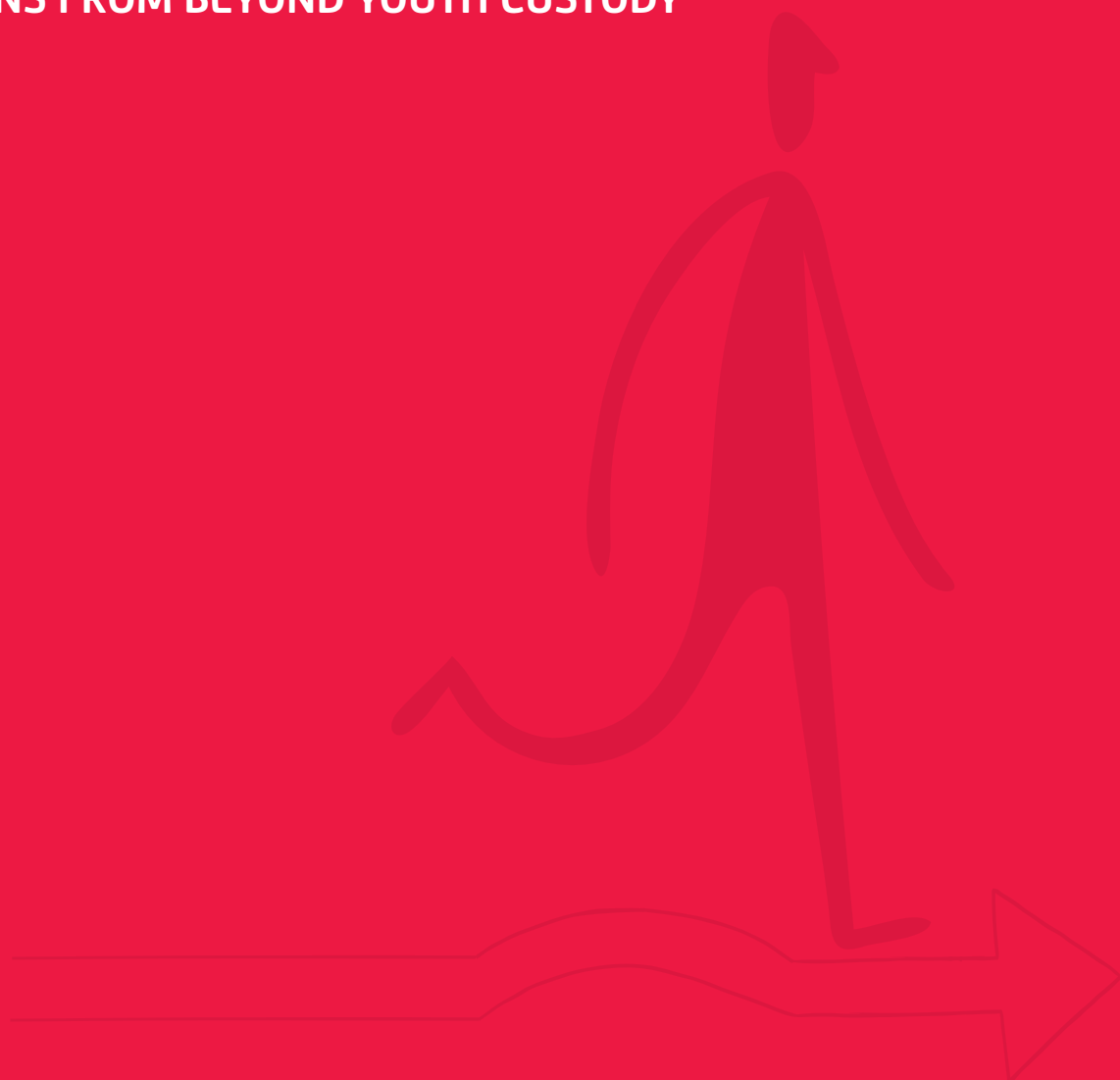


Beyond
YOUTH CUSTODY

EFFECTIVE RESETTLEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

LESSONS FROM BEYOND YOUTH CUSTODY



LOTTERY FUNDED

Beyond Youth Custody (BYC) is one of three England-wide learning and awareness projects funded under the Big Lottery Fund's Youth in Focus (YIF) programme, which aims to support vulnerable young people through changes in their lives.

