



Resettlement Support Panels

Guidance



Llywodraeth Cymru
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Youth Justice Board
Bwrdd Cyfiawnder Ieuencid

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Guidance Objectives

The objectives of this guidance are to:

- Provide a framework that enables youth offending teams to operate RSP in line with lessons learned from the pilot and independent evaluation; and
- Share emerging practice that has developed based on findings from the pilot and independent evaluation.

Background

The All Wales Youth Offending Strategy Delivery Plan 2009-11

The All Wales Youth Offending Strategy (AWYOS) and its subsequent delivery plan, 2009-11 set out priorities for the Youth Justice Board and Welsh Government for the provision of youth justice services in Wales. Safe use of custody where required and effective resettlement made up priority three and reducing re-offending made up priority two. In pursuit of reductions in re-offending and the use of custodial sentences the delivery plan committed the YJB and Welsh Government to encourage the expansion of resettlement programmes across Wales.

The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) made additional funding available in July 2009 to expand resettlement for young people leaving custody in selected areas of Wales. This was distinct from and in addition to the four areas already receiving funding for Integrated Resettlement Support (formerly RAP).

Building on the lessons learned from Youth Inclusion and Support Panels¹ and Resettlement and Aftercare Programmes², the YJB, supported by the Welsh Government decided to pilot a new approach to tackle the problems faced by young people receiving a custodial sentence. Resettlement Support Panels (RSPs) aim to ensure that all young people at risk of or coming out of custody are given the best possible help in a coordinated way to enable them to lead crime free lives. This approach is a low cost locally sustainable option that can be integrated with existing frameworks throughout local authorities.

RSPs are strategic oversight bodies, supported by dedicated resettlement support workers. They are intended to improve multi-agency involvement in:

- Developing packages of support to assist resettlement;
- overseeing delivery of resettlement support plans;
- facilitating continuity of care and transition strategies from sentence to voluntary aftercare;
- facilitating information sharing between agencies;
- improving partnership working to make the optimum range of service provision available to offer robust community alternatives to sentencers; and
- reviewing the effectiveness of local service provision for those who have received custodial sentences in order to determine how systems could have been better deployed and what support could have been offered by partners to avoid a custodial sentence.

The approach was piloted in six YOTs across nine local authorities and independently evaluated by the National Foundation of Educational Research (NFER)³. Each area agreed with the YJB, a proposal for the design and delivery of the RSP. The intention of the pilot methodology was not to issue overly prescriptive guidance but to allow each YOT to develop a distinctive approach that would suit local needs and objectives.

¹ Walker, J. Thompson, C. Laing, K et al (2007) *Youth Inclusion Support Panels; preventing crime and antisocial behaviour*. Newcastle; Institute of Health and Society.

² Galahad SMS Ltd (2010) *Evaluation of Resettlement Aftercare Programmes*. London; YJB.

³ Phillips, L. and Smith, R et al (2012) *Evaluation of the YJB Resettlement Support Panel scheme*. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

Research and experience

The approach that has been taken is based upon the Youth Inclusion and Support Panel (YISP) methodology. YISPs were intended to act as a focal point for multi-agency support of those at risk of offending. This is achieved by panel ratification, oversight and review of an individual support plan (ISP). The essential quality of a successful YISP is that YOT involvement in service delivery is kept to a minimum, with the majority of interventions offered by universal and statutory services. The most effective YISPs use key-workers as the panel's representative to drive the successful delivery of a multi-agency plan. The key-worker's role is to broker and facilitate the provision of interventions set out in the ISP and to act as a mentor and advocate for the children and their family, including a mediation role where relationships between the family and statutory service providers are at risk.

Among the most compelling reasons for taking this approach with those leaving custody were:

- The relatively low cost of providing a service that is predominantly aimed at co-ordinating access to partnership resources;
- the prior existence of suitable panels, such as YISPs in many areas of Wales which would enable existing infrastructure to be capitalised upon;
- the benefits of holding partners to account for delivering services to those who are often marginalised and excluded from the mainstream; and
- the essential role that effective multi-agency co-ordination and information sharing has for ensuring that the point of release is not a trigger point for a return to harmful behaviours.

