

POSTbrief

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Education of Young People Leaving Custody

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Background

Around 1,000 children between 10 and 17 years are in youth custody at any one time in England and Wales.¹ The previous Government announced a review of sentencing and consulted on plans to put education at the heart of youth custody.² For a detailed overview of the provision and quality of education in youth custody in England and Wales and the challenges of engaging children in custody with education, see [POSTnote 524 on Education in Youth Custody](#). On release from custody, successful resettlement into the community has a positive effect on the lives of young offenders and generates wider social benefits by reducing reoffending.^{3,4} Continuing education and training on release from custody is a key part of transitioning back into the community for children and young people.⁵ This brief provides an overview of educational provision in resettlement and examines key factors affecting children's engagement with education and training on release from custody.

Responsibility for resettlement services

Children are held in three different types of youth custody establishments: Young Offenders Institutes (YOIs), Secure Training Centres (STCs), and Secure Children's Homes (SCHs). Multiple organisations are involved in commissioning, delivering, and monitoring educational services to children as they transition from custody back into the community (see Table 1 for a glossary). Arrangements for resettlement vary depending on the type of youth custody establishment the child has been held in, and sometimes also vary by region. A simplified diagram is shown in Figure 1.

In 2015, HMI Prisons (HMIP), the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and Ofsted conducted a joint inspection of resettlement services for children. The report criticised the fact that responsibility for providing education and training to a child on release from custody falls between commissioning bodies and service providers, with no single person or organisation being accountable for delivering high quality resettlement overall.⁶ There are no national statistics or large studies tracking the participation of children in mainstream education and training after they leave custody. However, a recent small scale study (total sample 29) found nearly three quarters of children involved in the study had not maintained any education, training or employment on release.⁶ A separate cost benefit analysis indicated that good quality resettlement could save over £20,000 per offender per year, if it reduced the frequency of reoffending by 35% and the severity of

1. Youth Justice Board. (2015). [Annual Report and Accounts 2014/15](#).

2. Ministry of Justice. (2014). [Transforming Youth Custody government response to the consultation](#).

3. Beyond Youth Custody. (2013). [Resettlement of Young People Leaving Custody](#). Lottery Funded.

4. Renshaw, J. (2007). [The Costs and Benefits of Effective Resettlement of Young Offenders](#). *Journal of Children's Services*, 2(4), 18-29.

5. Youth Justice Board. (2006). [Youth Settlement: A framework for action](#).

6. HMIP, Care Quality Commission and Ofsted. (2015). [Joint Thematic Inspection of Resettlement Services to Children by Youth Offending Teams and Partner Agencies](#).

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offences (graded on a scale of 1-8) committed by re-offenders by 10%.⁴ Wider literature suggests that engagement with education on release is an important aspect of successful resettlement for children.³

Table 1: Glossary of key organisations involved in resettlement services in youth custody, and in resettlement and education services on release

| | |
|---|---|
| Ministry of Justice (MoJ) | Responsible for resettlement policy for children. |
| Department for Education (DfE) | Responsible for the education of children leaving custody. |
| Youth Justice Board (YJB) | Non-departmental public body for England and Wales that oversees youth justice and is responsible for the commissioning of custodial services from the NOMS. Also supports and monitors YOTs resettlement work. |
| National Offender Management Service (NOMS) | Executive agency of the MoJ. NOMS is responsible for the strategic and operational management of the YOIs. |
| Youth custody establishments | Secure centres for under-18s serving custodial sentences. There are three types: Young Offender Institutions (YOIs), Secure Training Centres (STCs) and Secure Children's Homes (SCH) (for more info see Table 1 in POSTnote 524 on Education in Youth Custody). |
| Local Authorities (LAs) | LAs have responsibility for local education and accommodation strategies. |
| Youth Offending Teams (YOT) | YOTs are part of local councils and aim to reduce the level of offending by children. They are made up of various services including police, probation officers, youth workers and social workers, schools and education authorities, charities and the local community. They are overseen by YJBs. |
| Youth Offending Panels (YOP) | YOPs consist of volunteers from the local community and one or more member of the YOTs. They work with young offenders, their parents and carers and victims of crime to support the young person to repair some of the harm caused and to reduce the risk of further offending. |
| Education providers | Includes schools, academies, colleges, and a range of commercial and charitable providers. |
| Other service providers | Includes a range of public, private, and third sectors bodies involved in service delivery of social care, health, substance misuse, and housing. |

