



# Resettlement in England and Wales: Key Policy and Practice Messages from Research

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# Foreword

Over the past decade, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) and others have fostered a programme of initiatives that has attempted to resolve the complex problems faced by young people coming out of custody. Most of these initiatives have been thoroughly evaluated and so have left a developing legacy of knowledge about what works in helping young people settle back in the community – and, by extension, reduce reoffending. This overview of the research captures the key learning and will be of significant value to all of us who are trying to improve resettlement.

The emerging evidence base has closely informed the development of our resettlement strategy. Working with researchers, the YJB has used the findings and recommendations from each initiative to guide our development of new innovations in effective aftercare. So, the evaluation of Medway Secure Training Centre informed the development guidance for the new Detention and Training Order (DTO). The evaluation of the DTO provided an evidence base for our *Resettlement – A Framework for Action* document and programmes like Resettlement and Aftercare Provision. Lessons from the evaluation of the RESET project, in which the YJB was a partner, directly informed the development of resettlement consortia pilots' emphasis on buy-in from a range of local services.

As a result of this research-informed evolution, we are now much clearer about both the benefits of getting resettlement right, the difficulties that we face in doing so, and what works in overcoming the issues. Consequently, many of the messages contained in this report form integral elements of practice currently being rolled out in resettlement consortia and wider guidance. The more recent learning, largely emanating from evaluations of the YJB's resettlement consortia pilots, is refining our approach further.

I welcome this briefing report as an excellent summary of what we have learned from research over the past decade. It provides clear and constructive messages to inform the way we tackle resettlement in the future. The authors demonstrate that there are many ways in which we can make a clear difference for young people trying to establish a positive lifestyle after custody.

Some of these approaches may be relatively straightforward for practitioners to implement, while others, like closer partnerships with employers, are more challenging at this time. Nevertheless, we know that effective resettlement support can transform lives, helps protect society and saves money. We welcome this guide and its role in helping us to achieve our aims.



**Frances Done**

Chair, Youth Justice Board

October 2012

# Introduction

The Secure Training Order (1998-2000) and, more recently, the Detention and Training Order (2000 to present), introduced and rolled out custodial disposals for young offenders that were served half in custody and half back in the community under supervised licence. This move to custody-community sentences emphasised the importance of resettlement (or 'aftercare') to the risk of a young person reoffending on release from custody. Evaluation reports highlighted how this depended on organisational success or failure in areas such as inter-agency cooperation.

Over the last decade, the YJB and others introduced a series of pilot initiatives and innovations to improve resettlement, most recently the resettlement consortia pilots. This brief report summarises the lessons learnt from evaluations of the full range of disposals and initiatives (see the list at the end of this report). It translates them into recommendations for policy and practice in the organisation and delivery of resettlement support.

## The problem of resettlement

Reoffending rates for young offenders released from custodial establishments are high. Of approximately 4,000 young people sentenced to custody each year, roughly 60–80% will reoffend within 12 months.<sup>1</sup> The evaluations have indicated that reoffending can occur quickly after release, with about a third reoffending within the first month. Moreover, research suggests that some of the youngest offenders, if not given sufficient support, can find themselves in trouble within days or even hours of release. That support, known as 'resettlement' or 'aftercare', is crucial to achieving both better short- and longer-term outcomes for young people who have been sentenced to custody.

However, policymakers have recognised that young people leaving custody are not treated in a consistent way. Although young people being released can be determined to stop offending, they may find themselves let down by promised support not being put in place, often due to difficulties in inter-agency cooperation. Only a minority of those may then go on to actually learn, train or work during the licence period of their sentence. The result can be disillusionment for the young person, possibly leading to reoffending.

## The benefits of effective resettlement

Policy documents have repeatedly highlighted both the importance of effective resettlement and the challenge in making it work on the ground. In February 2006, the YJB published its action plan, *Youth Resettlement: A Framework for Action*, highlighting the need for attention in this area. The *Youth Crime Action*

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<sup>1</sup> Youth Justice Board/Ministry of Justice (2012) *Youth Justice Statistics 2010/11: England and Wales*. London: Ministry of Justice.

