

Beyond
YOUTH CUSTODY

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

UPDATE: OCTOBER 2013



Introduction

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 accordingly committed to publishing regular supplements that take account of the latest developments in resettlement policy and practice and disseminate the most recent research findings in the field. The current paper is the second in a series of quarterly updates providing an overview of relevant publications appearing in the period since the literature review was originally published. It aims to ensure that those working in the field of resettlement with young people have access to the latest available lessons from research.

The use of custody

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. The under 18 population of the secure estate in December 2012 stood at 1,372 – 49% below that in the equivalent month in 2008. In the interim period, there have been further reductions: by March 2013, there were 1,290 children in the secure estate; by August 2013, that figure had fallen to 1,239 (Ministry of Justice, 2013a).

The review indicated that while the number of young adults aged 18-20 in prison had fallen, the extent of the decline was much less pronounced (at 16% between 2008 and 2012). Distinct figures for young adult prisoners are not published with the same regularity as those for the secure estate for children and young people. Nonetheless, the latest data suggest that detention for this age group is starting to decline more rapidly than previously. In June 2013, there were 6,272 young adults in prison, a reduction of 16% compared to the same month in the previous year (Ministry of Justice, 2013b).

For older prisoners, figures do not allow disaggregation by age. Custody for adults in general has been falling slowly but the trend is not an uninterrupted one. On 25 October 2013, the adult prison population stood at 85,235. While this represents a reduction of just over 1% by comparison with the equivalent week a year previously, it also constitutes the highest level of imprisonment so far this year (Howard League, 2013a).

Such continued falls in the number of young people detained within custodial institutions are obviously welcome but also have implications for resettlement services since the residual incarcerated population is likely to have a more entrenched pattern of offending behaviour and to have a higher concentration of problems (Bateman et al, 2013a). Moreover, so far as children are concerned, it is clear that the overall decline in custody has resulted in an increase in the proportion of the secure population who receive long-term sentences for what are known as 'grave crimes' (Nacro, 2007a). Whereas in August 2008, children serving sentences of long-term detention accounted for just under 18% of those in custody, by August 2013 that proportion had risen to more than 21%. Previous research has confirmed that children who commit very serious offences are more likely to have had previous traumatic experiences and suffered various forms of neglect, abuse and victimisation (Boswell, 1996). From a resettlement perspective, such young people are inevitably subject to considerably longer periods of statutory supervision on release than those serving detention and training orders (Nacro, 2007), raising questions about how services might best sustain engagement with resettlement activities over the longer term with this particularly vulnerable group (Bateman and Hazel, 2013).

These additional challenges for resettlement activity are set in the context of a financial climate in which resources to custodial establishments are under increasing pressure. As Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons's Annual Report (published in October 2013) noted, all establishments inspected during the year were under pressure 'to do more with less and, in some cases, the cracks were beginning to show' (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2013a: 14). For instance, the number of violent incidents involving children and young adults had fallen by 8.5% during 2012-13 but the reduction in the custodial population for this age group was more than double that percentage. As a consequence, despite the positive headline figure, many institutions had experienced higher levels of violence than previously (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2013a). The report also indicates that:

'priorities such as providing work and other purposeful activities [in custody] have fallen away. Young offender institutions sometimes struggled to deal with the more challenging cohort of young people' (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2013a: 14).

The Annual Report also notes that tensions within custody are sometimes exacerbated by what it terms 'the pointless strip searching' of all children at the point of admission. At Cookham Wood Young Offender Institution (YOI), for instance, 729 strip searches yielded just two finds of proscribed items (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2013a: 12). A Freedom of Information request reported by the Guardian newspaper indicates that 43,960 strip searches were conducted in the secure estate for children and young people in the 21 months to December 2012. Only 275 searches revealed illicit items, most commonly tobacco, and there were no recorded discoveries of drugs or knives (Allison, 2013).

In April 2013, Frances Crook, Chief Executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform wrote to Jeremy Wright, Minister with responsibility for youth justice, pressing the government to end the practice of routine strip searching (Crook, 2013). The Minister's reply in June 2013 indicated that such searches had been discontinued in secure children's homes and secure training centres and were no longer mandatory in YOIs unless there was deemed to be a significant risk of drugs, weapons or other 'contraband' being concealed. He further noted the government's intention to implement a three month pilot of 'entirely risk and intelligence based searches and that a suitable site was currently being sought' (Wright, 2013). At the time of writing, the outcome of the pilot is not known.

