

# **Beyond Youth Custody**

## **Resettlement: reviewing the evidence and the Beyond Youth Custody Framework**

Tim Bateman, University of Bedfordshire

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# The resettlement challenge

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- Despite a substantial policy focus on resettlement of children, reoffending, - particularly for short sentences – has shown no downward trend: the 12 month recidivism rate for children serving six months or less has been 75% or more in 8 of the last 10 years
  - Other poor outcome indicators for children leaving custody – education, training and employment; mental health and emotional wellbeing; substance misuse; and a lack of suitable, stable and sustainable accommodation – readily explain the high levels of reoffending – arguably more important (Bateman et al, 2013; HMI Probation, 2015)
  - In its 2015 inspection of resettlement services, HM Inspectorate of Probation described outcomes for young people leaving custody as ‘shocking’
  - A range of practice initiatives have shown promising results (including many of the Youth in Focus projects) – but these have not been sustained at national level or longer term
  - *‘We know the solution ... why on Earth is it not being done?’* (HMI Probation, 2015: 4)
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Joint thematic inspection  
of resettlement services  
to children by Youth  
Offending Teams and  
partner agencies

A joint inspection by:  
HM Inspectorate of Probation  
Care Quality Commission  
Ofsted

# A telling background? Does language matter?

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- The term 'resettlement' is of relatively recent origin – first appearing in a Home Office consultation paper in 1998 (Bateman et al, 2013): replacing an older terminology 'throughcare' and 'aftercare'
- The new expression recognised:
  - The need to repair the harms associated with deprivation of liberty
  - The importance of a 'seamless sentence'
- But it also perhaps reflected a hardening of attitude towards those who broke the law (Raynor, 2004)
- Part of the problem?



A dark blue rectangular box with a textured background. The text 'Question #3:' is written in a light blue, sans-serif font at the top. Below it, the phrase 'Why should I care?' is written in a large, bold, yellow, sans-serif font.

# The evidence: children's backgrounds and the impact of custody

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- Children in custody are those who suffer from highest levels of disadvantage:
    - 51% live in a deprived household
    - 39% have previously been on the child protection register
    - Three times as likely to have experienced the death of parents or siblings
    - Almost half have been excluded from school
    - More than one in ten have attempted suicide
    - Around 50% have substance misuse concerns and well over one third have problems with mental health
  - Eighty percent suffer five or more 'disadvantage factors' (Jacobsen et al, 2010)
  - Resettlement services accordingly have a significant challenge – but custody tends to exacerbate many of these problems (Bateman et al, 2013)
  - The secure estate is becoming more violent, less safe and more reliant on seclusion and physical restraint (Youth Justice Board, 2018)
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## The importance of transition:

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- There is a 'window of opportunity' following release when young people are enthusiastic to change – but the window quickly closes
- The point of release is one that many children (and their parents/ carers) find extremely disorientating and stressful

