

‘There’s not going to be a single solution’: The role of resettlement consortia in improving the resettlement outcomes of young people leaving custody

Paul Gray, Hannah Smithson, Richard McHugh and Graham Smyth
Manchester Metropolitan University

Abstract

As part of the government’s Transforming Youth Custody programme, in 2014, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) established four new resettlement consortia in four areas in England. This article presents the findings from a process evaluation of the new consortia, paying particular attention to the enablers and/or barriers that affected the implementation of an enhanced resettlement offer. We found that the consortia did appear to improve partnership working and collaboration between key agencies. Yet the delivery of an enhanced offer was often hampered by the geographically dispersed nature of the consortia, along with problems accessing suitable accommodation upon release.

Keywords

collaboration, enhanced resettlement offer, partnership working, resettlement consortia, youth custody

Introduction: resettlement consortia

A resettlement consortium is a group of cross-sector organisations involving several local authorities (often regionally led) who work together to improve the life chances and resettlement outcomes of young people leaving custody. In 2009, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) piloted three resettlement consortia in three sites across England (for more details see: Ellis et al., 2012; Hazel et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2012). Two of these consortia - the consortium in the north west of England and the consortium in Wessex - functioned at both a strategic and operational level, while the consortium in the south west of England functioned at only a strategic level. Following this pilot, in 2014, as part of the *Transforming Youth Custody* programme (Ministry of Justice, 2014), the YJB launched four new resettlement consortia, two in the north of England and two in the south. All four of the consortia functioned at both a strategic level and an operational level. The consortia were funded for three years, with funding to cease in March 2017. Each consortium was selected on the basis that the levels of custody usage within the local authorities in each of the consortia areas fell into the highest twenty per cent in England in 2011/12 and 2012/13. In addition, the local authorities within each of the consortium areas also needed to evidence a history of working togetherⁱ. Indeed, one of the distinctive features of a resettlement consortium is partnership working to facilitate better collaboration between the key agencies involved in resettlement. With an overarching aim of reducing the risk of reoffending and enhancing the outcomes for young people leaving custody, each consortium had the autonomy to develop and deliver a local ‘enhanced’ resettlement offer, intended to provide interventions beyond that already delivered in each of the four areas. The criteria set out by the YJB for each of the consortia were as follows:

- To improve links between key agencies (secure establishments, YOTs, local authorities and voluntary and private sector providers) and access to publicly available services.
- To increase collaborative and potentially innovative ways of working between partners and with other services of the local authority.
- To encourage improved information sharing between agencies.
- To offer a package of services on education, training and employment and accommodation from non-statutory as well as statutory agencies.

- To establish continuity in relationships with the young person through a wrap-around approach.
- To achieve sustainability in the support that is provided to young people.

The consortia arrived at a time of both opportunity and challenge. When the new consortia were commissioned, the numbers of young people in custody in England and Wales were at their lowest point since 2000 (Youth Justice Board/Ministry of Justice, 2014) - and have continued to fall since (Youth Justice Board, 2016) - yet reoffending rates remain stubbornly high. With nearly 70 per cent of young people released from custody reoffending within 12 months (Ministry of Justice/Youth Justice Board, 2016), it is understandable why Bateman (2016: 12) concludes that the youth custodial estate in England and Wales is in a 'state of crisis' that 'requires radical, and urgent, action'. With this in mind, this article will focus on identifying the enablers and the barriers that affected each consortium's ability to develop and deliver an 'enhanced' resettlement offer. It will also look at what lessons can be learnt from the consortia to usefully inform future resettlement approaches. Before moving on to look at these issues in more detail, this article will firstly briefly highlight some of the current issues and concerns around resettlement provision for young people.

Resettling young people: partnership working and integrated services

In their comprehensive review of the resettlement literature, Bateman et al. (2013) identify a number of key principles that need to inform resettlement practice. These include:

- The continuation of service provision between custody and the community beyond the licence period;
- Preparation of release beginning at the start of the sentence, including the planning of community based needs, such as accommodation;
- The provision of a co-ordinated and holistic approach to resettlement; and,
- The consideration and co-ordination of the termination of resettlement support and exit strategies to ensure that any benefits of earlier support are not diminished once statutory services are removed.