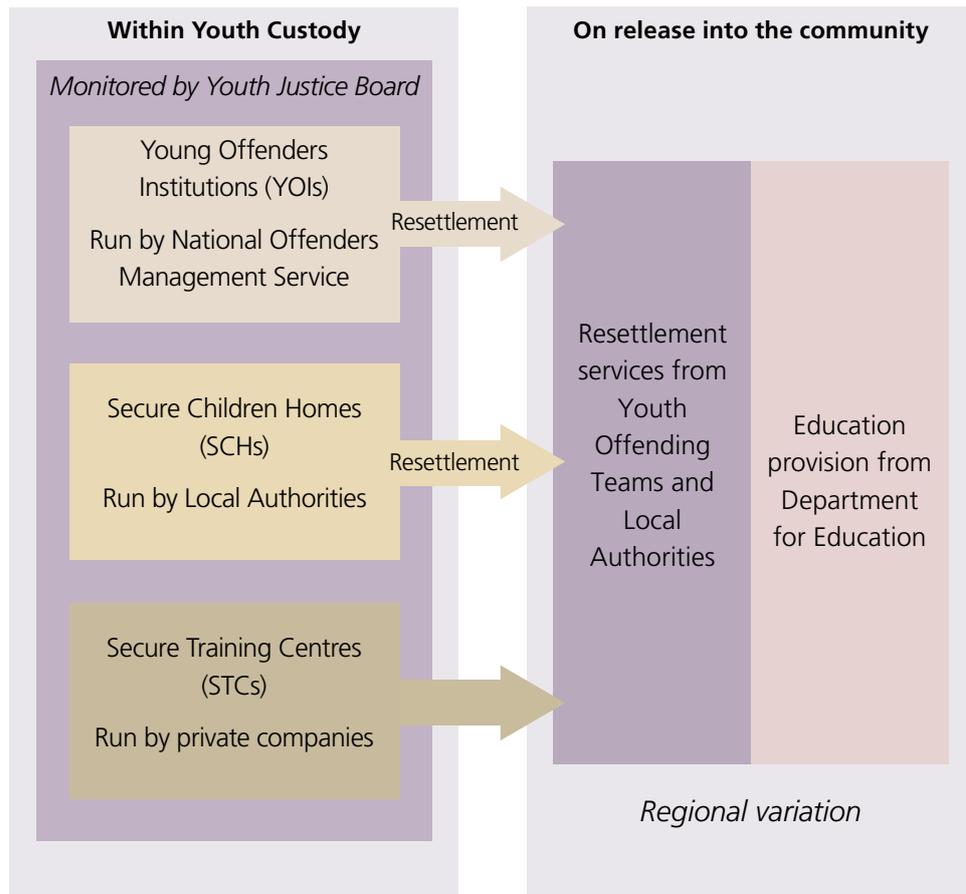


Figure 1. A simplified diagram of responsibility for resettlement services in youth custody and for resettlement and education services on release

Key factors affecting engagement with education in resettlement

Providing education in resettlement can be challenging because of the number of organisations involved in planning and providing education on release (see Table 1), as well as the complex needs of children in youth custody. A wide body of literature, including inspection reports and small-scale studies, suggests that there are six key factors that affect whether children are likely to engage in education or training, summarised below.

Involvement of the child in plans for their release

All children in custody have a training plan developed and monitored during their custody. Some academic research suggests that children are more likely to engage with education and training on release if they are involved in developing plans for their education as part of this training plan and if they perceive these plans to be relevant to their future aspirations.⁷ However, inspection reports

7. Little, R. (2015). *Participation and Practise in Youth Justice*. *Eurovista* 3 (3).

have shown that in some Young Offenders Institutions (YOIs), children did not have their own copy of their training plan or their targets related to education, learning and skills.^{8,9} Further, while targets may be discussed with children, in one study 41% of the children (total sample 61) could not recall their targets and less than half felt they had a say in what these targets should be.¹⁰ Targets were also rarely found to be related to the child's future plans.⁹ If children are not aware of their targets related to education, learning and skills, or cannot see the relevance of these to their future plans, this may limit their motivation to engage in the resettlement process.^{8,9} It also raises questions about the usefulness of setting targets around education, learning and skills.¹⁰ However, these issues are not common to all types of youth custody establishment; Ofsted reports that overall, resettlement work is good within Secure Training Centres (STCs) and Secure Children's Home (SCHs), with training plans well supported in SCHs.^{11,12,13}