BYC has been designed to challenge, advance and promote better thinking in policy and practice for the effective resettlement of young people.

It brings together Nacro, the crime reduction charity, with three research and evaluation partners: ARCS (UK), and Salford and Bedfordshire universities.

Forewords

Nacro's President, The Rt Hon Lord Dholakia

During my long involvement with Nacro, I have seen the work it has done to support offenders move on with their lives and away from crime. Children and young adults are some of the most vulnerable in custody, so the continued decline in the use of custody for this group over the past decade is welcome.

Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the challenge that the remaining young people in custody present. These young people commit a disproportionate amount of crime, are more likely to have committed serious violent offences, have high levels of need and all too often continue on a revolving door of crime when they return to their communities. It is vital, therefore, that we focus our resources on supporting these young people to change.

Whilst the nature of some young people's offending may result in a custodial sentence, incarceration rarely solves the social problems caused by youth crime nor does it resolve an individual's offending behaviour. We must support young people to lead constructive lives when they are released from custody.

Beyond Youth Custody is a game changer. It challenges and advances our thinking on what works to reduce reoffending by young people. It has produced a clear evidence base from which we can build, and shares best practice across the country with agencies and individuals working with some of the most challenging young people in the country. I'd like to thank the Big Lottery for funding this work and their continued commitment to find solutions to social problems impacting communities.



Young person's perspective, Ian Thomas

I spent nearly three years in custody and was sent to ten different youth and adult prisons across the South of England from 18 to 23 years old.

Towards the end of my last stretch inside, I got help from an organisation that showed me by example, truth and empathy that there was a much better way to live. The most significant people in my journey of recovery have been those who could relate to me. They encouraged me to take a good look at myself. Without them, I'd have been back inside – or even dead. I've now been out of prison and not offended in over 5 years. Today I work in social care supporting young people.

Many of the young people in prison have never been in a position to sustain a place in society and achieve successful independence. It is important to help those in conflict with the law engage with things that help them feel a part of society. They need to be able to look at themselves and understand why they get into these situations in the first place. It's about looking at the core issues rather than the symptoms.

We all need to be accountable for our actions, but we also need the opportunity to learn from our behaviours and about life.



Background

“People don’t appreciate how much it can feel like you are being set up to fail”

In January 2015, the number of children in custody was 981. The first time on record the population has fallen below 1000. Numbers have been falling steadily over the past decade, which is welcome, but it poses new and significant challenges for services.

Those sentenced to custody are more likely to display an entrenched pattern of offending behaviour. They’re more likely to have committed serious offences and have a higher concentration of problems.

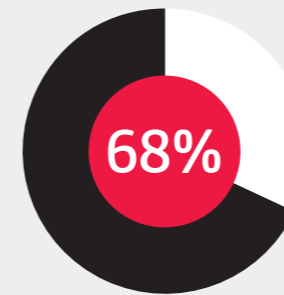
- Reoffending rates remain stubbornly high. Over two thirds of children reoffend within 12 months of release from secure institutions. Reoffending rates are also substantially higher amongst young adults in the criminal justice system than older adult offenders. This shows the destructive cycle of crime that some young people fall into and struggle to get out of.
- Many of these young people have had complicated and chaotic lives. Many have experienced trauma, abuse, bereavement, grown up in local authority care, been excluded from school, experienced drug or alcohol related dependencies and have mental health problems or personality disorders.
- Young people are increasingly isolated from family. The closure of some institutions and restructuring of the secure estate has meant some young offenders end up in custody a long way from home.
- Gang-involvement is problematic. A recent inspection report by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons reported that Feltham young offenders’ institution was ‘rife with gang violence’ and called for new thinking about how to tackle the “debilitating and seemingly intractable” problem.
- Support isn’t consistent between youth and adult systems. The transition from the youth justice system to the adult justice system further impacts on the consistency and quality of support provided and can cause young people to fall unsupported through the cracks.

Where appropriate support is available and agencies work together in a coordinated way, custody can provide young people with the interventions they need to overcome problems and start the process of building a better life. Central to this is making sure resettlement is the driving force of sentence planning.