Changes to the custodial estate and developments in resettlement

The fall in numbers inevitably impacts upon the Youth Justice Board's commissioning strategy. Both the male and female estates have been affected. In terms of the former, it was announced earlier in the year that the Board would withdraw totally from Ashfield YOI (a total of 360 places) and reduce capacity at Hindley YOI by 192 and at Wetherby YOI by 180. The three remaining YOIs for girls, with a total capacity of 41 places, were also scheduled to be re-rolled as adult provision. In September 2013, the Board indicated that it would cease to commission all 192 custodial places at Warren Hill in Suffolk by spring 2014 (Ministry of Justice, 2013c). This latter decision is significant in the context of the rising proportion of prisoners below the age of 18 subject to long-term detention since one of the units to close provided specialist provision for this group.

Further extensive change to the configuration of the secure estate for children and young people is anticipated as a consequence of the Ministry of Justice's Green Paper *Transforming Youth Custody* (Ministry of Justice, 2013d). Consultation on the paper, which describes the government's vision for putting education 'at the heart' of custodial provision for children, closed on 30 April 2013 but, at the time of writing, the government is continuing to analyse feedback and has yet to publish its response.

The proposals relate to custodial accommodation for children below the age of 18, but in October 2013 it was announced that Weston College had entered a partnership with Portland YOI, which provides for young adults, to open what they refer to as a 'secure college'. Weston College was successful in its tender to deliver courses to 11 prisons and YOIs in the South West under the Offender Learning and Skills Service (McCardle, 2013).

As regards the adult estate more generally, the government has announced a 'modernisation' programme involving the construction of a new establishment with 2,000 beds in Wrexham in Wales and ongoing work to consider the feasibility of building a second large prison on a site in South East England. One of the sites under consideration is Feltham YOI, which currently accommodates both under 18s and young adults in separate establishments. Following highly critical inspections of both institutions (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2013b; 2013c) which indicated that standards of provision, including that for resettlement, had deteriorated in the recent past, one option being considered by the Ministry of Justice is to replace the existing provision with a large adult prison and a new youth facility on adjoining sites (Ministry of Justice, 2013e).

The Prison Reform Trust (2013a) notes that 28 out of 124 prisons in England and Wales now hold over 1,000 prisoners, with such establishments accounting for more than 40% of the prison population, compared with 18% 10 years ago. They estimate that the 'modernisation programme' will take this figure to more than 50%, a process they describe as 'Titan prisons ... by stealth' (Prison Reform Trust, 2013: 3). Drawing on a range of previous research, the Prison Reform Trust argues that smaller institutions are more likely to lead to successful rehabilitation since prisoners in larger establishments:

- find it easier to obtain illegal drugs
- are less likely to receive help with accommodation
- are less likely to know whom to contact for assistance with employment related issues
- are more likely to report having been assaulted by staff or other inmates (Prison Reform Trust, 2013a).

Such evidence raises questions about the impact on effective resettlement of a shift towards larger custodial institutions.

Despite such criticism of the direction of penal policy, the government is clearly aware of the challenges posed by resettlement. In July 2013, Chris Grayling, Justice Secretary, announced the creation of a network of 'resettlement prisons' where the same provider would be commissioned to provide resettlement services within the custodial establishment and outside. In the interim period, it has been confirmed that HMP Dovegate will join three others in Staffordshire and the West Midlands as establishments specialising in resettlement on the above model. Trials will begin in the North West of England in the autumn with full roll-out by autumn 2014, and it is anticipated that the majority of detainees will be transferred to a resettlement prison for at least the last three months of their sentence, allowing release into their local community (Ministry of Justice, 2013f).

In this context, a review of the women's custodial estate, published in October 2013, notes that the report on women in custody prepared by Baroness Corston in 2007 had recommended that the government adopt a strategy to replace existing women's prisons with 'suitable, geographically dispersed, small multi-functional custodial centres within 10 years'. The recommendation was not accepted at the time, but the current review endorses the principle underlying it and proposes that an open unit outside of the existing women's estate should be established which would allow female prisoners from the region to work in the community prior to release. The pilot would enable an evaluation of the impact of such a development on reoffending post-custody (Robinson, 2013).