*Plan*<sup>2</sup> later reflected the policy support for resettlement by stressing its importance in breaking the cycle of offending. It stressed the need for greater involvement of local authority children's services departments and that adequate plans should be in place prior to release from custody. But as the YJB's Framework noted, delivering effective resettlement provision is "complicated".

However, the rewards of ensuring effective provision go beyond the individual young person and his or her local community. Getting resettlement right could also bring significant financial benefits. Rolling out enhanced resettlement practice with the lessons contained in this report could bring annual savings to the public purse estimated at over £80m.

## **Innovations in aftercare provision in England and Wales**

Over the past decade, the YJB and other national bodies introduced several pilot projects that attempted to address aftercare issues, often trying to build on the learning from the previous initiative. These projects have included:

- the RESET resettlement support programme
- Resettlement and Aftercare Provision
- Integrated Resettlement Support
- resettlement support panels
- the Nacro Resettlement Service Finder
- the YJB/Foyer Foundation partnership providing after-custody accommodation places
- the London Youth Reducing Reoffending Programme (Daedalus)
- resettlement consortia.

The evaluations of these pilot projects, in addition to wider research on youth custody, have built up a considerable knowledge-base of what is important, what works and what does not work in resettlement of young people after custody. This briefing paper draws together that learning and translates it into key messages for policymakers and practitioners.

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<sup>2</sup> HM Government (2008) *Youth Crime Action Plan*. London: Home Office.

# Policy messages

The overall message from research on the resettlement of young offenders over the past 15 years is that reducing reoffending after custody depends upon getting a few key elements right. In essence, resettlement work needs to ensure:

1. a smooth transition from custody to community, including focusing on resettlement throughout a sentence, early preparation for release and effective communication between the custodial establishment and home community
2. a coordinated holistic response to the multiple complex needs of offenders when in the community.

Central to achieving these elements is an emphasis on partnership between agencies. In order to get the key elements right, we need:

- effective cooperation between custodial establishments and community agencies to ensure preparedness for release
- widespread partnership coordination in the community after release to address offenders' multiple needs.

The policy messages from previous research are developed below.

## Ensuring a smooth transition from custody to community

The main custodial disposal, the Detention and Training Order (DTO) is spent half in custody and half on licence back in the community (subject to recall for breach of licence agreement). The intended strength of this type of custody-community sentence is that the intervention provides a continuous programme of support. However, this requires a coordinated approach to work done with the young person, involving both the custodial establishment and community agencies. Key to ensuring the smooth transition of each programme from custody to community is management of the relationship between agencies and effective communication between them. Effective resettlement also depends on the young person being sufficiently prepared for release and support already being set up and ready for them.

### Overall strategic management

- Attention should be paid to trying to fulfil the DTO's intention of a continuous programme of intervention through custody to community. Support and training across both settings should be coordinated by one joint planning team from both custodial and community agencies to ensure continuity of provision and shared ownership.
- Sentence plans should focus on resettlement from the moment the young person enters custody (if not from the pre-sentence report stage). All activity while the young person is in custody should be carried out with a view to resettlement and preparation for release. As such, management of custody

is less about detention and more about working towards what happens on release.

- Resettlement activity is much easier when the young person is placed close to their home. This aids continuity of family relations, coordinating visits by youth offending team (YOT) staff and other agencies, and temporary release to organise accommodation, education, training and employment.
- Effective working between custodial and community agencies is much easier when local professionals are dealing with fewer custodial establishments. Indeed, ideally community agencies in any one area would just need to build a relationship with one establishment – this has shown the best resettlement results. However, since numbers in custody are still substantial, it is recognised that fulfilling this aim along with prioritising placement in smaller localised custodial establishments (which have better reconviction figures) is difficult.
- Communication and planning would be helped by reducing the number of times a young person is transferred between custodial establishments. Both this and placing young people closer to home relies on less secure estate overcrowding.
- Consideration should be given to a case-management role for custodial establishments after release to ensure a smoother transition. At the least, establishments should have a place on community resettlement panels and follow cases into the community.
- Service level agreements with custodial establishments should encourage space for innovation in resettlement. Establishments should not block extra or piloted assistance for young people on the grounds that it may be inequitable to the whole population of the secure establishment.