Alongside these principles is the need to ensure that young people are fully engaged in the resettlement process (Bateman and Hazel, 2013). Indeed, the successful implementation of any resettlement programme is dependent on engagement (Smith, 2006). Although not all explicitly linked to partnership working, the relationship between the principles outlined above and partnerships is implicit. Yet, despite the integration of services and partnership working being recently acknowledged as key characteristics to effective resettlement (Taylor, 2016), integrating services and working in partnership has historically been viewed as particularly challenging within a youth justice setting (Hagell, 2004). While it is now commonly accepted that the effective resettlement of young offenders requires 'multiple solutions' (Harding, 2006: 391), cultural working practices and differences in aims and targets can make successful partnership working particularly challenging (Souhami, 2009). Any ensuing lack of cooperation ultimately results in a lack of services to meet the wide-ranging resettlement needs of young people (Gray, 2011).

In terms of the actual needs of young offenders leaving custody, an evaluation of the RESET project that aimed at improving the resettlement outcomes of young people, identified multiple support needs amongst the young people it engaged with (Hazel et al., 2010). These included: the need for more constructive activities; help to address offending behaviour; employment and education needs; substance misuse problems; anger management; and homelessness.

Similarly, research for the Prison Reform Trust (Jacobson et al., 2010) found that half of young people in custody came from deprived households, nearly 40 per cent had been on the child protection register and/or had experienced abuse or neglect, and nearly half had been excluded from school. Furthermore, research (see Farrant, 2006; Gray, 2010) has shown that, for many young people leaving custody, the wide range of problems that they were experiencing when they went into custody are simply exacerbated by the custodial sentence. In particular, the young person's accommodation status (see Hazel et al., 2012).

It is important to note, however, that the challenges related to resettling young people leaving custody are not down to a young person's needs not being accurately assessed in both custodial and community youth justice settings. Rather, it is the fact that there is often a discrepancy between the needs identified and the availability of services to provide the most appropriate support. For example, the evaluation of the RESET project found that workers were only able to involve half the number of agencies for each young person that they had originally intended to (Hazel et al., 2010). With this in mind, it is understandable why the initial pilot resettlement consortia, and the four consortia that are the subject of this article, focussed on improving partnership working and the integration of services. Indeed, the pilot consortia clearly demonstrated that successful partnership working (at both a strategic and operational level) - particularly between the secure estate and those agencies in the community - led to: improved communication amongst agencies; increased sharing of aims and targets; improvements in levels of engagement in education, training and employment; increased provision of suitable accommodation; and ultimately, reductions in reoffending (Hazel et al., 2012).

The interim report of the Taylor Review (2016) has re-focused efforts on the resettlement of young people in custody, with the second part of the review emphasising that education and employment are integral to preventing offending amongst children and young people. The report recommends a 'radically different' youth custody with a call to replace youth prison with 'secure alternative provision schools' (Taylor, 2016: 6). Partnership and collaboration between services and provision is also highlighted as significant to effectively addressing the causes of offending. This chimes with the original priorities of the pilot consortia as described above (Hazel et al., 2012).

Our research was carried out against the back-drop of an uncertain future for youth justice. Cuts to funding and practitioner unease around what the final report of the Taylor Review might recommend were omnipresent. The current resettlement consortia, the subject of this paper, were introduced just months prior to the 'Joint thematic inspection of resettlement services to children by Youth Offending Teams and partner agencies', conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, the Care Quality Commission and Ofsted (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2015). This inspection was scathing of the lack of improvement in resettlement outcomes for young people despite decades of initiatives, and called for greater utilisation of impact evaluations. This is particularly salient to this piece of research given that, unlike the evaluations of the pilot consortia (Ellis et al., 2012; Hazel et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2012), the YJB commissioned a purely process evaluation of the four consortia with no plans for an impact evaluation.

The process evaluation

The process evaluation on which this article is based was commissioned by the YJB in 2014 and ran until 2016. The evaluation sought to assess how successfully each of the four new resettlement consortia were implemented and delivered. As mentioned above, unlike the evaluations of the pilot consortia (Ellis et al., 2012; Hazel et al., 2012; Wright et al., 2012), this

evaluation did not focus on the impact or outcomes of the consortia's activities. Instead, the overall aims of the evaluation were to a) assess whether the consortia have been implemented successfully, and according to criteria set out by the Youth Justice Board, and b) draw out any lessons to inform future resettlement approaches.