Effective multi-agency working

Academics have argued that a unified response to planning and delivering resettlement from the organisations involved would increase the chances of getting children back into mainstream education.^{14,15} This includes the Youth Justice Board (YJB), Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), Youth Offending Panels (YOPs), schools, and mainstream education authorities (see Table 1). Ofsted has criticised the poor relationships between YOIs, external agencies and education providers. It has also criticised the fact that resettlement planning meetings in YOIs are not multidisciplinary.⁸ However, this varies between types of youth custody establishments, and Ofsted reports good working relationships with local authorities, external agencies and employment providers in STCs and SCHs.^{16,17,18,19}

Resettlement consortia, supported by the YJB, have been established to bring together local services and custodial establishments to enhance effective multi-agency working, especially within the planning stages of a child's release (see Box 1).⁶ Following successful pilots in the South West, North West and Wessex in 2012, resettlement consortia have been rolled out across regions including North East London, South London, South West Yorkshire, East Midlands, and South East and Southern Wales, but have not yet been evaluated.⁶

8. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. (2014). [An Unannounced Inspection of Keppel Unit HMYOI Wetherby](#).

9. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. (2015). [An Unannounced Inspection of HMYOI Feltham \(children and young people\)](#).

10. Cripps, H. & Summerfield, A. (2011). 'Resettlement Provision for Children and Young People' and 'The Care of Looked After Children in Custody': Findings from two inspectorate thematic reviews. *Prison Service Journal*, 201, 31-38.

11. Redwood A. (2015). [Children and Young People in Custody 2014-15](#). Youth Justice Board and HM Inspectorate of Prisons.

12. Ofsted. (2015). [Children's Home Inspection – Full](#). URN SC035648.

13. Ofsted. (2015). [Children's Home Inspection – Full](#). URN SC035500.

14. Ball C. & Connolly J. (2000). [Educationally Disaffected Young Offenders](#). *British Journal of Criminology*, 40(4), 594-616.

15. Hazel, N., Liddle, M. & Gordon, F. (2010). [Key Lessons from the Reset Programme: Executive summary](#). *Catch 22*.

16. Ofsted. (2014). [Inspections of Secure Training Centres: Inspection of Oakhill Secure Training Centre](#).

17. Ofsted. (2014). [Inspections of Secure Training Centres: Inspection of Hassockfield Secure Training Centre](#).

18. Ofsted. (2015). [Children's Home Inspection – Full](#). URN SC033457.

19. Ofsted. (2015). [Inspections of Secure Training Centres: Inspection of Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre](#).

Need for accommodation to secure an education and training placement

Education and training placements for a child cannot be found until the child knows where they are going to live.⁶ However, 2014/15 HMIP reports of YOIs indicated that “some” children did not know where they were going to be living until 48 hours before their release.^{16,22,23} One Ofsted report of a STC in 2014 found that because of inadequate accommodation arrangements, 28% of children released did not have an education, training, or employment placement.¹⁶

YOIs and STCs have reported challenges in finding suitable accommodation for children on release, even where considerable efforts have been made by staff, accommodation has been discussed in planning meetings from an early stage and good working relationships existed with outside agencies.^{16,24} Difficulties in securing accommodation have been attributed to a lack of local authority accommodation, and difficulties placing children who have committed certain types of crimes, such as sexual offences, or who have a negative reputation from previous placements.¹⁰ Because youth custody establishments do not collect data on accommodation after release, it is not known whether the accommodation provided is suitable or provides a long term solution.¹⁰

Box 1: Resettlement consortia within Young Offender Institutes

Some YOIs have established projects to assist with the resettlement process.²⁰ Projects can have practical aims, such as encouraging external employers to work with the children while they are still in custody. Other projects have aimed to enhance multi-agency working and have embedded project workers within custody to facilitate partnership building or to work directly with children on their resettlement plans.³

One example is the RESET (resettlement, education, support, employment and training) programme. This was an experimental resettlement project run by a large consortium led by the charity Catch22 (formerly Rainer) from 2005 to 2007, funded by the European Commission. The RESET project aimed to support those under 18 on detention and training orders during and after their sentences. It trialed a variety of approaches, including using a RESET worker to work with each child from their entry to custody to their release and through their resettlement. It also trialed using a RESET worker to coordinate multi-agency resettlement support. One aspect of RESET’s work was to help the child gain an appropriate education or training placement. An independent evaluation of the RESET project found it was successful in a number of aspects, including building stronger links between service providers. However, it found that education, training, and employment activities were limited by poor information flow between institution and resettlement workers. It made a number of recommendations for future projects or policy, including that information about work done in custody, such as education or training, should be passed to the community in advance of release.²¹