### **Preparing the young person for release**

- Custodial establishments should emphasise preparing young people for release, focusing on the impact of transition and readjustment. All young people, including those on short courses, should undergo preparation for release ‘training’ that spans their time in custody.
- In order to prepare for education in the community, there needs to be sufficient provision of low-level pre-entry education courses in custody. Young people in custody have typically had poor school attendance and engagement, and substantial numbers will not be able to engage with standard levels of education in the community.
- More extensive use of Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) is key to both preparing the young person for when they leave and setting up provision in the community. ROTL will both help guard against debilitating disorientation when back in the community, and with establishing education, training, employment and accommodation placements through interviews and local meetings.
- Greater use of ROTL requires (a) establishments to replace their focus on risk aversion with recognition of its benefits to reducing reoffending, and (b)



speeding up the processing of ROTL requests so that those on shorter sentences can also benefit.

- Custodial establishment procedures should allow community agencies maximum access to the young person while in custody. They may need to be given the status of legal visits, but facilities and times need to be found to allow more constant contact of both YOTs and other community agencies while the young person is in custody.
- In order to allow early access to education, training and employment on release, for young people interested in construction, there needs to be a way to take the construction health and safety card tests while in custody. Regardless of whether problems are caused by IT, financial or other restrictions, national policymakers need to ensure that young people are able to gain their card in full prior to release.

### **Preparing the home provision for the young person**

- Arrangements for education, training or employment for the licence period should already be in place in time for release from custody. This should be a key target.
- Agencies should focus particularly intense support on the immediate period after release. This is critical to avoiding breaching. Arrangements should be made for a clear supervision meeting schedule, but with flexibility from workers.
- Particular attention should be paid to ensuring immediate housing provision for young people coming out of custody, both to prevent homelessness and staying with offending peers. This is challenging, so should be started early.
- On release, roll-on, roll-off courses should be available for young people so they do not have to wait to join a new term's cohort before starting education, training or employment. Alternative activities should be arranged for those released out of school term-time or the courses run throughout the year.
- Local children's services agencies should not be permitted to deregister looked-after children while they are in custody.
- Assessments for homeless status of the young person should be done while the young person is in custody, and preferably early in their sentence, rather than waiting until the young person is released.

### **Communication and information flow between custodial establishments and community agencies**

- Custodial establishments should know who the community keyworker contact is for each young person (and where to send information). More joint working and planning should facilitate this sharing of contact details.
- There should be consistent central recording of all in-custody work with young people, including addressing offending behaviour. This should be accessible to the key community agencies while the young person is still in custody.

- Information about work done in custody must be passed to the community in advance of release (e.g. education, addressing offending behaviour, psychological assessment and development).
- Further steps should be taken to ensure the consistent completion of *Asset* (or alternative) to monitor young people's needs and support them throughout their sentence. This may mean undertaking work to ensure a common recording system is in place in custodial and community agencies.

## Ensuring a coordinated approach to support after release

Young people leaving custody have complex multiple needs that need to be addressed to prevent reoffending. These needs cannot be met by one agency alone, and need input from various agencies, both within and outside of the youth justice system. These agencies include those from the private and voluntary sectors, as well as local employers. Where resettlement support fails, it is often because of a lack of engagement with these other stakeholders. The key to addressing young people's needs is effective development and coordination of partnerships between these agencies.

