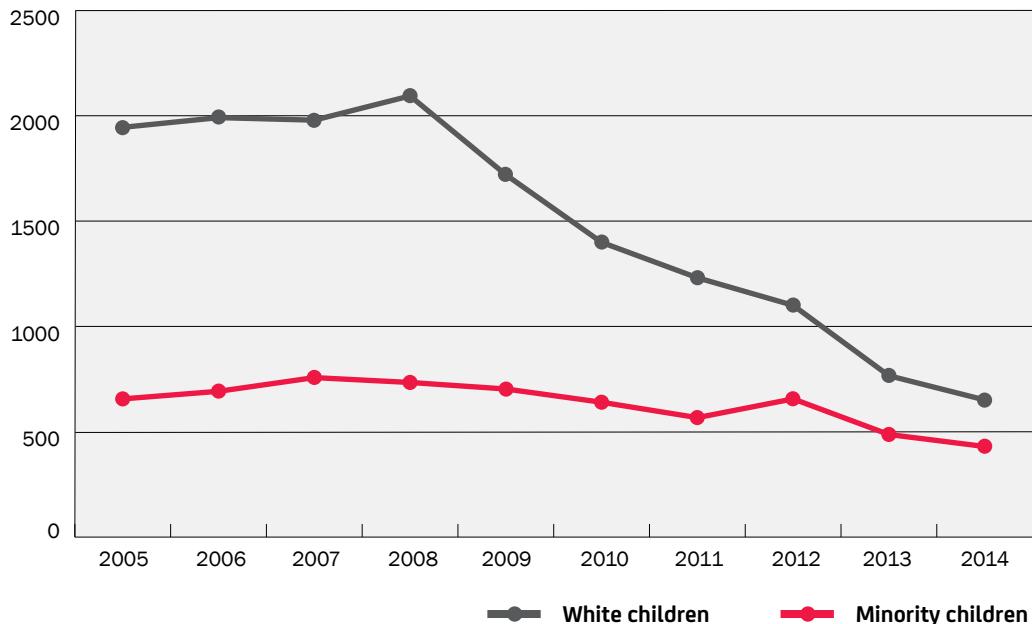
Year	Number released	Number resentenced to custody	Proportion resentenced to custody
Adults			
2007	60,081	17,771	29.6%
2008	65,051	18,906	29.1%
2009	63,832	17,315	27.1%
2010	56,284	16,217	28.8%
2011	59,313	17,282	29.1%
Children aged 10-17 years			
2007	3,534	1,580	44.7%
2008	3,522	1,452	41.2%
2009	2,938	1,163	39.6%
2010	2,304	958	41.6%
2011	3,534	847	42.8%

It has been suggested that, while the continued falls in the number of young people detained within custodial institutions are obviously to be welcomed, recent trends pose additional challenges for resettlement services (Bateman et al, 2013a). A previous literature review update summarised recent evidence that, as children and young people whose offending is of a less serious or persistent nature are increasingly diverted from prison, the residual population is correspondingly more likely to display an entrenched pattern of offending behaviour. It is also likely to have a higher concentration of problems (Bateman and Hazel, 2014a). No separate data of this kind has been published relating specifically to young prisoners aged 18-24, but it would not be unreasonable to suppose that a concentration of disadvantage may have occurred among this population as the overall level of incarceration has reduced. Resettling such young people is clearly a more difficult endeavour.

There is evidence too that those who remain in custody are more vulnerable and disadvantaged in particular respects. For example, the decline in imprisonment of black and minority ethnic (BME) children has been significantly less pronounced than for the 10-17 population as a whole, as shown in figure 1. As a consequence, while BME children have consistently been overrepresented in custody (May et al, 2010), that representation has increased sharply since 2008 when the population of the secure estate began to fall. Accordingly, while BME children accounted for almost 26% of those in the secure estate in April 2008, the equivalent figure for the same month in 2014 was 39.8%. Children referred for resettlement provision will inevitably reflect the changed ethnic composition of the custodial population.

Figure 1
Population of the secure estate by ethnicity: 2005-2014 (April)

(Source: Bateman, 2014)



Research has also confirmed that black and mixed heritage children within the youth justice system have increased levels of need compared with their white counterparts (May et al, 2010). This was measured by Asset, the YJB's assessment tool.