20. Youth Justice Board. (2006). *RAP Guidance* London: Youth Justice Board.

21. Hazel, N., Liddle, M., and Gordon, F. (2010). [Key lessons from the RESET programme.](#)

22. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. (2015). [An Unannounced Inspection of Keppel Unit HMYOI Wetherby.](#)

23. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. (2014). [An Unannounced Inspection of Juvenile Unit at HMYOI Werrington.](#)

24. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. (2014). [An Unannounced Inspection of Juvenile Unit at HMYOI Parc.](#)

Perception of offenders by mainstream education providers

Research indicates that mainstream education providers may be reluctant to accept children from youth custody establishments, especially when the provider has to pay to register children for end of year exams. This reluctance is based on a number of negative perceptions of young people leaving youth custody. Risks perceived by mainstream education providers include potential disruption to the learning of other children, potential harm to other children, and to the institution's performance record if the child does not complete the course.²⁵ This perception can make negotiating an educational or training placement for the child challenging.^{6,25,26} Fixed start dates for courses and exams in mainstream education and training courses can make access difficult for children leaving custody, as they can be released at any time of the year. It can also be very difficult for a child to start a placement mid-way when social networks have already been built.²⁵

Education not perceived as positive by the child

The YJB asked 50 children who had been in the youth justice system what they thought the main barriers were to engaging in education and training on release. They identified three key issues: a sense of lack of achievement (compared to peers), bullying, and difficult relationships with teachers.²⁶

The YJB also found "dubious practices" that limited the amount of time the child spent in education.²⁶ For example, some schools were found to be using informal exclusions or inappropriate study-leave. They also found local education authorities had a lack of capacity to provide alternative education options for children leaving custody, such as a placement at a pupil referral unit (PRU) or alternative provision academy (PRUs that convert to academy status). Research suggests that these barriers and practices can mean that children's expectations are not met on release. This can lead to disengagement, loss of confidence in the system and in themselves, and reduced willingness to persevere with education.²⁵

Additional needs of the child not addressed on release

Children within the youth custody population have a higher prevalence of educational, mental health, language and communication, and neurodisability problems than the general population (see Table 2).²⁷ Joint inspections by HMIP, CQC, and Ofsted, found that over two thirds of children in custody with mental or emotional health needs showed no improvement when they left custody.⁶ As such, extra support may be required for these children to engage in education and training on release.

Some children may have an education health care plan (EHCP, formerly known

25. Lanskey, C. (2015). Up or down and out? [A systematic analysis of young people's educational pathways in the youth justice system in England and Wales](#). *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 19 (6) 568-582.

26. Youth Justice Board. (2006). [Barriers to Engagement](#). B259.

27. The Offender Health Research Network. (2015). [CHAT Final Report](#).

as a statement of educational needs) that sets out what support the child is entitled to because of their needs. This may pre-date their sentence or have been drawn up while the child was in youth custody. There is a lack of data on whether continuous support for these needs is provided in educational and training placements, or whether it meets the needs of the child.²⁸ However, one specialist project has successfully provided continuous support to adult prisoners who suffer from traumatic brain injury (see Box 2), which may be of relevance to children.²⁹

Table 2: Prevalence of mental and emotional health problems in children within youth custody compared to the prevalence in general population

| <i>Mental health and emotional needs</i> | <i>Prevalence in youth custody population (10-17 years)</i> | <i>Prevalence in general population (5-16 years)</i> |
|--|---|--|
| Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder ³⁰ | 30% | 6% |
| Learning Disability ^{31,32} | 20% | 2-3% |
| Borderline ³² | 30% | NK ^b |
| Dyslexia ³³ | 43-57% | 10% |
| Speech, language, and communication needs ^{32,34} | 60% | 5-14% |
| Traumatic brain injury ³⁵ | 50-80% | 10% |
| PTSD | 10% ³⁰ | |
| Psychotic symptoms | 5% ³² | 10% ^{36,c} |
| De[ression | 10-19% ³⁵ | |

a. Prevalence statistics are for 10-17 years in youth custody population, and 5-16 years in general population as no directly comparable statistics are available.

b. No estimates for borderline learning disability in the general population aged 5-16 years are available.

c. No separate prevalence rates for PTSD, psychotic symptoms and depression are available for the general population aged 5-16 years, so statistics for mental health disorders overall have been presented.