Initially, there were concerns from some pilot areas that using existing YISPs or other prevention panels as the basis for the RSP approach might not be appropriate due to the profile of young people at the polar ends of the system being fundamentally different. However, experience from the pilot suggests there is no need to be overly cautious when applying this approach to those who have offended and are in need of resettlement support. It is the core operational components of the model that are demonstrated as the key success factors. Findings from the RSP evaluation have shown that it is equally viable to set up a new panel or integrate resettlement support into existing multi-agency panels in the locality. This will be dependent on existing frameworks within local authorities and the priorities that are identified by them.

Findings from the evaluation of RSP

Areas that intend to establish a RSP are advised to take note of the following lessons learned from the independent evaluation of the pilot of RSPs.

In 2012 the Welsh Government published research into Resettlement Support Panels undertaken between 2009 and 2011. The evaluation was intended to focus on the process of setting up a RSP and whether access to mainstream services had been improved. It was found that RSP provided a good means by which local systems of multi-agency collaboration could be formalised which resulted in;

- Improved information sharing;
- improved co-ordination of service provision;
- improved communication and planning between the secure estate and community-based services;
- improved access to mainstream services for young people and families; and
- higher levels of accountability on the part of collaborating agencies.

The evidence suggests that each RSP was set-up and perceived to respond to local needs but that no model operated entirely free of any difficulty. The benefits of pursuing this model

is that it encourages other agencies to take greater responsibility in addressing the resettlement needs of young people and improving inter-agency collaboration. Effective resettlement panels are able to determine how services should be aligned and prioritised in order to make the best use of existing provision. Panels are also able to act as a central point for the joint commissioning of support services. Similar to findings from the YISP evaluation the most effective RSPs had dedicated resettlement workers who had taken an active role in developing supportive relationships with young people. The role of the resettlement worker included; encouraging young people to take ownership of their resettlement plans, providing advocacy, brokering agency co-operation and sign-posting services and mediating between the young person and his or her parents/carers when relationships had broken down.

Barriers that were encountered when setting-up and agreeing the function of the RSP were mostly due to the varying levels of engagement by partner agencies. Essentially this was due to historic levels of engagement with the YOT, the attitudes of senior representatives and capacity issues within agencies. When considering establishing a new panel it is essential to scope existing arrangements within the local authority. Often, the same young people and their families will be discussed within a number of multi-agency meetings. In this instance, arrangements can be made to integrate resettlement into an existing framework. This will have the benefit of reducing the burden on resources.

In summary the success factors drawn from the independent evaluation of RSP are:

- A model that is relatively low-cost and therefore sustainable.
- multi-agency partnerships which are effective at both the strategic and the service delivery levels;
- improved relationships between secure and community-based services that enable better information sharing, planning and co-ordination in end-to-end case management and resettlement;
- increased responsibility taken on by partner agencies with resettlement being no longer seen as only the responsibility of the YOT;
- it is an effective way of holding agencies to account through a local escalation procedure;
- partnerships are able to identify gaps in provision and are able to find local solutions to overcome barriers;
- partnerships are able to develop bespoke packages of support at the pre-sentence stage to offer robust alternatives to custody;
- linking rigorous assessment to the development of integrated support plans so that interventions are targeted at addressing factors associated with offending and promoting resilience;
- the approach to resettlement planning being flexible to meet the changing needs of young people;
- having a resettlement support plan in place that can be monitored and reviewed with the young person and by the panel which does not allow cases to drift;
- promoting effective engagement through the development of supportive relationships between the case responsible officer and the resettlement worker with the young person and his or her parents/carers;
- it is a model that improves engagement between young people and service providers;
- developing and agreeing coherent exit strategies to ensure families receive continuing support as necessary; and
- securing the participation and commitment of children, young people and their families at all stages in the RSP process.

Findings have shown that areas with established and fully functioning RSPs have made a contribution to preventing recall on licence, breach of intensive community sentences and further offending that may result in re-imprisonment. When young people did go on to re-offend the gravity of the offence was significantly less. Whilst it was acknowledged by most interviewed during the pilot that these reductions were not solely due to the work carried out by the RSP there was widespread acceptance that it had made a significant contribution.