More recent reoffending data is not broken down by ethnicity, but figures for 2011 indicated that black children had higher levels of recidivism than the general youth justice population. 42.6% reoffended within 12 months compared with 35.9% (Ministry of Justice, 2013a). The data is not disaggregated by both age and index disposal, but one might reasonably assume that the difference is explained at least in part by the higher likelihood that black children will receive custodial sentences (since incarceration is associated with increased levels of reoffending) and higher level of vulnerability of children from BME groups. In any event, it is clearly incumbent on resettlement services to ensure that they are able to meet the particular needs of BME young people.

A recent review published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons suggests that there is scope for significant improvement in the treatment of young BME prisoners (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2014). It considers the implementation of the recommendations of a public inquiry into the death of Zahid Mubarak that was published in 2006.

Nineteen year old Zahid Mubarak was murdered in March 2000 by a racist cell mate shortly before he was due to be released. He was serving a sentence of 90 days' detention at Feltham young offender institution (YOI). Robert Stewart, who committed the offence, was known to have racist views. He had previous convictions for violence, had manifested violent behaviour in custody and had bragged about his intention to commit murder. It was also recognised that he had mental ill health difficulties. A public inquiry, whose report was published in 2006 found over 186 failings across the prison system, and made 88 recommendations designed to "reduce the risk of something like this ever happening again". (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2014: 6)

Two of the inquiry's recommendations were rejected by the government at the time of publication. However, in 2011, ministers indicated that, of the remaining 86 recommendations, 71 had been implemented and 15 had been partially implemented or were regarded as having become obsolete as a consequence of

developments in the interim period. Despite this, a thematic inspection of the implementation of the inquiry's recommendations concludes that there is no room for complacency (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2014).

The review looks at improvements to information sharing and risk assessments and notes that such processes have changed for the better with the introduction of new technology. However, in practice, failure to follow procedures means that such improvements are not used to full effect. At the time of Zahid's death not all establishments had a personal officer scheme. These schemes are now universal, but some appear to exist '*only on paper*' (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2014: 24). Surveys suggest that some prisoners do not know who their personal officer is or have very little contact with him or her. Experience of the personal officer scheme is rated less favourably by the BME population.

The inquiry into the murder questioned whether the benefits of holding young adults separately from adult prisoners outweighed the disadvantages. As noted in a previous update to the literature review (Bateman and Hazel, 2014a), the government has consulted on the issue through the 'Transforming Management of Young Adults in Custody' agenda (Ministry of Justice, 2013b). This initially proposed the abolition of young adult YOIs and the integration of 18-20 year old males into adult custodial establishments. A final decision has been deferred pending the report of an independent inquiry into the deaths of young adults in custody (Ministry of Justice, 2014d). The HM Inspectorate of Prison's thematic review notes that:

current outcomes for young adults are too often not good enough in whatever type of establishment they are held No one model of provision will meet all young adults' needs. A range of different types of establishment are needed to meet young adults' different needs. (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2014: 22-23)

In respect of the experiences of BME young people in custody, the inspection draws attention to the fact the BME prisoners continue to be more likely to report feeling unsafe within the custodial environment. This is indicated in table 3.

Table 3
Percentage of the custodial population reporting that they had felt unsafe while in the institution by ethnicity

Category of population	White	Black	Asian	Mixed	Overall
Male adult	33%	35%	42%	37%	34%
Women	34%	26%	39%	14%	33%
Young adult	20%	36%	21%	29%	24%
Children	28%	35%	36%	29%	30%

Almost 1 in 10 Asian young adult prisoners report having been victimised by another prisoner because of their race. Moreover, as highlighted in table 4, BME children and young people are significantly less likely to consider that custodial staff treat them with respect. This is particularly true of Asian young adults.

Table 4
Percentage of the custodial population reporting that staff treat them with respect

Category of population	White	Black	Asian	Mixed	Overall
Young adult	70%	55%	45%	52%	64%
Children	81%	65%	58%	70%	74%

The thematic inspection concludes that '*insufficient progress*' has been made since the death of Zahid Mubarak in 2000 (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2014: 29).