The government has confirmed that such a unit will be opened outside HMP Styal in Manchester. The government is also committed to ensuring the accommodation of all female prisoners in resettlement prisons and that all women will be provided with 'through-the-gate' support on release (Ministry of Justice, 2013g).

The implications of the development of resettlement prisons for young adults aged 18-21 who are accommodated separately from older prisoners is currently unclear, and there are no plans for this group to be the focus of a separate review. However, the Ministry of Justice is currently engaged in a 'scoping exercise' looking at the management of young adults in custody. The intention is that this exercise will inform consideration of how the resettlement needs of this group can be addressed in the context of the wider changes to the prison estate (Ministry of Justice, 2013f).

One element of the government's programme of criminal justice reform involves amendment of the statutory provisions governing resettlement, and in particular those that relate to shorter custodial sentences. The provisions of the Offender Rehabilitation Bill are relatively complex but the intention is to ensure that all prisoners aged 18 or more should be subject to a minimum of one year post-custodial licence or supervision (Parliament UK, 2013: clauses 2-10). The amendments will not alter the period served in custody but will, in many cases, increase the period during which young people are required to comply with resettlement services once they are released. The period of statutory supervision to which young people leaving custody are currently subject depends upon their age and the nature of the sentence imposed (Bateman et al, 2013a). The provisions will accordingly affect different young people in different ways, depending upon the existing arrangements:

- Adult prisoners (18+) serving two or more years of imprisonment are currently released at the mid-point subject to licence conditions for the remainder of their sentence. The provisions in relation to this group will accordingly remain unchanged.
- Adult prisoners aged 21 or over serving between 12 months but less than two years of imprisonment are similarly released at the mid-point subject to licence conditions until the end of the order. It is intended that the length of licence for this group will remain unchanged, but they will be subject to an additional period of statutory supervision that runs from the end of the sentence to one year post-release.
- Adult prisoners 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 Bill, such young people 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.
- Young adult prisoners aged 18-20 serving short-term sentences of less than 12 months are currently released halfway 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, which will be supplemented by a period of statutory supervision until they have been back in the community for a year.
- Children receiving custodial sentences between four and 24 months are sentenced to a detention and training order of which, by default, half is served in the secure estate and half in the community.¹ The amended legislation will not interfere with these arrangements except where the young person reaches their 18th birthday during the custodial phase of the order. 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.

¹ There is provision for early or late release where the sentence is eight months or longer. Since 2002, there has been a presumption of release at the earliest point permitted by the legislation, subject to an electronically monitored curfew, other than for cases involving violent or sexual offences (Nacro, 2007b). For a detailed overview of the resettlement provisions for children, see Howard League, 2012.

Some examples of how the changes will impact on young people are given in the table below.

Details of young person	Current arrangements	Proposed arrangements under the Offender Rehabilitation Bill
24-year-old serving a 6 month prison sentence	Unconditional release at three months. No licence period or statutory supervision	Release at three months subject to 3 months licence, followed by 9 months supervision
19 year old serving 8 months detention in a YOI	Release at 4 months subject to 3 months licence	Release at 4 months subject to 3 months licence, followed by 9 months statutory supervision
Child serving a 4 month detention and training order who turns 18 during the custodial phase of the sentence	Release at 2 months followed by 2 months supervision in the community	Release at 2 months followed by 2 months licence and 10 months statutory supervision

The underlying intention of the legislative change is to ensure that young people (and adults) serving short-term custodial sentences receive a minimum period of resettlement support. Moreover, a recent study published by the Ministry of Justice provides evidence that probation supervision can contribute to reduced levels of offending. The research looks at one and two year recidivism rates of adult offenders either side of the 12-month custodial sentence supervision threshold, allowing 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. As the table above shows, 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 without increasing the risk of breach (Bateman et al, 2013a). Such concerns have been echoed by penal lobbying groups in relation to the new statutory provisions. The Prison Reform Trust (2013b), 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 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, 2013b: 4).