Outcomes for young people would not have been achieved to the same extent if the RSP had not been in place.

Improved outcomes through engagement with the RSP include;

- improved support to seek help for substance misuse problems and a reduction in substance misuse issues;
- improved relationships with families and peers;
- new and more positive leisure interests developed;
- securing safe and appropriate accommodation on release from custody;
- securing places in colleges or with training providers, or entering paid employment;
- young people having increased self-esteem and self-confidence to engage in opportunities made available to them.

Resettlement support is considered supplementary and complementary to the statutory requirements of a sentence. What is significant from the evaluation findings is the opportunity that is available through adopting this approach to improve outcomes for young people across the seven youth resettlement pathways identified in *'youth resettlement, a framework for action'*⁴. Pathways include;

- Case Management and transitions
- Accommodation
- Education, Training and Employment
- Health
- Substance misuse
- Families
- Finance, benefits and debt

From the outset two of the pilot areas opted to include a review function as part of the panel's responsibility which subsequently led to fundamental changes in the way resettlement work was carried out. One of the areas was also in a position to develop bespoke support packages as an alternative to custody. It is envisaged that improved partnership working with regard to the provision of resettlement support at the pre-sentence stage will be able contribute to a reduction in the use of custody in the first place.

⁴ YJB (2006) *'Youth resettlement; a framework for action'*. London; YJB. *The framework is also recognised in HMIP (June, 2011) Thematic report by HM Inspectorate of Prisons; resettlement provision for children and young people.* HMIP

Organisational Guidance

This section provides guidance on the establishment, organisation and management of Resettlement Support Panels.

Structure

In common with all effective youth justice services, RSP should have clear governance lines to local strategic partnerships including the Children and Young People's Partnership, the Community Safety Partnership, the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Local Criminal Justice Board, where they exist.

While RSP personnel themselves will usually be line managed through the YOT and panels may be chaired by YOT managers, RSP should not be seen by partners as a delivery mechanism for services that should be provided by statutory agencies. It is for this reason that the multi-agency panel is such an essential aspect of the RSP.

The following are core operational components of RSP:

- A multi-agency panel made up of officers with sufficient seniority to commit resources to resettlement support plans,
- One manager with operational accountability to the YOT partnership and the Panel for the delivery of RSP,
- Named resettlement support worker(s) with responsibility for oversight of resettlement support plans for individual young people,
- Clear information sharing protocols,
- A review function that focuses on the effectiveness of the panel and monitors whether outcomes for young people are being improved.

Performance Management

During the pilot it was found beneficial by the areas to use their case management systems to monitor whether schemes were operating effectively. By doing so, YOTs are able to monitor the number of young people engaged in resettlement support. Resettlement support is considered supplementary to statutory requirements therefore it is beneficial to record this activity on a separate intervention screen.

Operational Guidance

Providing a resettlement package to all young people leaving custody is crucial to ensure continuity of care and effective supervision. It will enable many more young people to receive resettlement services and will contribute towards reducing reoffending. In order to provide the services to a wider group, a multi-agency approach is vital.

The objective of RSP is to co-ordinate multi-agency support for the resettlement of this group of young people in order to reduce the risk of reoffending, for example through:

- Addressing specific needs and behaviours that may increase a young person's vulnerability such as substance misuse issues, mental health concerns and those surrounding accommodation, education, training and employment;
- Providing the opportunity for young people to develop consistent relationships with supportive adults who can provide practical guidance and support;
- working with parents, carers, families and peers;
- developing better use of leisure time by identifying, accessing and participating in positive leisure pursuits; and

- developing life skills, budget management, healthy living, and diet, and improve self-esteem and confidence to make positive decisions.

Role and Composition of the Panel

The role of the panel is to oversee the agreement and implementation of resettlement support plans and to commit resources to the plan on behalf of their agencies. Furthermore, the panel should review the delivery of plans and the outcomes for children and young people engaged by RSP. In addition two of the pilots, decided to establish an enhanced review function for the panel, whereby past and current custody cases are examined to determine if local processes and services might have been better deployed in order to offer a credible community-based alternative.