Changes to the custodial estate and developments in resettlement

The substantial reductions in the number of young people who are subject to imprisonment, as noted above, inevitably impact on the configuration of the custodial estate as the capacity required to accommodate that population shrinks. As noted in a previous update to the literature review, so far as children are concerned, there has been a substantial contraction in the number of beds that the YJB commissions within the male YOI estate. The 3 dedicated YOIs for 17 year old females have been closed and all females and all girls are now accommodated within secure training centres (STCs) or secure children's homes (SCHs). The number of places purchased by the YJB within the latter form of provision has also reduced considerably (Bateman and Hazel, 2014a).

The fall in the number of children imprisoned has thus been reflected in a contraction in the number of establishments in which they are held. This poses a particular difficulty for resettlement provision because it increases the chances that custodial provision will be located a considerable distance from the child's home area. 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).

More recent figures, provided in answer to a Freedom of Information request, are not directly comparable since they relate only to those children detained in YOIs rather than all custodial institutions. Nonetheless, they might suggest that average distance from home has increased further in the interim period. In April 2014, 38% of 15-17 year olds in prison service accommodation were detained more than 50 miles from home. The equivalent figure for young adults aged 18-20 was 35% (Ministry of Justice, 2014e).

The government is proceeding with plans for the longer term configuration of the youth justice custodial estate, first outlined in the green paper 'Transforming youth custody' (Ministry of Justice, 2013c). Central to these plans is the development of a network of 'secure colleges'. This is described as '*a new model of youth custody*' that '*puts education at the heart of detention*' with a single lead provider delivering all the services within the establishment rather than educational input being commissioned separately (Ministry of Justice, 2014f: 5). It is intended that secure colleges will replace all STCs and YOIs, accommodating the large majority of children (boys and girls aged 12-17). Some specialist provision will remain within SCHs for younger children aged 10-12 and 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, 2014f: 10).

The Criminal Justice and Courts Bill, currently before Parliament, contains provision to make secure colleges one of the forms of institution in which children deprived of their liberty can be detained. The first purpose-built pathfinder secure college will be developed adjacent to Glen Parva YOI and is scheduled to open in April 2017. In June 2014, the government announced that it had appointed Wates as the preferred provider to design and build the establishment. A tendering exercise to select a provider to run the pathfinder will start in 2015 (Grayling, 2014).

The proposal has proved controversial. The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (2014), in its legislative scrutiny of the bill, has expressed concern over the proposed size of secure colleges. (It is anticipated that the pathfinder would accommodate 320 children.) The committee notes that international human rights standards would imply a contrary strategy to the one currently envisaged by the government and would involve the establishment of:

small open facilities where children can be tended to on an individual basis and so avoid the additional negative effects of deprivation of liberty; and that institutions should be decentralised to allow for children to continue having access to their families and their communities. (Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2014: 19)

In this context, it is worth noting that if subsequent secure colleges were of a similar size to that proposed for the pathfinder, just 3 establishments would be sufficient to accommodate the current child custodial population. Such a configuration of the secure estate would inevitably exacerbate difficulties outlined above in relation to distance from home. The government, however, has responded that the siting of the first secure college has been determined in part by a shortfall in custodial provision in the Midlands and East of England, thereby enabling placement closer to home (Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2014).

The committee also raised concern over the accommodation of small numbers of girls and younger children alongside a large majority of older boys. In its report it highlights that, despite the government's contention that:

both girls and younger children should be able to benefit from the improved educational provision that will be on offer. (Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2014: 20),

an equalities impact assessment of this issue has not been carried out. Finally, the committee argues that the proposal that force may be used by staff in secure colleges '*to maintain good order and discipline*' is likely to be incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights and may contravene the UK's obligations under the UN Convention against Torture. In its most recent Concluding Observations on the UK, the UN Committee against Torture recommended that the State should take steps to:

ensure that restraint against children is used only as a last resort and exclusively to prevent harm to the child or others and that all methods of physical restraint for disciplinary purposes be abolished. (cited in Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2014: 23)

The first secure college will not open for 3 years. The government's plans for transforming youth custody accordingly also make provision for changes in the meantime. A previous update to the literature review outlined plans to improve existing education provision within YOIs (Bateman and Hazel, 2014a). More recently, the YJB has confirmed that it will launch new resettlement consortia in 4 areas in England, selected on the basis of a high use of custody and a history of shared partnership working. This new initiative will build on the lessons derived from earlier consortia developed in 2009 and discussed in the original literature review (Bateman et al, 2013a). The YJB has recently held 'engagement events' at Feltham and Wetherby YOIs to raise the profile of the work. The launch later in the summer will coincide with the establishment of 2 employer forums in London and Greater Manchester (Hinnigan, 2014). The resettlement consortia will be subject to national evaluation.