Research indicates that children belonging to certain groups, such as girls, and children from black and minority ethnic groups (BME), may also require extra support to engage with education on release. Girls comprise around 4% of the youth custody population and are more likely to have experienced physical or sexual abuse or domestic violence than boys.^{37,38} BME children make up

28. Council for Disabled Children. (2014). [Young offenders with special education needs: A new legal framework](#).

29. The Disabilities Trust Foundation. (2015). [Brain Injury Link worker Report](#).

30. British Psychological Society. (2015). [Children and Young People with Neurodisabilities in the Criminal Justice System. Position Paper](#). Working Group of the Professional Practice Board on Neurodisability and Crime.

31. Hughes, N. et al. (2012). [Nobody Made the Connection: The prevalence of neurodisability in young people who offend](#). The Children's Commissioner.

32. Chitsabesan, P. et al. (2006). [Mental Health Needs of Young Offenders in Custody and in the Community](#). British Journal of Psychiatry, 188, 534-548.

33. Hughes, N. (2015). [Neurodisability in the Youth Justice System: recognising and responding to the criminalisation of neurodevelopmental impairment](#). Howard League What is Justice? Working Papers 17/2015.

34. Bryan, K., Freer, J. & Furlong, C. (2007). [Language and Communication Difficulties in Juvenile Offenders](#). International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders, 42 (5), 505-510.

35. Williams, H. (2015). [Repairing Shattered Lives: Brain injury and its implications for criminal justice](#). Barrow Cadbury Trust.

36. CMO. (2014). [Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2013](#). Public Mental Health Priorities: Investing in the Evidence. Department of Health.

37. Hazel, N. & Liddle, M. (2012). [Resettlement in England and Wales: Key policy and practise messages](#). Youth Justice Board.

38. Beyond Youth Custody. (2015). [Resettlement of Girls and Young Women](#). National Lottery Funded.

approximately 45% of the youth custody population.⁴⁰ They are also less likely to have their social, educational, and health needs met within youth custody than White children.⁴¹

Box 2: Example of continuous care for adult prisoners with traumatic brain injury

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) affects a person's ability to follow rules as well as their concentration, inhibition and memory. It also impacts on other skills that determine their capacity to engage with and benefit from education.^{33,35} A trial was run at Wetherby and Hindley YOI to evaluate the effectiveness of a 'link worker service' for adult male offenders with TBI. Link workers helped offenders to address problems resulting from their TBI, including sleep problems, anger management and memory loss, as well as the challenging behaviours that may have led to criminal activity. The link workers also assisted the adults in engaging with education, and provided continuing care after release. Evaluation of the service is yet to be published and this service has not been trialled with children. However, interim evaluations indicate that it is likely to be effective and that it benefits both the brain-injured adult and service providers.²⁹ An expert at Exeter University has suggested that the link worker model of support could be applied to support prisoners with other mental health needs and neurodisabilities such as depression, or language and communication needs.³⁹

Future directions for education provision in resettlement

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice commissioned a review of the youth justice system in 2015.⁴² In February 2016, an interim report was published.⁴³ It suggested that YOIs and STCs could be replaced by secure schools with closer ties to education and other community services, with a view to improve resettlement and access to education and training on release. It suggested that these schools would give greater opportunities, where appropriate, for children to attend education and training in the community prior to their release, in order to facilitate their re-integration into society. Comments from the YJB and Prisoners Education Trust about the review were generally positive, although they did not focus on particular proposals about education in resettlement.^{44,45} The full review was expected in July 2016 but has been delayed.

39. Personal Correspondence with Professor Huw Williams, Associate Professor of Clinical Neuropsychology and Co-Director of the Centre for Clinical Neuropsychology Research, Exeter University.

40. Youth Justice Board. (2016). [Youth Custody Data](#) (April 2016).

41. Beyond Youth Custody. (2015) [Ethnicity, Faith and Culture in Resettlement: A practitioner's guide](#). National Lottery Funded.

42. Ministry of Justice. (2015). [Review of the Youth Justice System: Terms of reference](#).

43. Ministry of Justice. (2016). [Review of the Youth Justice System: An Interim report of emerging findings](#).

44. Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. (2016). [Press Release 09.02.16: Response to interim report of emerging findings from the youth justice review](#).

45. Prisoners' Education Trust. (2016). News, 09.02.16. [Prisoners' Education Trust hails Charlie Taylor's vision of smaller, more local 'secure schools'](#).