The evaluation itself was carried out in two stages. Stage 1 ran between March and June 2015 and concentrated on the initial implementation of the four consortia. Stage 2 ran between January and February 2016 and focussed more heavily on what each consortium had delivered. The lapse in time between the two stages was to allow for each consortium to embed their enhanced offers. The evaluation was purely qualitative and involved interviewing (through a combination of semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews) 99 people in the following five roles:

- Project managers: Each consortium had a project manager responsible for managing the delivery of the consortium, for working strategically and operationally to support the delivery of effective and sustainable practices, and to help facilitate information flow between partners.
- Strategic leads: Each consortium had a strategic lead responsible for chairing the strategic steering group meetings (see below).
- Lead Youth Offending Team managers: As the consortia covered a number of local authorities, a lead YOT manager for each consortium was identified. Their role was to represent the views of the consortium's other YOT managers at a strategic level.
- Strategic steering group members: The strategic steering group contained representatives from a range of key agencies and provided leadership and accountability.
- Operational steering group members: The operational steering group also contained representatives from a range of key agencies, but this time at a more operational level. The group provided a space where service delivery and project implementation issues could be discussed.

In stage 1, interviews were conducted with all the project managers, strategic leads and lead YOT managers. In addition, around five steering group members from each consortium (members identified by the project managers as being most involved in the implementation of the consortium) were also interviewed. A total of 30 interviews were undertaken in this stage. In stage 2, those who had been interviewed as part of stage one were re-interviewed. In addition, all of the strategic steering group members and operational staff were invited to participate in the evaluation. A total of 69 interviews were undertaken in this stage of the evaluation. To protect the anonymity of those that were interviewed, in the following analysis the consortia areas will simply be referred to as Area 1, 2, 3 or 4.

Consortia priorities and the enhanced offer

As described earlier, each consortium was given the autonomy to develop and deliver a local resettlement package to address the needs of young people released from custody within their consortium areas. This package was known as the 'enhanced offer'. It was envisaged that developing an enhanced offer would necessitate the commissioning of new services and implementation and delivery of new processes. When the respondents were asked to outline their consortium's priorities, they appeared to be guided by the seven 'pathways'ⁱⁱ outlined in the Youth Resettlement Framework (Youth Justice Board, 2005). Indeed, the priorities that were highlighted most commonly were accommodation and education, training and employment.

Accommodation is a huge issue. Unless accommodation is secured we then have difficulties with education and the rest of the resettlement pathways. (Area 3, Operational steering group member)

The two key priorities or areas of work that we wanted to develop within our consortia have been around accommodation and education. (Area 1, Strategic steering group member)

It is important to note that, despite being widely acknowledged as a key resettlement pathway (Youth Justice Board, 2005), the diverse range of accommodation providers in each of the consortium areas made engaging with the most appropriate representatives particularly challenging for the consortia.

Accommodation is key [but] every local authority has different access routes and uses different providers - a mixture of local authority commissioned plus directly commissioned plus third sector etc.. It would be difficult to get one or two representatives that could then fully represent the big picture [in terms of accommodation from the consortium area]. (Area 2, Lead YOT manager)

When it came to deciding what each consortium's priorities would be, the need to develop an evidence base to inform the specific local focus of the enhanced offer was paramount (see also the 'mapping phase' of the Resettlement Broker project in Hazel and Hampson, 2015 and Hazel et al., 2015). For example, Area 1 began by consulting with all the YOTs in the consortium and collating information on their approach to resettlement, including: systems; processes; providers; and any challenges they faced. The findings from this consultation process were then presented to the consortium's strategic steering group in the form of a needs analysis report. Respondents stated that it was this report that guided the development of the priorities and 'enhanced offer' in that consortium area. Consortium area 4, on the other hand, appointed an accommodation strategic lead to undertake a cost-benefit analysis study looking at the benefits of identifying accommodation placements in advance of release. This study was ultimately influential in changing local practices, and as a result, the local authorities in the consortium area agreed (in principle) that accommodation would be in place two weeks prior to a young person being released.