The problem of non-compliance is also captured, in a different context, by the U R Boss young people's manifesto (U R Boss, 2013), launched at this summer's party conferences. U R Boss is a Howard League initiative, funded by the BIG Lottery, supporting young people in the criminal justice system to

have an impact on policy and practice. The manifesto was produced by young advisers to the project and, in a short document, reinforces many of the messages from research as to what constitutes effective resettlement. It addresses, for instance, the importance of maintaining contact with family and friends and of increased flexibility within custody to avoid damaging relationships. It notes that education in secure establishments needs to be meaningful, as opposed to 'Mickey Mouse qualifications', and proposes that links between activities in custody and the community should be strengthened, including 'linking and opportunities for continued study with community further education colleges' (U R Boss, 2013: 3). It points to the need to get the basics right in terms of providing young people with support to ensure that housing, bank accounts and benefits are in place prior to release, with particular care given to assisting those who do not have a family to provide a safety net such as looked after children, care leavers and unaccompanied children. It also proposes that professionals need to listen to young people and respond appropriately to what they are told. In the context of breach, the manifesto argues that being released from prison should offer opportunities for succeeding rather than exacerbating the risk of failure. Compulsory conditions attached to resettlement should accordingly be restricted to those that meet the individual young person's needs and circumstances rather than imposing unnecessary restrictions. As one young person cited in the document puts it, the licence is 'not hard to follow but it's easy to break' (U R Boss, 2013: 3).

Research findings

The authors of the Beyond Youth Custody literature have recently become aware of differences in terminology between jurisdictions that may need to be taken into account when searching the literature. What is referred to as 'resettlement' in the UK is, at least on some occasions, known as 're-entry' in the United States. As a consequence, reviews that use the former designation as a search term will not capture all of the American research evidence. For such reasons, a special edition of the American based journal on youth development, *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* published in 2004, was not included in the literature review published by Beyond Youth Custody earlier this year (Bateman et al, 2013a). Many of the themes identified in that issue were, however, addressed.

Mears and Travis (2004) detail seven 'domains' around which challenges to re-entry of young people to society following a period of incarceration occur: family and living arrangements; peer groups and friends; mental, behavioural and physical health; substance abuse; education and schooling; vocational training and employment; and leisure and recreation. Each of these issues was considered in our earlier review.

In the same issue, Howard Snyder (2004) presents an empirical portrait of the 100,000 juveniles released annually in the United States from custodial facilities who are 'candidates for re-entry programs' [sic] (p.39), drawing on a range of available data. As in England and Wales, the large majority of such young people were male (88%), though they tended to be younger than in the UK: almost one in five were aged 14 or younger. Thirty nine per cent were from a non-Hispanic white background, a similar proportion were from a non-Hispanic black background and 17% were from a Hispanic background. A third were detained for property offences. Young people in custody were significantly more likely than the general population to come from single parent families (54% compared to 26%) and to have relatives with previous convictions. Educational needs for juveniles in custody also far exceeded those of non-incarcerated young people: 23% of the former group had never entered high school.

One third of young people reported being under the influence of alcohol at the time of their offence and drug use was common, with more than one third reporting regularly using drugs by the age of 12-13. Rates of mental ill health were also a significant problem with more than two thirds of those in custody having a mental health disorder. There was some evidence that mental health difficulties were greater for girls than for boys (Snyder, 2004).

The extent and nature of such vulnerabilities will be familiar to those working with young people in custody or on release in England and Wales. Steinberg et al (2004) highlight that such adversities are compounded by the fact that young people are in a process of transition to adulthood that requires a certain level of 'psychosocial preparedness' (p.23) before they have the capacity to attain the level of maturation that allows them to take advantage of potential turning points in their lives. Such development is mediated by the context in which young people find themselves, and the criminal justice system, and custody in particular, can function to impede the natural processes of transition. Conversely, the authors argue appropriate intervention by practitioners can, in principle, promote psychosocial development, although such efforts are inevitably constrained by the punitive and restrictive environment in which they are delivered.

The provision of punishment, it is contended, does nothing to prepare young people for successful re-entry into the community and may be more likely to arrest development than promote it. The authors conclude that it may be necessary to review the goals and methods of the youth justice system from a developmental perspective, predicated on the provision of supportive adults and opportunities for young people to 'develop responsible autonomy, acquire important competencies and establish positive relationships with prosocial peers' (Steinberg et al, 2004: 33). Mercer Sullivan (2004), drawing on ethnographic research that illuminates the perspectives of young people themselves, argues that traditional methods of determining success of re-entry are overly limited and do not take sufficient account of the differential experiences of young people who come to the attention of the criminal justice system. A focus on recidivism per se may increase stigma and be less likely to engage the broad range of community resources necessary to address the difficulties that young people face in the transition from custody to the community and the simultaneous shift from being a youth to an adult.