All too often it isn’t. Services are patchy or poorly coordinated, too little attention is given to preparing young people for release and planning for resettlement doesn’t start early enough in their sentence – when it is most effective.

BYC aims to change this picture. It has been designed to challenge, advance and promote better thinking in policy and practice for the effective resettlement of young people, with the ultimate aim of improving outcomes for young people leaving custody.

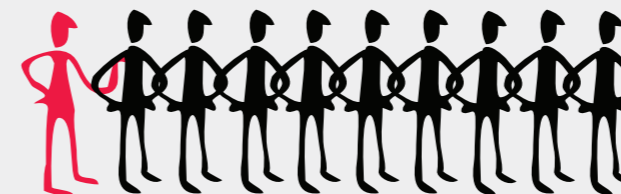
YOUTH CUSTODY FACT FILE



68% OF CHILDREN RELEASED FROM CUSTODY REOFFEND WITHIN A YEAR



FEWER THAN 1% OF ALL CHILDREN IN ENGLAND ARE IN CARE, BUT LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN MAKE UP 33% OF BOYS AND 61% OF GIRLS IN CUSTODY



11% OF CHILDREN IN PRISON HAVE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

£224 MILLION

£224 MILLION WAS SPENT ON THE PROVISION OF SECURE ACCOMMODATION FOR CHILDREN IN 2012/13

SOURCE: Prison Reform Trust (2014) Bomley Briefing Prison Factfile.

TOM'S STORY

The first time I ever went to prison I was 15 and still had a long way to go in maturity. I was still caught up in gangs and drugs and I found myself at the beginning of my offending cycle.

At the end of my custodial sentence I was released with no sense of direction and I had to rely on the YOT to support me through my rehabilitation. As part of my licence I was forced to attend pointless meetings and workshops.

When I tried to voice my opinions and reach out for help, I was shunned and my questions were disregarded. They told me, “These are the things we have in place for you. You can choose to attend them or we can breach you and send you back to prison.” This made me very disengaged and hostile.

Within a few weeks I was reoffending and soon back in prison. Angry and with no optimism for my release, I found myself constantly getting into fights. On the day of my release I met with someone from the YOT and they gave me my agenda for the week. When I saw what they had planned, I immediately gave up hope.

Building a lasting legacy for resettlement

BYC's aim is to help young people turn around their lives by ensuring the right resettlement services are in place for them in custody through to the community. Our five-year programme works to establish an evidence base of effective practice that can be used to support a clear strategy for resettlement services.

We focus on the following areas of work



1. Producing robust evidence about what works

We analyse existing and emerging research and explore under-researched issues to identify best practice that can be applied across diverse settings.

We do this by:

- publishing regular updates that bring together the latest lessons from research, policy and practice in the resettlement of young people
- publishing thematic reports that provide an analysis of resettlement through different lenses (such as engagement, gender-specific approaches, coping with release and the impact of gang involvement)
- consulting widely with young people, practitioners and other stakeholders by conducting interviews, focus groups and developing an archive of case studies
- helping Youth in Focus project practitioners to evaluate and monitor their own service by collecting additional primary data



2. Giving young people a voice

We actively encourage young people who've been in custody to voice their opinion about resettlement services – because nobody understands the challenges better.

We do this by:

- consulting with young people before and after their release about their needs, expectations and experiences of resettlement services
- asking young people who have been through resettlement services to help shape future policy and raise awareness of the issues affecting people leaving custody
- involving young people in innovative communication projects about effective resettlement – like blogs and short films
- extending the scope of BYC up to the age of 25, to capture insights from young adults who also require a distinct approach



3. Developing and promoting good practice

We work with practitioners to improve resettlement practice and help them deliver effective services for young people leaving custody. We use our evidence base to steer future policy and encourage change that improves outcomes for young people leaving custody.

We do this by:

- identifying the practice implications of our research and providing ongoing feedback to practitioners about what works
- developing sustainable delivery models that can be replicated and adopted on a national scale
- feeding examples of what's working in practice into research, creating forums to test emerging findings, and helping practitioners to put BYC's learning into practice
- publishing a series of practitioners' guides that focus on key areas of resettlement practice



4. Identifying and communicating what needs to change

We continue to build a network of stakeholders so that we can test findings, share best practice and communicate the lessons we learn.