By the second stage of the evaluation (when the consortia had been up and running for at least 12 months), a diverse range of services had been commissioned. As expected, a number of the services directly addressed the priorities outlined above. For example, in relation to education, training and employment, Area 1 had managed to work with a local college to provide ROTLⁱⁱⁱ opportunities for taster days and familiarisation sessions. The use of temporary release has recently been recommended as a key enabler in a successful transition from custody to release (Bateman and Hazel 2015; Hampson and Kinsey, 2016). Furthermore, across the consortia, a number of projects were commissioned that supported the young people into employment by working with partners to develop a social enterprise. In addition to these services, the consortia also commissioned a number of services with the more overarching remit of overcoming any potential barriers to resettlement. These included, for example, services that provided: link workers and/or mentors to support young people both in custody and upon their release; one-to-one life coaching; group sessions delivered to young men in custody focused on the pressures and expectations of being a man; offender behaviour programmes focused on addressing the emotional/social triggers that lead to aggressive behaviour; family therapy between a young person and their family/carers; and trauma-focused work with young people. A number of the consortia also used portions of the available funding to create a flexible

resettlement fund for YOTs to support the specific needs of young people (e.g. the purchase of tools required for a work placement etc.). It is important to mention that, despite research highlighting the need to ensure that young people are fully engaged in the resettlement process (Bateman and Hazel, 2013), projects/services aimed specifically at increasing engagement were notably lacking.

The range of projects/services commissioned to deliver each consortium's enhanced offer appeared to be broadly in line with the key principles highlighted by Bateman et al. (2013). Indeed, it could be claimed that the necessity of an evidence-based local approach to identifying need is a worthy addition to these key principles. The delivery of this diverse range of projects/activities necessitated engaging with a wide range of providers from the public, private and third sectors. Partners included, for example: the police; probation; the secure estate; children's homes; Police and Crime Commissioners; special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services; the Care Leavers Association; CAMHS; Public Health England; the YMCA; the Children's Society; Barnardo's; and Nacro. Bringing these partners, and others, on board was crucial to each consortium's ability to deliver their 'enhanced' resettlement offer. Unlike historical concerns around the effectiveness of partnership working (Souhami, 2009; Gray, 2011), the respondents felt that the consortia approach on the whole, worked well. With this in mind, we now move on to focus on identifying the enablers that affected each consortium's ability to bring the required partners on board, and highlight the positive outcomes that resulted.

Key enablers to delivery

It was widely acknowledged that the funding from the YJB was a crucial prerequisite for the consortia. Firstly, because funding was made available for each consortium to recruit a project manager of senior standing. It was felt that having a dedicated project manager facilitated the development of each consortia (see also the role of a 'Resettlement Broker' in Hazel and Hampson, 2015, and Hazel et al., 2015).

I think a key enabler for this is having a suitably senior [project] manager to really drive this, I think that's absolutely spot on. (Area 4, Lead YOT manager)

I think that having dedicated management time from the consortium manager post is really helpful to get things moving and move us forward. (Area 1, Strategic steering group member)

In addition to this, many of the consortia involved very senior heads of service, such as Directors of Children's Services as the strategic lead. Having someone of this seniority was viewed as key to, as one respondent noted, 'removing any blockages' that might have appeared. As highlighted in the quote below, it also helped to ensure buy-in from senior stakeholders at partner agencies.

Getting [X] to be the co-chair [i.e. strategic lead] has added real gravitas to the steering group and I think that really helped bring people together actually. (Area 4, Lead YOT manager)

The second aspect where the funding was crucial was helping to secure and incentivise engagement from partners. Particularly at a time of financial cuts within local authorities.

You can bring any consortium together but if there isn't any resource to do anything then it's much more difficult and often doesn't happen. The fact that there was development funding ... was pretty vital. (Area 1, Strategic lead)

If the YJB provides a grant, particularly in the current environment, it's going to drive peoples' behaviours. (Area 4, Strategic lead)

Although the funding from the YJB was key to ensuring buy-in from various partners, for many respondents, the simple fact that they were involved in a resettlement consortia was important, as the process itself had raised the profile of resettlement and placed it as a priority on people's agendas.