At a more local level, according to a YJB bulletin, resettlement at Wetherby YOI is to be enhanced through a partnership with Barnardo's. The initiative, which is jointly funded by the Cabinet Office, will involve offering children who are leaving the institution the chance to take part in a voluntary 'social action programme'. The aim of this is to help them to review how they got to the situation they are currently in, where they would like to be and what support they would need to get there. The programme also involves a bike recycling project for families of prisoners and a training project to raise awareness among professionals of the issues faced by children leaving custody (Youth Justice Board, 2014).

The government has also announced a change to the treatment of 15-17 year olds detained in the 5 public sector YOIs. As of 3 August 2014, there is a requirement that this group is in their cells with lights out by 10.30pm each evening. The rationale for the change is to provide discipline and routine to children who often lack it. Children who fail to comply with the new arrangements will lose privileges (Ministry of Justice, 2014g). The move has been criticised by the Prison Reform Trust on the grounds that it could lead to an increased likelihood of physical restraint, and undermine the potential for rehabilitation (BBC, 2014).

As indicated above, any further changes to the custodial estate for young adults aged 18-20 have been postponed pending the publication of the independent review into self-inflicted deaths of 18-24 year olds in custody chaired by Lord Harris. The review follows increasing concern over the high level of such fatalities. Between January 2011 and June 2014, a total of 55 young people in this age group died in prison service custody. Of these fatalities, 86% (47) were self-inflicted (Inquest, 2014).

However, as outlined in a previous update, the government has reserved the option to abolish the sentence of ‘detention in a young offender institution’ (which currently applies to young adults aged 18-21) and disperse this population across the adult estate. One potential advantage of doing this is that this age group would become eligible to spend the last 3 months of their sentence in a resettlement prison, once these become operational (Bateman and Hazel, 2014a). Conversely, while levels of violence are higher in dedicated young adult YOIs, young people detained in them report feeling safer than those placed with adults (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2014).

Young women aged 18-20 are detained in adult female prisons. While there is an expectation that they are accommodated in discrete provision, this does not appear to be common practice (Bateman and Hazel, 2014b). Given that 12 of the resettlement prisons announced to date hold females, there would appear to be no obstacle to this group having 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, 2013d). However, the current configuration of the adult female estate means that 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 has 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. This would allow female prisoners from the region to work in the community prior to release. The government has accepted the proposal and has 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, 2013c).

In any event, there is evidence that conditions in women’s prisons have recently improved. This is reflected in the fact that incidents of self-harm within such establishments have fallen by more than half in the last decade (Hardwick, 2014). In the year to March 2005, there were 18 deaths of women in prison compared with just 6 in the equivalent period to March 2014 (Ministry of Justice, 2014g). Nick Hardwick, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Prisons has suggested that this is, in part, a consequence of female establishments having become smaller. This makes it easier to deliver services that will facilitate resettlement (Hardwick, 2014).

Young males aged 21-24 are similarly detained in the adult estate. In contrast with conditions for females, conditions for adult male prisoners appear to have deteriorated. Incidents of assault, self-harm and fatalities have all risen. As indicated in table 5, in 2014 there were 219 deaths in male prisons, an increase of more than one fifth since 2005. Across the whole of the prison estate, suicides have risen by 69% in the last year. Between 2005 and 2014, incidents of male self-harm rose by more than 77% (Ministry of Justice, 2014i).