We do this by:

- engaging with policy and decision makers through events, party conferences, all party groups and responses to consultations
- initiating and contributing to discussions that explore the challenges related to policy and practice
- running on and offline campaigns and an online hub to share findings and raise national awareness of the issues affecting young people leaving custody
- membership of the Youth Justice Board's Resettlement Steering Group, Transition to Adulthood Alliance (T2A), the Standing Committee for Youth Justice (SCYJ)

CO-ORDINATION OF SERVICES

A COORDINATED, INDIVIDUALLY TAILORED, WRAP-AROUND PACKAGE OF SUPPORT MUST BE IN PLACE. THIS IS CRUCIAL TO MEETING THE MULTIPLE AND COMPLEX NEEDS OF VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE.



EFFECTIVE RESETTLEMENT

A PROCESS THAT ENABLES A SHIFT IN A YOUNG PERSON'S IDENTITY, MOVING THEM AWAY FROM CRIME TOWARDS A POSITIVE FUTURE



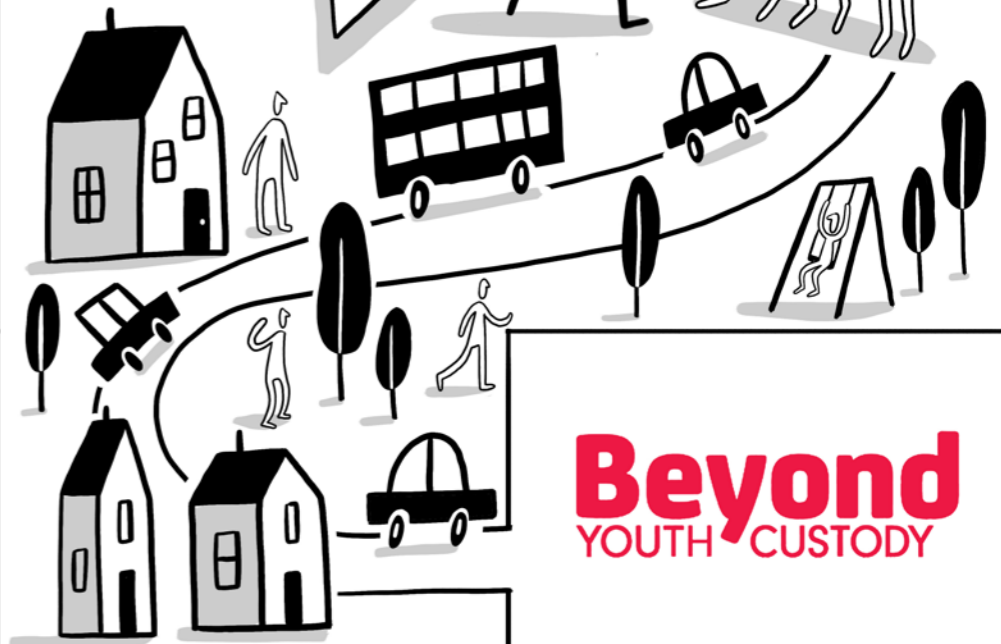
60%

HAVE COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS



MAY INVOLVE RELAPSE

AS WELL AS PROGRESS



Beyond
YOUTH CUSTODY

61% GIRLS **33% BOYS**

IN CUSTODY HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN IN CARE

91%

HAVE EXPERIENCED ABUSE OR LOSS

NEGATIVE INFLUENCES

CONTINUOUS SERVICE FOCUSED ON RESETTLEMENT

THERE MUST BE A CONTINUOUS SERVICE BETWEEN CUSTODY AND THE COMMUNITY, WITH SENTENCE PLANNING FOCUSED ON RESETTLEMENT THROUGHOUT.



INDIVIDUALLY TAILORED

WE APPROACH YOUNG PEOPLE ON THEIR LEVEL, SHOWING THEM THAT WE CAN RELATE TO THEM...