The fact that the consortium was set up in the first place, that resettlement as a whole has been given some sort of priority and focus, I think that's been really important. (Area 1, Operational steering group member)

Added to this, once the partners were on board and steering group meetings were taking place, for many respondents, the merits of meeting and working with people with a common focus became evident. As one strategic steering group member from consortium area 4 noted, one of the benefits of the consortia was '*having everyone singing from the same hymn sheet*'. Indeed, many of the steering group members - both operational and strategic - claimed that they really benefited from working with partners that they might not have traditionally worked with. This feeling of common purpose is significant given that we know the multiple needs of the young people cannot be met by criminal justice professionals alone (Hazel et al., 2010).

Once you bring people together to talk about one subject, they actually realise that there's a lot of interdependencies and a lot of potential benefits through working together. (Area 1, Project manager)

The fact that we are bringing people together who have got shared values, ... I think that is a benefit in itself. (Area 2, Strategic steering group member)

It appeared that the consortia approach helped to remove some of the obstacles normally associated with partnership working in a youth justice setting (Souhami, 2009). Indeed, it was often the differences in the various partners' cultural working practices that brought about the benefits that respondents identified. Although these differences were recognised, they did not preclude the sharing of values and an understanding that co-operation was key to delivering effective resettlement solutions. Certainly, as noted below, the multi-agency nature of the consortia gave those partners involved a real sense of ownership and control over how the YJB funds could be best spent.

Having that sense of shared ownership, in terms of the partners feeling like they're actually having an input and that they're jointly responsible and sharing the decision making, that's been definitely effective. (Area 3, Strategic steering group member)

Bateman et al. (2013) highlight the importance of the secure estate and Youth Offending Services working closely together to improve resettlement planning and ensure that there is a continuity of service between custody and the community. This was repeatedly highlighted by respondents as paramount, and for a number of the respondents, improving the relationships between the secure estate and those agencies and services in the community was one of the most important outcomes of the consortia.

The key is working with the secure estate. ... That's been the strongest, most significant relationship that's formed from the consortium. (Area 2, Strategic steering group member)

There's been merit in getting the secure and community aspects together staffing wise, operationally. ... Bringing that together has improved relationships. (Area 2, Lead YOT manager)

Improved relationships, especially between the secure estate and the youth offending services. People now know who to talk to, ... and I think that that's something that will be sustainable. (Area 3, Strategic steering group member)

Looking to the future: sustainability in a time of austerity

As touched on in the above quote, the question of how to ensure that the projects/activities commissioned through the YJB funding continued after the funding ceases in 2017 was omnipresent for all involved in the consortia.

We need to be thinking about sustainability in the mainstream as a big theme for the coming year. (Area 4, Lead YOT manager)

While the improved working relationships between the secure estate and community providers, and between agencies across local authority boundaries, were not dependent on the consortia continuing, many of those interviewed were pragmatic that, in the current financial climate, finding resources to continue funding specific resettlement projects/activities would be difficult. As such, all of the consortia focussed on developing and delivering initiatives that would not be dependent of continued funding, and thus, would be sustainable in the longer term.

The partner agencies that were brought in ... are not delivering a service, they're coming in to the youth offending service to specifically train the staff to be able to deliver those programmes. So, that at the end of the resettlement consortium, YOTs can continue to run these things in-house. (Area 1, Operational steering group member)

In addition to using the funding to train existing delivery staff, new ways of working that were not dependent on continued consortia funding were agreed by many of the partners in the consortia. For example, in Area 3, new protocols were put in place regarding the sharing of information at key stages of the resettlement process. While in Area 1, ROTL was used to enable those leaving custody to attend taster days and familiarisation sessions at a local college.

Nevertheless, despite all of the consortia developing and delivering initiatives that were not dependent on continued funding, as outlined above, the fact funding was attached to the resettlement consortia was a great incentive for agencies and organisations to become involved. Respondents were concerned that without funding to incentivise participation, the consortium meetings and working relationships would not be maintained post-YJB funding. Furthermore, some of the smaller projects that had been directly funded by the YJB monies would struggle to continue operating.