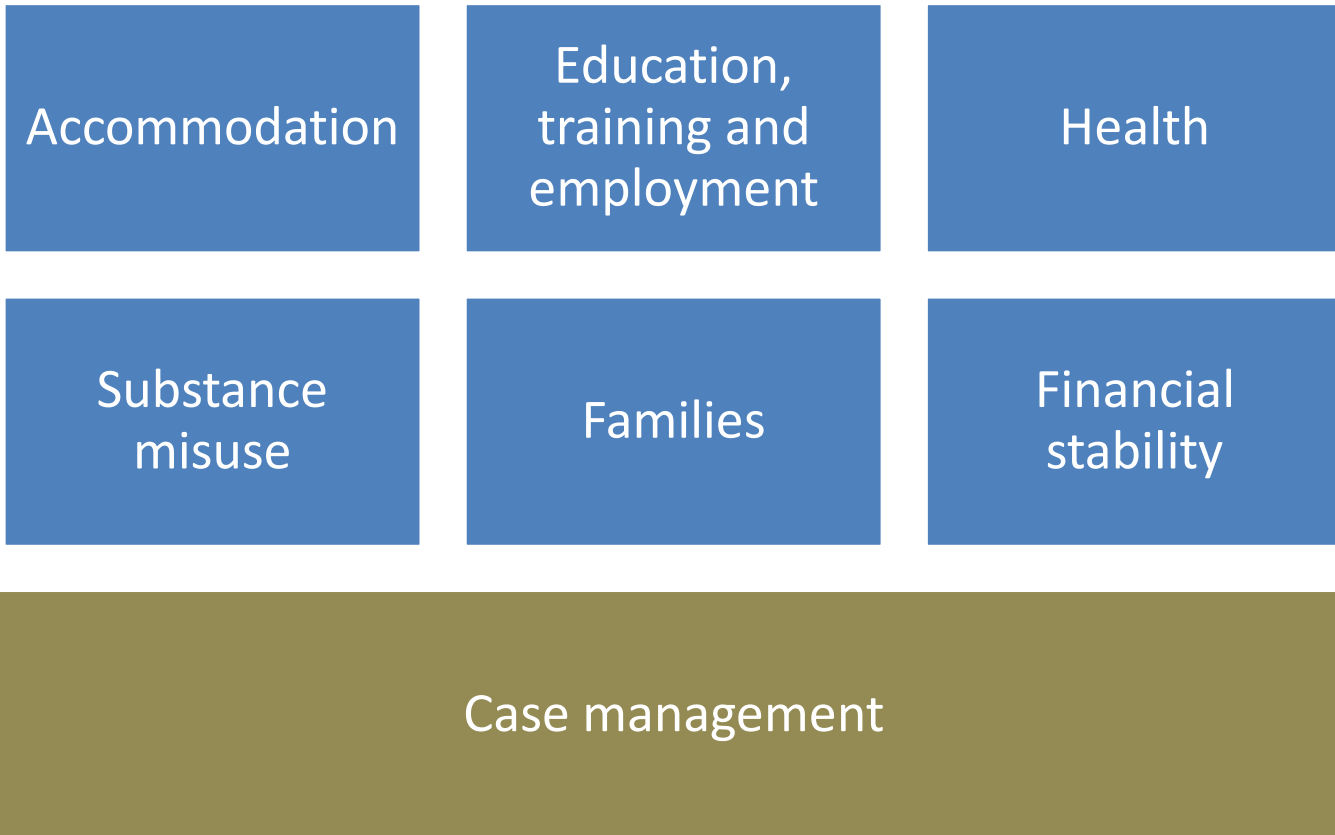
Locus of change	Examples of disorientation
Regime	Abruptness of change Pace of life Lack of structure
Environment	Familiar seeming unfamiliar The world has moved on
People	Interrupted relationships Awkwardness in talking to others about what has happened

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## The mainstream response

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- The Youth Justice Board identifies seven 'resettlement pathways' – drawing on the characteristics of children in custody



## So what's the problem? – oh and the start of the solution

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- **In spite of the framework:**

- Work in custody is based on what is available rather than preparing children for release
- Plans devoid of meaningful content; children recognise their 'tick box' nature
- Resettlement in the community starts too late and does not link to progress in custody
- Low compliance with post custody supervision; high rates of breach
- Ineffective inter-agency work (HMI Probation, 2015)

- **The question is why?** The work of BYC suggests that:

- The framework (and much other guidance on resettlement) focuses on discrete elements of activity without providing an overview of how they fit together or an understanding of how they contribute to long term change
  - This encourages seeing those different elements as addressing deficits in the child rather than promoting future orientated change
  - The framework lacks a clear aim or theory of change: it is decontextualised
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# What might a resettlement theory of change look like?