THIS GENERATES A LEVEL OF MUTUAL RESPECT. SOMETHING MANY YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE NEVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE

ENGAGING THE YOUNG PERSON FOR POSITIVE CHANGE

EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT AND HIGH QUALITY, TRUSTED RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY TO ENHANCE A YOUNG PERSON'S MOTIVATION TO MAKE POSITIVE CHOICES AND BUILD RESILIENCE TO NEGATIVE INFLUENCING FACTORS.



SEAMLESS SENTENCE

"HE CAME INTO PRISON TO TALK ABOUT MY OPTIONS AND HE CARED"



What does effective resettlement look like?

Effective resettlement is a process that enables a shift in a young person's identity, moving them away from crime towards a positive future.

For resettlement to be effective and sustainable, we need to look 'beyond' criminal justice's short-term aim of preventing reoffending. There needs to be longer term understanding of resettlement as a process promoting desistance, wellbeing and social inclusion. Crucially, we must acknowledge that this may involve episodes of relapse as well as progress. This process can be facilitated by providing structural support as well as promoting a belief within the young person that they have the capacity to change.

Our research shows that for the resettlement process to be effective, it should be underpinned by the following principles:

Coordination of services

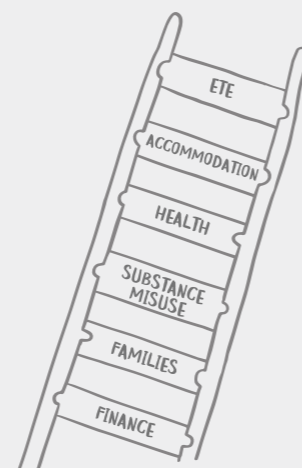
Partners need to work collaboratively

Young people in custody have multiple and complex needs. They've frequently experienced trauma, victimisation, abuse and social injustice – all of which are commonly exacerbated by the experience of incarceration.

The best way to meet these needs is to offer an individually tailored, wrap around package of support delivered by partners across sectors. However, the input of a wide range of agencies in itself is not enough.

There needs to be proper coordination between custodial facilities and the community – between the statutory, voluntary, community and business sectors – and necessary information must be shared appropriately between them.

- There needs to be a strong 'brokerage' function to establish working partnerships across all sectors to jointly plan and deliver the required range of support.
- It's important that young people continue to receive the services they need when their statutory involvement with the youth justice system comes to an end. This can only be achieved through genuine wrap around services.
- Partnership arrangements need to extend beyond service providers to include the engagement of the family, representatives of the community and employers from the area in which the young person will live.



Engaging the young person for positive change

Relationships lie at the heart of successful engagement

Unless young people are engaged in the criminal justice process, resettlement is unlikely to be effective. Effective engagement and high quality, trusted relationships are crucial to enhance a young person's motivation to make positive choices, stay in support programmes and build resilience to negative influencing factors.

Engaging young people in resettlement activities is a challenging process. There are significant barriers that can impede engagement and these are frequently exacerbated by previous negative experiences of criminal justice agencies.

Young people are more likely to engage with services if they share a mutual respect with staff and believe that staff care what happens to them. This means listening to young people and involving them in decisions about their own resettlement planning.

The engagement process in resettlement involves three steps.

- The service engages with the young person - generating an interest and encouraging participation in activities and contact with staff.
- The young person engages with the service - developing a sustained relationship with project staff, identifying with the project's aims of promoting a shift in identity.
- The young person engages with wider society - the shift in identity is sufficiently well established that a young person is no longer dependent on resettlement services and can construct relationships with broader society.



Continuous service focused on resettlement

Preparation for release needs to start early

Resettlement is much more effective when young people are able to visit accommodation, arrange employment or education, meet providers of support services, and re-orientate themselves back into the community prior to release.

Young people need to be prepared for release not just in the weeks before they leave custody, but at the point they enter it. They need to be aware of the community based opportunities available to them.

- Secure, long-term, stable accommodation needs to be available close to the young person's family and community (unless that location is considered unsafe). Before they're released – and before any other services are offered – young people need to know where they will be living.
- Education, training and vocational programmes should be available immediately and they need to be tailored to each individual's previous experience and levels of attainment. This is essential if young people are going to have the confidence they need to re-engage with education.
- Release on temporary licence (ROTL) can help to ensure that arrangements are in place for the young person's return to the community, allow for a graduated return to family life, and mitigates against the worst effects of disorientation and trauma. There should be a presumption of ROTL unless there are clear reasons for not allowing it.