### Overall strategic management

- New resettlement initiatives should balance the need for nationally recognised good practice and local flexibility to address local issues. Both the content and structure of support will need to adapt to geography, demographics and resource levels. For instance, resettlement consortia may not be suitable in more rural areas or where young people are spread among several establishments.
- Other state-sector agencies, including a range of local authority children's services, housing, and the Primary Care Trust are crucial to meeting the needs of young people leaving custody. These agencies need to understand the cost-effectiveness of resettlement work and the links with safeguarding the wellbeing of the young people. The shifting of the financial responsibility for some custody to local authorities should help at a strategic level, but this message should be spread further to result in a cultural shift.
- Early senior-level buy-in to the resettlement agenda in a local area is essential. In particular, having senior executives in the local authority and its agencies to champion resettlement can make a huge difference to ensuring shared commitment and ownership from all those agencies needed to provide wrap-around support.
- Agencies need to discover or develop shared aims and targets around resettlement. Where agencies that are key to wrap-around services do not have targets that relate to resettlement (elements of support), they should be introduced and should be comparable with those of other agencies involved.
- Resettlement support is most effective when different agencies not only develop a strategic partnership to provide different services, but work closely together operationally. Where possible, having multi-agency operational meetings involving looking at (problem) cases together ensures

a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for each young person, and improves understanding and communication between those on the ground.

- A two-tiered management approach consisting of a strategic group of service heads and an operational group of key staff on the ground works well. In addition to the benefits of the operational group, any multi-agency problems can be referred up for guidance or decisions from the strategic group. Alternatively, it has been suggested that a review body examine whether relevant agencies are meeting their full responsibilities.

### **The 'service broker' model of managing resettlement**

- Local youth offending services (or consortia) need a dedicated resettlement manager, whose role should focus on partnership coordination rather than casework. Results suggest that having an effective coordinator may halve reoffending rates, although further research (including full reconviction studies) is needed. This 'service brokerage' approach would enable youth offending services or consortia to be better able to form partnerships with secure establishments, enable resettlement officers to share good practice, and enable the development of relations with other community agencies.
- Even if resettlement is managed by a consortia, each YOT should have their own resettlement contact, to champion resettlement within the YOT and other agencies within that area, and act as the key contact for secure establishments and other YOTs.
- Recruitment and training for resettlement staff should focus on skills for coordinating local partnerships – a management role different from other youth case work. Professionals in this area need the skills to be able to engage and coordinate partners from across sectors.

### **Developing wrap-around partnerships**

- A wide range of partnerships is needed (nationally and locally) in order to address the holistic support needs of this complex group of young people (from self-esteem to education, training and employment). Youth justice professionals should be encouraged to engage other public agencies, the third sector and local employers.
- Effective partnerships are challenging to set-up, develop and maintain. Potential local stakeholders should be engaged early in any resettlement service development.
- Particular attention should be given to engaging partners beyond youth justice, including voluntary sector groups and local employers. These groups are difficult to engage, particularly accommodation providers and employers, but their engagement is important in terms of meeting the needs of young people.
- National policymakers should develop more guidance and best practice in developing local partnerships.
- Suitable accommodation is both key to effective resettlement and most difficult to arrange and ensure. Resettlement coordinators and local authorities should prioritise developing relationships with potential providers of suitable accommodation.

- Engaging with suitable employers is also key to resettlement for many young people, but especially challenging (and particularly in negative economic conditions). Priority should be given to developing links with employers, and related brokerage schemes. The support which would be provided to young people while in jobs can be emphasised to potential employers. Links with employers should go beyond the construction industry in order to match the vocational interests of more young people, and so increase the chances of sustained engagement.