The panel should be composed of members of all the agencies relevant to the successful resettlement of children and young people following a period in custody or a high intensity community sentence. They should be of sufficient seniority to enable them to commit resources on behalf of their organisations. The core partners should be:

- Social Services
- Education
- Health (CAMHS are of particular relevance)
- Police
- Housing and housing providers
- Careers
- YOT
- The secure estate (where possible)
- Youth Services
- Voluntary organisations

The possibilities for inclusion of the secure estate in the panel should be rigorously pursued as this has proved beneficial in the pilot sites that chose to include the secure estate as panel members. Where distance is a barrier to attendance by representatives from secure providers, serious consideration should be given to use of video conferencing where available.

Enhanced review function

RSPs that chose to adopt an enhanced review function were able to identify barriers to effective resettlement and could adapt strategic and operational arrangements to respond to individual needs. One area was able to recognise the benefits of using this approach at the pre-sentence stage. They were in a position to provide comprehensive support packages that on a number of occasions gave sentencers sufficient confidence to impose a community sentence as an alternative to custody.

Even though only two of the areas from the outset made it explicit that they would establish an enhanced review function, most of the areas carried out internal reviews of the RSP subsequently leading to improved changes in how they operated and engaged with young people.

Case oversight and the role of the RSP Worker

During the pilot it was found beneficial by most areas to have a dedicated RSP worker or other named lead professional to take responsibility for overseeing and driving the delivery of resettlement support plans for each young person from when they enter custody, through and beyond the end of their sentence. This function is recognised as a core component of the RSP approach. Findings from the evaluation have shown that the recruitment of resettlement workers has led to marked improvements in the engagement of young people with the statutory requirements of their sentence and engagement with mainstream provision.

The lead professional should develop a resettlement support plan once the young person enters custody, which will identify the resources required to enable a young person to successfully resettle. This plan should be developed with the young person their parent/carer and any professionals already involved. It should be approved by the panel and regularly reviewed.

The provision of resettlement support is additional and complementary to the requirements of the statutory order. When young people disengage from their resettlement plans it is often due to them viewing the provision as an extension to the youth offending team and the statutory order. Evidence from the pilot suggests it is essential to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of resettlement workers and for young people to be helped to understand the difference between the statutory order and voluntary support. Young people should be made aware of their universal rights and entitlements and workers should seek to overcome barriers in re-engaging young people with mainstream services. In addition, findings from the evaluation suggest that using mentors and sessional workers to provide day-to-day support also leads to an improvement in engagement. Providing practical and emotional support, acting as a positive role model and supporting young people to access mainstream services are key activities of a mentor⁵.

Encouraging engagement

Young people who offend are often difficult to engage, with a history of failed attempts to do so by mainstream services. RSPs will need a clear approach towards encouraging young people to participate in line with article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Learning from the evaluation suggests that:

- Support plans should be tailored to meet individual needs/preferences; and
- a sense of ownership can be conveyed to the young person by consulting with them and encouraging participation in the design and goals of resettlement support plans.

RSP staff should refer to the YJB Key Elements of Effective Practice (engaging young people who offend) and Nacro Cymru's *Youth justice and participation in Wales*⁶ when developing and reviewing practices and approaches to working with young people.

What if a young person refuses RSP?

RSPs should have a process in place for when a young person refuses support – this should include offering the opportunity to engage again at a later date. Resettlement workers should arrange to see the young person soon after sentencing and offer support. A young person, who is offered the provision just after being sentenced to custody, and refuses to engage, should be offered the service again before they are released from custody, and again when they are serving the community part of the sentence. Learning from YISP and the subsequent pilot and evaluation of RSP has shown that persistent and tenacious attempts to engage hard

⁵ For further evidence-based findings on mentoring see, Holton, D. (2007) *'Dancing Through The Gaps: the External Evaluation Of The Welsh Government Personal Support In Custody Pilot Project'*. Welsh Government.

⁶ <http://www.nacro.org.uk/data/files/youth-justice-in-wales09-746.pdf>

to reach young people are important when attempting to gain the trust of those that may have become used to being disengaged from mainstream services.