Table 5
Recorded incidents of assault, self-harm and deaths in male custodial establishments: 2005-2014

Year (to March)	Assault	Self-harm	Deaths
2005	12,163	9,849	179
2006	13,683	10,639	161
2007	13,673	12,357	155
2008	14,625	11,309	181
2009	14,927	12,686	158
2010	14,281	13,780	174
2011	13,785	14,769	176
2012	14,888	16,202	207
2013	13,573	16,399	175
2014	14,491	17,474	219

According to research conducted by the Howard League, the capacity of the prison estate has reduced by almost 6,500 places since the coalition government took office in May 2010. The number of frontline prison staff has also fallen from 27,650 to 19,325, a contraction of around 30%. Over the same period, however, the total prison population has grown by 255. (Howard League, 2014). The Howard League suggests that this combination of factors has led to reductions in association and purposeful activities with a corresponding increase in the amount of time that prisoners spend in their cell. They argue that increased levels of violence, self-harm and suicide should be understood in that context. Planning for release and providing high quality resettlement for young people in such circumstances is clearly more challenging than it would otherwise be.

Research findings

Since April 2013, a team from the Ministry of Justice's Analytic Services has offered organisations who work with offenders an analysis of their impact on reoffending, a service known as Data Lab. Participating organisations provide details of service users with whom they work and an outline of the services provided. The analysis involves collating the reoffending data held by the Ministry of Justice on individuals and comparing patterns of recidivism to those of a matched control group with similar characteristics. The reports prepared for individual organisations are published and, where those organisations offer services relevant to resettlement, they can provide an indication of what forms of provision might be effective.

Roundabout is a local housing charity in Sheffield that provides accommodation to young people who are:

homeless on release from custody, who need an address to secure an early release from custody, or who could be offered an alternative sentence through the provision of suitable accommodation.
(Ministry of Justice, 2014j: 8)

Data Lab analysis indicates that the impact of the service on rates of reoffending could not be conclusively ascertained, but there was a statistically significant reduction in the frequency of reoffending by comparison with the control group. Young people referred to Roundabout commit an average of 1.17 further offences over 12 months compared to 1.92 for the comparator group (Ministry of Justice, 2014j).

The difficulty with interpreting information like this is that it is not clear from the analysis exactly how the service provided impacts on reoffending. While, for instance, one might reasonably assume that Roundabout's success in reducing the frequency of further offending is a consequence of the provision of accommodation to those who would not otherwise have access to it, other analyses suggest that a more nuanced account is required.

Home Group residential and support service, for instance, provides '*housing and support services for vulnerable people with a wide range of support needs, including people with a history of offending behaviour*' (Ministry of Justice, 2014j: 11). Given that the organisation accepts referrals from youth offending teams, it is apparent that some services users are young people.

A Data Lab analysis of outcomes for those provided with residential and support services after leaving custody found that reoffending rates and the frequency of reoffending were both significantly higher than for the control group. It is not clear why provision of accommodation in this instance should be associated with less favourable outcomes than those achieved by Roundabout. The Ministry of Justice notes that the disappointing outcomes for Home Group might be explained by:

characteristics (in particular factors associated with homelessness or accommodation issues) of this cohort which are not reflected in the MoJ underlying data. (Ministry of Justice, 2014j:13)

A 'through the gate' resettlement project managed by the Prince's Trust for young adults leaving custody provides mentoring support for a period of 3 to 6 months prior to release and a similar period following

release to the community. Each young person is individually matched to a mentor who has previous experience of being in custody. While such an approach would appear to be consistent with the evidence base on effective resettlement provision, Data Lab analysis was inconclusive as to the impact on reoffending. This ranged from a 24 percentage point reduction to a 12 percentage point increase compared to the matched control group (Ministry of Justice, 2014j). Findings like these again highlight the importance of trying to understand how particular types of intervention impact upon the outcomes for young people who participate in them.

As noted in a previous update, from an international perspective, there are differences in terminology between jurisdictions. These may need to be taken into account when identifying research that is relevant to working with young people leaving custody. What is referred to as 'resettlement' in the UK is, at least on some occasions, known as 're-entry' or 'aftercare' in the United States. The latter has the advantage of focusing attention on that fact that 'care' is generally a prerequisite of successful intervention with young people (see for instance, Bateman et al, 2013b). It also tends to suggest an emphasis on what happens following release into the community, rather than a process that commences at the point of incarceration. 'Re-entry' similarly tends to imply that relevant intervention occurs after the custodial episode. Indeed, this is an accurate reflection of much of the provision that is available. Nonetheless, literature from the United States can provide important lessons for resettlement work in England and Wales in spite of the different context.