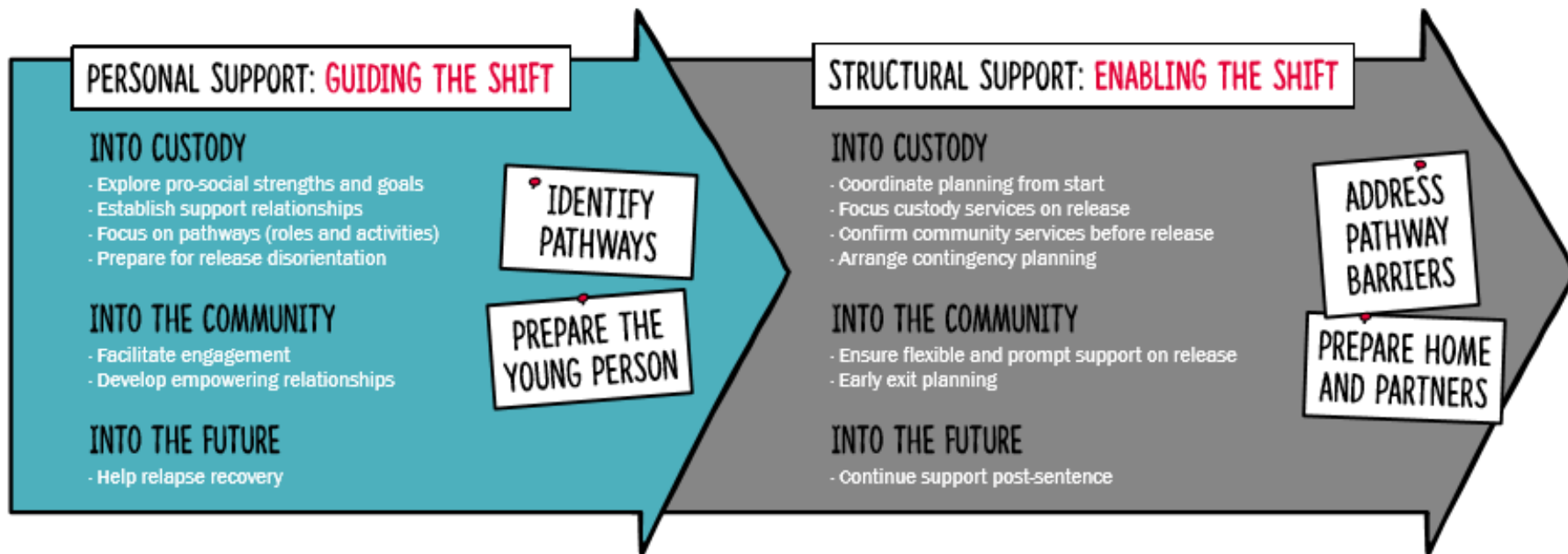
- BYC proposes a desistance-based, future orientated model of resettlement:
  - the resettlement process, where successful, is better conceived as representing a journey for the child, involving a shift in personal narrative and moving towards a changed identity
  - The resettlement task is to facilitate that journey, empowering the child to make the shift – that will (ultimately) result in more positive choices





# How to facilitate the journey / shift in narrative

- Facilitating the child's journey requires the provision of two distinct – but interlocking forms of support:
  - *Personal* – helping develop a sense of agency; identify goals; work with the young person to plan towards them
  - *Structural* – children do not operate in a vacuum; there are real social, economic and demographic barriers to achieving change



CARE



SOCIAL JUSTICE

# It ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it

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- The nature of the support given will depend upon the individual child – but it is possible to specify a number of qualities that characterise all effective provision of support
- These qualities should be evident in the provision of both personal and structural support

- **Constructive** – centred on identity shift, future-oriented, motivating, strengths-based, empowering
  - **Co-created** – Inclusive of the young person and their supporters
  - **Customised** – individual and diverse wraparound support
  - **Consistent** – resettlement focus from the start, seamless, enhanced at transitions, stable relationships
  - **Coordinated** – managed widespread partnership across sectors
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