Eligibility

Often children and young people in custody come from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and present with a myriad of complex problems. Re-offending is particularly high with 69.7% of young people sentenced to custody going on to re-offend within one year of release.⁷ Resettlement and reintegration on release from custody is particularly difficult as most children and young people are seldom integrated in the first place. During the pilot it was recommended that RSP is made available to all young people recommended for or receiving custodial sentences and who had additional resettlement needs. In addition, from the outset some YOTs chose to offer resettlement support to those young people in the intensive cohort of the Scaled Approach. As other panels became more firmly established they too extended the offer of resettlement support to young people serving community sentences. It is widely accepted that those young people at high risk of further offending if left unsupported should be eligible to be offered RSP.

RSPs should be able to address needs such as accommodation, education, training and employment, substance misuse; mental health and support for families, all of which evidence shows are key to effective resettlement and prevention of re-offending. This enables a more holistic approach to resettlement.

When considering the use of this approach two main principles apply:

- RSP contact is voluntary and should complement statutory requirements; and
- RSP is best used to provide additional support to enable young people to access their universal entitlements or specialist provision.

Timing of referral to panel

Evidence from the pilot suggests, depending on the workload of the RSP, referral can be made at a number of points:

- When custody is considered in the PSR
- on sentence to custody;
- on remand to custody; and
- when young person nearing the end of a community disposal is identified as being at high risk of custody on further offending if left unsupported.

Evidence from the pilot suggests that, while local decisions need to be taken with regard to the appropriate time for referral to panel, areas choosing to pursue this methodology should aim to refer at the earliest stage possible. This decision will often be based on a number of factors, but is particularly dependent on the level of strategic and operational links that have been established in the locality. One area in particular during the early days of the pilot referred only those who were due for release from custody to the panel. By the end of the pilot those serving community sentences were also eligible and the panel were in a position to consider offering RSP at the PSR stage. It is envisaged that offering robust and credible resettlement support at this stage may allow sentencers to more confidently use community alternatives rather than custodial sentences where appropriate. One case study area was able to demonstrate a number of examples where robust resettlement support packages put in place at the PSR stage were the deciding factor in young people receiving community sentences as an alternative to custody.

During the course of statutory involvement the resettlement plan should form part of assessment-led intervention planning, it would also be beneficial for this to be extended to cover voluntary engagement beyond this period. Once the statutory order has ended the duration of resettlement support should be a joint decision between the young person and his

⁷ YJB/MOJ (2012) *Youth Justice Statistics 2010/11; England and Wales*. YJB/MOJ.

or her family or carer and the responsible resettlement worker. Evidence from the pilot suggests that there is no specific time frame for support to continue. The decision to cease engagement is best agreed by the young person and his or her parent/carer with the resettlement worker. Every attempt should be made to help young people to access appropriate support services that can be maintained beyond their engagement with RSP and the YOT.

Visiting young people in custody

The resettlement planning process should aim to begin at least as soon as the young person has been sentenced to a custodial sentence. If custody has been recognised or recommended as an option for sentencers in the pre-sentence report; planning could start earlier.

Maintaining links with the secure estate

As well as encouraging secure providers to participate in panel meetings wherever possible, joint working with the secure estate as part of case oversight is critical to the success of the RSP. It is important for secure estate staff to maintain contact with the youth offending team once the young person is serving the community part of their sentence. Often, young people in custody develop important relationships with their key worker which stops at the point of release. The RSP pilot has highlighted many benefits in developing greater integrated working between a secure establishment and a YOT. For instance, key workers from a secure establishment visiting young people serving the community element of a detention and training order has been observed to improve engagement. As a result the main secure provider in South Wales has decided to develop a Mentoring project that will support young people during their time in custody and the transition through 'the gates' back into the community.