This theme of resettlement (or re-entry) involving a dual transition for young people is picked up in more recent research that considers the barriers to reintegration (Fader and Dum, 2013). Drawing on interviews with aftercare workers in Philadelphia in the United States, the authors found that processes of 'bureaucratic ritualism' – a rigid reliance on rules, procedures and guidance – tended to impede the goals of resettlement. For instance, a focus on paperwork, formalised forms of assessments and developing written supervision plans frequently took priority over establishing constructive relationships with young people, their family and other relevant members of the community. The supervision plan could become a 'document with no inherent meaning' and might function to disempower individual young people and their families (Fader and Dum, 2013: 902).

A priority was afforded to attendance whether or not the services on offer were relevant to the individual young person – in large part a consequence of payments being related to compliance with the programme. This on occasion led staff to view the young person turning up as more important than the nature of the intervention. Conversely, and paradoxically from a young person's perspective, such dynamics increased the potential for non-compliance. Similarly, an approach that rewarded providers according to how many young people obtained employment encouraged staff to push young people towards jobs for which they were unqualified, in which they had no interest, or were unsuitable for other reasons, such as distance from the young person's home.

Conversely, however, the authors note that some staff were able to overcome, or bypass, such bureaucratic obstacles through a commitment to caring for young people that led them to value person-centred outcomes more than organisational ones. These 'proactive caregivers' prioritised engagement, were prepared to break rules if they regarded them as contrary to the interests of service users, and saw themselves as advocates on behalf of those with whom they worked. The article concludes that further research is required to ascertain whether such 'caregivers' generate better outcomes than staff who allow themselves to be constrained by adherence to bureaucratic processes.

The importance of the support networks to which young people return from custody is explored in a meta-synthesis of the literature conducted by Martinez and Abrams (2013). The negative impact of criminal peers is frequently acknowledged, but for many young people the choice is to return to the pre-existing friendship group or risk being socially isolated and giving up a sense of belonging. Young people considered that confronting old friends and influences without getting involved in their offending activities would be one of the most difficult challenges associated with release. Such young people 'walk a fine line' (p.175) between distancing themselves from pressure to commit crime and becoming isolated. Given the difficulties associated with finding new, pro-social friendship groups, the most successful strategy was one of 'selective involvement', limiting association with peers to times when offending was less likely, or to individuals who exerted less pressure to revert to criminal activities.

The research also confirms the importance of supportive family networks in the journey towards desistance, and the provision of a place to live and practical and emotional support are critical in the process. However, family ties can also be detrimental. Where carers have overly high expectations, impose too rigid boundaries or express disappointment in their children, a return home can lead to young people developing feelings of failure, becoming withdrawn from potentially positive relationships and relying more heavily on delinquent peers. In some instances, the 'ties that bind' could lead to 'a self-fulfilling prophecy of return to criminal patterns and activities' (Martinez and Abrams, 2013: 183). The authors conclude that while informal support should be woven into the network of resettlement services, professionals need to be aware of the potentially ambiguous nature of relationships with both family and peers.

Research conducted in Australia considers young people's perspectives on resettlement based on interviews conducted in custody and again following release into the community (Moore et al, 2013). Of the 11 young people in the sample, only three had managed to spend a substantial period of time outside the justice system over the 18-month life of the project. Each of these reported having supportive families, strong friendship groups and a commitment to finding employment. Two of the three also cited the importance of developing a good relationship with a member of staff as contributing towards their successful desistance. However, the large majority of young people reoffended or were returned to custody for non-compliance.

Young people had a clear sense of what they needed if they were to give up offending and these tended to cluster around three particular themes. The first was effective integration in community networks of friends, family and workers, relationships with whom had been placed under strain by the experience of incarceration. Many also recognised the potential benefits of establishing positive connections to new groups of people that would allow them to access different resources on the one hand, but would also provide the opportunity to feel more a part of the community and facilitate the development of a new, more positive sense of self. The second theme to emerge was a desire to resolve the negative effects of incarceration, and in particular of having lost a range of basic skills, largely as a consequence of institutional dependency, or what has been called elsewhere 'infantilisation' (see for instance Bateman et al, 2013b). It was important in this context that adults provided support without attempting to take control, developing a 'relationship that fosters interdependence' (Moore et al, 2013: 338) which could replicate elements of the custodial experience.