### **Meeting the young person's needs**

- The first priority in resettlement is to keep the young person occupied with constructive activities so that they do not fill their time hanging around with offending peers.
- Where possible, it is important to ensure that the young person's family is on-board with resettlement support and are engaged in some activities.
- Involving more agencies and associated activities in addressing a young person's support needs could bring increased licence requirements, and thus the risk of the young person being breached for non-compliance. Care should be taken to ensure that more support does not disadvantage young offenders by increasing the risk of being breached. Possible solutions include making all additional attendance voluntary, or having compulsory supervision meetings but not breaching young people if they do not attend.
- There is a danger that the culture and perceived aims of some agencies and initiatives, particularly those that are law enforcement related, can undermine the aims of resettlement and lead to heightened breaching rates. Agencies such as the police and Integrated Management need to understand the emphasis on support and sustainability in a young offender's licence period.
- Support should not end suddenly at the end of the licence period, but be tapered off over time. Removing all enhanced support immediately after the end of the licence period may increase the risk of reoffending dramatically. Young people should be given a tapered exit plan that continues to provide support when needed in order to reduce the risk of reoffending.
- There needs to be closer working between YOTs and the Probation Service to allow for a seamless transition of service where young offenders change to adult status during a sentence. This is required more consistently across geographical areas in order for YOTs to learn lessons from the outcome of cases, and for probation officers to understand case history fully to ensure effective service delivery. This should involve working towards compatible case management and risk assessment systems.

Finally, the consistent challenges to ensuring a smooth transition between custody and community remind us that custody will always make a continuous programme of support and rehabilitation for a young person more difficult. Resettlement activity, no matter how good, is necessarily hampered by the young person being away from where practitioners are trying to broker links. So ultimately, we should remain committed to reducing the use of custody for young people through investment in earlier intervention and alternatives to custody.

# Key resettlement research studies and references

## Evaluation of Medway Secure Training Centre (1998–2000)

Medway was the first secure training centre, initially housing offenders aged 14 to 16 years serving a new disposal – the Secure Training Order. This disposal was the precursor to the Detention and Training Order and pioneered its approach of a continuous sentence served half in custody and half in the community. The centre was evaluated by the Policy Research Bureau, which found that the resettlement aspect of the disposal was key to whether the young person reoffended. Their report highlighted limited engagement between the custodial establishment and outside agencies. It also first highlighted the importance of inter-agency cooperation, which, at that time, commonly broke down, leaving trainees disillusioned. The report informed the YJB's development of policy around the new Detention and Training Order (below).

Published as:

Hagell, A., Hazel, N. and Shaw, C. (2000) *Evaluation of Medway Secure Training Centre*. Home Office Occasional Paper. London: Home Office Research.

## Assessment of the Detention and Training Order (2000–2002)

The introduction of the Detention and Training Order meant that almost all young people sentenced to custody would serve half their sentence on supervised licence in the community. This brought an increased emphasis on the resettlement requirements noted with the Secure Training Order. The YJB commissioned an evaluation from the Policy Research Bureau, Nacro and Kings College, London. The report noted that while the custody-community combination per se worked well, resettlement broke down when YOTs were unable to deliver the training plan as agreed. This was again usually when relying on other formal agencies such as schools and children's services. It led to a number of initiatives looking at improving inter-agency cooperation in resettlement, including RESET (see below). The report also informed intensive community programmes such as Resettlement and Aftercare Provision (see below) and the evidence base for the development of the YJB's action plan, *Resettlement - A Framework for Action*.

Published as:

Hazel, N., Hagell, A., Liddle, M., Archer, D., Grimshaw, R. and King, J. (2002) *Assessment of the Detention and Training Order and its Impact on the Secure Estate across England and Wales*. London: Youth Justice Board.

## Evaluation of the RESET national resettlement programme (2005–2008)

RESET was a major resettlement project, involving over 50 national partners who came together to innovate and improve aftercare provision. Led by Rainer (now incorporated into Catch 22), it operated locally in seven YOT areas across two regions. The programme was evaluated by the University of Salford (CSR.Salford) and ARCS UK, with additional cost-benefit work by Judy Renshaw. The evaluation report highlighted both the importance and difficulties of engaging with agencies outside the youth justice system in order to address support needs. The report found that this engagement and associated offending rates were significantly better in areas piloting a model where resettlement workers focused on coordinating partner agencies rather than managing individual custody cases. A model involving coordination of aftercare provision from within a secure establishment also showed promising results.