Involvement of parents/carers and families

The involvement of parents/carers is critical throughout all stages of RSP. Where appropriate, families should be engaged and involved in planning as early as possible. Ways of engaging parents/carers include:

- Starting to work with parents/carers first, in cases where the young person is unwilling to engage at the outset by supporting parent/carer visits to custody;
- promoting family contact whilst in custody;
- involving parents/carers in developing resettlement support plans, and obtaining their agreement to specific activities.; and
- linking with other parental interventions in the YOT, local authority and other providers

Balancing statutory supervision and voluntary resettlement work

The YOT provides a supervising officer for every young person subject to a statutory order; RSP provision is supplementary and should complement this statutory role. In some YOTs there may be an overlap of staffing: for example the RSP service may be managed by the supervising officer. However, even if there is an overlap, it is advised that the following role delineation is in place:

- The supervising officer remains responsible for the full range of activities and interventions specified for a young person under orders of the court;
- RSP resources should not be used as a holding facility to cover short-term gaps in case management; and
- There should be clear managerial guidance that sets out the relationship between RSP and supervising officers, and also other key resources (such as the YOT substance misuse workers).

Risk Management

Supervising officers must retain overall responsibility for risk assessment and management, including child protection and mental health aspects. When necessary, supervising officers also retain responsibility for enacting breach proceedings. RSP should contribute to these processes through local arrangements, and highlight any issues arising during involvement with a young person.

Community element of RSP

Resettlement schemes should endeavour to ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place to meet/collect the young person on release. RAP and IRS has shown the benefit of putting in place arrangements and capacity to collect young people and undertake a face-to-face meeting with the young person on the day of release. Feedback from secure estate staff during the pilot of RSP has also highlighted this as very important.

Young people require intensive support immediately after release from custody. Schemes should consider using mentors to provide additional support. Access to weekend provision should be made available and monitored.

Pilot areas that chose to adopt this approach were able to disrupt some entrenched patterns of offending by developing constructive use of leisure time activities. By using mentors it allows young people to develop trusting relationships with appropriate adults who act as positive role-models.

The level of support should be tailored according to individual needs (as identified when the young person is in custody), for example, using the scaled approach to provide interventions based on risk and need. However, resettlement support plans should be able to offer an appropriate level of supplementary support throughout the licence and beyond, as directed by the panel. Where possible, plans should seek to engage young people in activities and with local services that will, where appropriate, be sustainable beyond the end of the period of RSP involvement.

Aftercare

Learning from the pilot of RSP and the evaluation of RAP have both highlighted the importance of maintaining appropriate support beyond the requirements of a statutory order. The duration of aftercare support will be determined by the young person and the resettlement worker and ratified by the panel. During the pilot the approach to case management beyond the end of a statutory sentence varied across the areas. Essentially it could be grouped into two themes;

- ongoing assessments of a young person's risk of reoffending and their underlying needs, including family factors, to shape the provision they receive. An open and maintained YOT case file;
- the period of aftercare was viewed as an exit strategy and evidenced by the final assessment and review. YOT case files were closed.

The evidence with regard to which approach was more effective is inconclusive; it is recommended that the approach to case management during aftercare be agreed with the young person and coordinated by the panel. Support from the YOT should gradually reduce as support from the most appropriate agencies is identified, accessed and continued engagement is demonstrated by the young person.

What if a young person stops engaging?

The group of young people eligible for RSP may find regular involvement particularly challenging and it is anticipated that some young people may attend sporadically or drop out

for long periods. This does not mean that a case should automatically be closed, young people should be encouraged to participate at every opportunity (see page 10 – engagement).

What if a young person returns to custody while still on RSP?

Some young people on RSP may return to custody, for example, by breaching conditions of their licence, or if they are convicted for other offences. This does not mean a case should be closed. The young person should remain on the RSP caseload until the panel, the young person and his or her family considers that there is no more benefit to be had from engaging with the resettlement plan.

Transition to independence

Transition or exit strategies that disengage young people from support in a sensitive way are as important to their stability as engaging them in the first place. All staff and volunteers should receive training in how to end professional relations with young people positively. Engagement should be ended in a structured way, directly involving the young person in a closure plan. It is crucial that the young person is fully transferred to and engaged with other services/activities in advance of the resettlement support plan ending.

User satisfaction survey

Upon completion of RSP, it is suggested that every young person should complete a user satisfaction exercise, tailored to suit their speech, language and communication needs. This allows schemes to monitor quality and level of support provided as well as encouraging service development and continuous improvement.

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