In this context, the third theme was focused on what young people wanted from workers whose role it was to assist them on release. In this respect the research confirms the evidence from other studies. Staff who were respectful, non-judgemental, optimistic, approachable and flexible were more likely to engage effectively with young people. The notion of promoting interdependence was an important one. Young people were welcoming of support, but only in relation to problems that they had identified themselves or in partnership with professionals and where the aim was assist the young person to come to his or her own solutions.

Another study drawing on the views of young people released from custody considers the impact of stigma on young men leaving prison in Hong Kong (Chui and Cheng, 2013). There was a strong sense among this group that employers discriminated against offenders and that finding a job would accordingly be difficult. But this perception of objective difficulties was compounded by subjective challenges in the form of self-stigma. The young men showed a diminished sense of self-worth and this was reinforced by a recognition of their poor educational qualifications, which they tended to regard as a significant marker of social status. The interviewees were also ashamed and embarrassed at their criminal past and as a consequence were more cautious than they would otherwise be in their interactions with others, further inhibiting their ability to draw on new or existing networks of support. There was a risk, in this context, that the young men would come to think of themselves as outsiders, making the task of resettlement considerably more challenging.

A recurrent feature in much of the recent research literature is the importance of what happens to young people around the point of release. A paper presented at the European Society of Criminology conference in Budapest in September 2013 utilises data from a range of resettlement studies over the last 15 years to suggest that the general recognition that entering custody is traumatic needs to be supplemented by an awareness of the traumatic nature of release. Young people leaving custody describe manifestations of trauma that include: physical symptoms such as shaking, exhaustion and disrupted sleep patterns; depression and withdrawal; agoraphobia; anxiety and irrational fears; and an inability to cope with the pace of life outside the custodial establishment (Hazel and Bateman, 2013). Symptoms of this sort are experienced even by those with well-developed networks of support; indeed supporters can make matters worse where they expect a resumption of normality immediately the young person returns home. For most young people leaving custody, such trauma on release compounds earlier experiences that will have impacted adversely on mental and emotional health and well-being.

The aforementioned paper argues for a greater awareness of the issue and for resettlement service providers to prepare for it. A more flexible use of release on temporary licence would help to reorientate young people in the period prior to release, allowing a more graduated return to the community. It is also important that all young people are met at the gate by someone with whom they have a good and trusting relationship.

While there is an increasing understanding of the general principles that underlie effective resettlement work, there is less concrete evidence of the impact of particular interventions, particularly where these are delivered by non-statutory providers. The government's Justice Data Lab initiative aims to improve the evidence base and to provide individual organisations with an opportunity to compare reoffending of service users with a matched control group with similar characteristics. Organisations wishing to take part supply the Data Lab with details of the offenders with whom they have worked and the services they have provided, and in return receive an analysis of reoffending rates in comparison to the control group.

In the six months between the launch of the service on 2 April and 31 September 2013, 52 requests for reoffending analysis were submitted. Of these, seven did not supply sufficient data and 38 have yet to be processed. The Ministry of Justice has, however, published the results in relation to the remaining seven applications (Ministry of Justice, 2013h).

There was insufficient evidence to draw a conclusion of the impact on reoffending for four of the services. Users of a project managed by Shelter providing housing advice and accommodation casework within HMP Armley were found to have higher reoffending rates than the matched control group but this may be explained by characteristics (associated with homelessness) of the population who used the service that is not reflected in the Ministry of Justice's data set.

Two projects, both of which provide services to adults leaving custody, were found to have more promising outcomes. Blue Sky offers adults leaving custody full-time employment for up to six months and aims to move them on to longer-term jobs at the end of the contract. Individuals employed on the scheme showed a reduction of between one and 23 percentage points by comparison with the matched sample. Preventing Offender Accommodation Loss targets short-term sentenced and remand prisoners in HMP Lewes who are at risk of losing their accommodation or are homeless. Data Lab analysis indicates that convicted offenders targeted by the project experienced a reduction in reoffending of between one and 38 percentage points.

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

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