Sentence planning must focus on resettlement

There needs to be a continuous service between custody and the community, with sentence planning focused on resettlement throughout.

- The resettlement process should be a seamless one that bridges the divide between custody and community.
- The work done in custody should carry on in the community so that young people get the support they need beyond statutory periods of post custody supervision.



Transition into the community needs enhanced support

The transition period from custody to community offers a 'window of opportunity' in which young people can be open to intervention that aims to promote desistance. But it also represents a time of substantial risk during which young people may be under pressure to resume previous forms of behaviour and associate with offending peers. Research has consistently found that reoffending, or breach, are both more likely in the critical period immediately after release.

There are several steps that can be taken to help reduce these risks.

- Young people should be met at the gate by someone they know and trust. That person should understand the resettlement plans and any obligations on the young person, and be able to provide emotional and practical support over the coming weeks and months.
- Young people need time to adjust. There needs to be flexibility not just immediately after release but leading up to it too. Imposing rigid requirements at the point of transition is likely to undermine engagement and may be counterproductive.
- Young people should be released at a time that gives them the time and opportunity to access a wide range of services on the day of their return to the community.



What next?

From its inception, Beyond Youth Custody has committed to bringing about benefits and lasting change to young people leaving custody and the communities they return to.

Working alongside young people, practitioners and policy makers, our next phase of work is to ensure our learning secures a lasting impact beyond the lifecycle of the programme.

Changing a young person's path can be hard. But it can be done. By putting resettlement at the heart of a custodial sentence, young people can take the important steps needed to change their path and build constructive links with their community.

Many elements of our learning can be implemented within current systems and can be achieved within existing resources. Others will require a collaborative effort from decision makers, agencies and professionals involved in resettlement to drive necessary change.

In our final two years

A key focus now will be to develop a resettlement framework. This will help redesign resettlement services in custody and the community to focus on what works. It will generate a sustainable response to the challenge of reducing reoffending by the current cohort of young people in custody. We will be consulting widely with young people with experience, practitioners, partner organisations and policy makers to ensure the framework continues to be relevant and useful to the sector.

We will also consider the costs and benefits of resettlement models both to communities and the economy. Our early work indicates that getting resettlement right results in significant public expenditure savings, and not just through a reduction in custodial expenditure. There is wider economic value in opening up employment to individuals and reducing the social impact of crime in communities.

There are some young people who are capable of behaviour which causes trouble and fear in communities and they continue on this path for too long. By focusing on rebuilding links between these young people and communities, and addressing problems while opening up potential, we can begin to improve outcomes for the most troubled young people in society. By doing so we can reduce crime and the impact of crime on victims and communities.

“We are all involved in an area of policy where there are no silver bullets and no magic wands. But it is definitely possible to make progress by sharing best practice and by learning about each other's successes and areas for improvement.”

Lord McNally, Chair of the Youth Justice Board

PUBLICATIONS

RESEARCH REPORTS

Gang-involved young people: custody and beyond
Custody to community: how young people cope with release
Resettlement of girls and young women
Engaging young people in resettlement

PRACTITIONER GUIDES

Gang-involved young people: custody and beyond
Resettlement of girls and young women
Developing trauma-informed resettlement for young custody leavers
Young offenders and trauma: experience and impact
Participatory approaches for young people in resettlement
Engaging young people in resettlement

LESSONS FROM THE LITERATURE

These regularly published literature reviews aim to set out the latest lessons from research, policy and practice in the resettlement of young people.

We regularly update our publications which are available to download at www.beyondyouthcustody.net.

Thank-you

Our work relies heavily on the help, cooperation and experiences of individuals and organisations across the country. We act as a mouth piece to communicate what is happening and being felt by young people and staff working in resettlement and those involved in developing policies and programmes.

We would like to thank all those people and projects who have helped us over the three years of the programme, whether that be arranging or taking part in interviews, helping us identify priorities for upcoming research, attending conferences or focus groups and helping us to engage with young people to make their voices heard. Special thanks to the young people that have contributed to our research.

We are most grateful for your help and enthusiasm in Beyond Youth Custody.

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

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