Published as:

Hazel, N., Liddle, M. and Gordon, F. (2010) *Key Lessons from the RESET Programme: Executive Briefing*. London: Catch 22.

See: <http://www.catch-22.org.uk/Files/Catch22-RESET-Summary.pdf?id=91e8ecd5-af0f-478c-bb52-9e1600fceb2b>

Hazel, N., Liddle, M. and Gordon, F. (2010) *Evaluation of RESET: A Major Resettlement Programme for Young Offenders*. London: Catch 22.

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

## Evaluation of Resettlement and Aftercare Provision (2005–2009), later Integrated Resettlement Support (2009–10)

Initially, Resettlement and Aftercare Provision (RAP) was a voluntary offer focused on substance misuse and mental health resettlement support, but Integrated Resettlement Support (IRS) widened this initiative to all resettlement services to all young people leaving custody. IRS schemes aimed to develop an integrated approach to working with crime and disorder partnerships, children's trusts and local authorities in order to ensure multi-agency addressing of resettlement needs. The evaluation, conducted by Galahad SMS, noted the importance of having sufficient flexibility to allow local projects to adapt to local resources and needs.

Published as:

Galahad SMS (2010) *Evaluation of Resettlement and Aftercare Provision*. London: Youth Justice Board.

Available at: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/youth-justice/publications>

## Evaluation of the YJB Pilot Resettlement Support Panel Scheme (2009–2011)

Six pilot areas in Wales introduced local panels across nine local authorities to coordinate multi-agency delivery of resettlement support. Each YOT used the funding in different ways: some to buy resources and employ staff, while others established new panels or utilised pre-existing ones to facilitate multi-agency planning and implementation of resettlement plans. An evaluation was completed by the National Foundation for Educational Research, which found that indicative and qualitative evidence suggested that young people had benefited from the resettlement work.

Published as:

Phillips, L., Smith, R., Martin, K., Mehta, P. and Durbin, B. (2012) *Evaluation of the YJB Pilot Resettlement Support Panel Scheme*. Cardiff: Welsh Government Social Research.

See: [www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/WYJT01/WYJT01.pdf](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/WYJT01/WYJT01.pdf)

## Evaluations of the YJB Resettlement Consortia Pilots (2011–2012)

In 2009, the YJB started to grant-fund a series of regional-level pilot projects around the country, which each saw a number of local authority areas work together on resettlement issues. These projects tried to put into practice some of the existing learning around resettlement, including greater collaboration between youth justice and other agencies. Each consortium of local authority areas worked in slightly different ways, developed to be appropriate to their local area – which provided researchers an opportunity for comparison of models. There was particular variation concerning whether partnership was at the strategic or operational level, and the number of custodial establishments who worked with the projects.

The first two pilot projects (in North West England and South West England) were evaluated by a team from the University of Salford (CSR.Salford) and ARCS UK, with the third pilot project (Wessex) evaluated by the University of Portsmouth.

Key findings from the three evaluations included:

- Resettlement consortia can significantly reduce arrests during the licence period, reduce accommodation problems and increase engagement with education, training and employment.
- The consortia did not reduce rates or times to licence breaching, mainly because there were more expectations and requirements on young people that came with more agencies' involvement.
- Closer working between community agencies and custodial establishments improved information flow around work concerning education, training and employment.
- Multiple needs of young people were addressed, but this was particularly

hard with accommodation, low qualifications and family problems.

- Agencies working together at the strategic level could lead to beneficial sharing of aims and targets around resettlement.
- Priorities of enforcement agencies, including the police and Integrated Offender Management, could be in conflict with resettlement aims, increasing risks of breaching.
- Agencies working together at the operational level meant a shared ownership of young people throughout their sentence, shared good practice, improved communication, delivery being more focused on child need, and an increase in the number of agencies supporting each young person.

The evaluations will be published by the local authorities involved.



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