A narrative review of 35 studies evaluating 29 different programmes of community-based re-entry programmes for prisoners leaving custody, notes that most evaluations reported favourable outcomes (Wright et al, 2014). The programmes evaluated over a 10 year period provided a wide range of different services tailored to different offending populations – although none appear to have focused particularly on young people. The most common type of intervention provided was substance misuse counselling. This was a feature of 59% of the programmes evaluated. More than half of the programmes offered individual or group counselling, 45% included an element of cognitive behavioural treatment and 41% offered support with employment. Most of the provision offered multiple forms of intervention, suggesting something of a holistic approach. This made it difficult to establish what component had the greatest impact on reoffending.

The review concludes that no programme features were '*clearly unsuccessful*' (Wright et al, 2014: 51). However, cognitive behavioural treatment appeared to have less of a positive impact than other forms of intervention. Conversely, provision of accommodation support was associated with the largest reductions in offending (Wright et al, 2014).

A study that focuses on the re-entry of young people notes that the evidence of effectiveness of aftercare services is '*relatively scant*' (Early et al, 2013). Research has tended to suggest that aftercare supervision alone does not have a significant impact on reoffending. However, the National Reentry Resource Center Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice has pointed to promising or emerging practices that include:

- cognitive behavioural approaches
- strengths-based strategies that emphasise positive youth development
- an emphasis on education and employment
- the development of connections that facilitate successful transition to adulthood and
- meaningful family and community engagement in the resettlement process (Bilchik, 2011).

In relation to the last point, family therapy interventions have been associated with successful youth crime prevention. When applied to children leaving custody however, results have been more mixed.

In this context, the research aimed to compare a new re-entry programme, Parenting with Love and Limits (PLL), with standard aftercare provision. The programme is based on a family systems approach. It has previously been offered to families of children deemed to be at risk as a diversionary service, or as an

intervention for young people subject to probation supervision. As applied to resettlement, the programme begins work with children and their families several months before release.

- **Stage 1:** involves both parent-only modules and family therapy sessions that look at planning for aftercare.
- **Stage 2:** commences 1 to 2 months before the return to the community. This focuses on the period of transition, agrees details of the implementation of the aftercare plan and identifies 'wraparound' services in the community to address the range of the individual child's needs.
- **Stage 3:** begins at the point of release and involves family therapy sessions several times a week for a period of 3 months.

Completion rates were high. 81% of those families referred completed the programme – although for African American children the figure was somewhat lower at 74%. In terms of the outcome, reoffending for those referred to the PLL re-entry programme – whether or not they completed it – was significantly lower than for those receiving standard aftercare services that commenced at the point of release across a range of indicators. As indicated in table 6, reoffending amongst those who completed the programme was lower than in those who were referred but did not finish the intervention. This suggests '*an association between completion of the full course of treatment and improved outcomes*' (Early et al, 2013). However, largely as a consequence of the smaller numbers completing the intervention, the difference with the control group did not quite reach the level of statistical significance.

Table 6
Reoffending indicators for PLL and standard aftercare provision

Indicator	Referred to PLL	Referred to standard aftercare
Re-arrest	29.4%	34.6%
Re-adjudication	17.7%	26.8%
Return to custody	16.3%	21.6%
Indicator	Completed PLL	Completed standard aftercare
Re-arrest	28.2%	34.7%
Re-adjudication	16.9%	25.8%
Return to custody	13.7%	20.2%

The authors conclude that:

the preliminary results from the initial implementation and evaluation of PLL Reentry offer support for the use of family-focused aftercare with youth transitioning back to their homes and communities following residential commitment. (Early et al, 2013)

However, they also acknowledge that the study was not able to determine what components of the PLL re-entry programme contributed to the reductions in reoffending. Given that previous studies of multi-systemic therapy as a post-release service have found no impact on recidivism, the authors surmise that an important element of PLL's success is that it starts while the child is in custody and focuses attention on the transition to the community.

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