I think that the kind of multi-agency set up [we have with the consortium] is something which could be continued, but then it's a case of what drives it, especially if there isn't going to be any kind of enhanced funding arrangement. (Area 3, Strategic steering group member)

The risk is that the projects aren't sustainable. ... There's a risk that some stuff that's funded [through the consortium] might just end. (Area 1, Strategic steering group member)

In addition, respondents felt that wider local authority budget cuts would also negatively impact on the sustainability of the consortia. This was because less resource and money was available to deliver the ‘standard offer’, meaning anything over and above this would suffer. It was also acknowledged that in a time of austerity, and particularly for those consortia areas with low custody numbers, focusing on resettlement was not a high priority. This is particularly worrying when, as Bateman (2016: 2) notes, those ‘left behind’ in the secure estate are ‘typically more vulnerable, more disadvantaged and serving longer sentences’ with more complex resettlement needs.

The financial cuts have, for YOTs and for the secure estate, had a massive impact. And when people [practitioners] have those kind of issues to deal with, they can't always be looking at changing and improving things in resettlement, can they? (Area 1, Project manager)

I think if I had to choose between being a practitioner and [being part of] a consortium, I'd choose a practitioner every time. ... But they're the difficult choices you've got to make. I want my kids worked with. I don't want to sit in more meetings. (Area 4, Strategic steering group member)

And even in the case of those partners where resettlement was a priority, the budget cuts had reduced the availability of staff to engage fully with the resettlement consortia.

I have noticed, particularly over the last five or six months, that the [wider budget] cuts have been impacting. So if, for example, someone is not able to make an operational management meeting, historically they would get [someone else to] cover [the meeting]. Whereas now, they're so thin on the ground that if that person is off, they physically can't get someone there [to the meeting]. (Area 4, Project manager)

With these barriers and challenges in mind, this article will now move on to look at how, in a time of austerity, resettlement consortia could function. In light of the quote above regarding the difficulty partners faced with actually physically attending consortium meetings, one suggestion that was made was the greater use of virtual forms of meeting (such as conference calls). This would greater reduce the resource burden faced by partners wanting to be involved in the consortia, yet still enable the consortia to function as originally envisaged.

One of the things to think about in the future is about using more virtual communication ... because it has proven to be difficult, particularly in this environment, to actually free myself up and other people on an operational level to go out and attend the [consortium] meetings. (Area 4, Strategic steering group member)

When the four resettlement consortia were created in 2014, a full-time project manager post was funded. As highlighted earlier in the article, the project manager was viewed as fundamental to the development and delivery of the consortia. Indeed, as the quote below illustrates, some respondents felt that having a dedicated project manager would be something worth funding moving forward (see also the role of a ‘Resettlement Broker’ in Hazel and Hampson, 2015, and Hazel et al., 2015).

I would hope that people have seen the value in having a dedicated manager's post. So that, I think, is something that I would want to advocate for continuing. (Area 1, Strategic steering group member)

Yet, as discussed earlier, many of the respondents recognised the merit of simply meeting and working with people with a common focus on resettlement, with or without a project manager. As a result, a number of respondents felt that there would be a benefit to continue working together as resettlement consortia even after any external funding had ceased.

It doesn't need grants, it doesn't need a regional coordinator [project manager], somebody that's there all the time. (Area 2, Strategic lead)

If we want to work together [on resettlement] as a group of local authorities we can do that without anybody funding it. ... We can still talk and we can still share our ideas. (Area 4, Strategic steering group member)

Indeed, for some, the funding and the pressures to quickly start delivering an enhanced offer had resulted in the process of commissioning projects and services feeling rushed and a little ad hoc. This in itself was evidence of the problematic nature of short-term funding with an attendant expectation of rapid positive resettlement outcomes.

I think anything that is short-term, you end up rushing things and playing at things. (Area 2, Strategic steering group member)

Discussion

There's not going to be a single solution [because] young people that fit into this category have got highly complex needs. (Area 1, project manager)

As highlighted in the above quote, the answer to the question of how to improve the resettlement outcomes of young people leaving custody is not a straightforward one. Young custody leavers have multiple support needs (Hazel et al., 2010; Hazel et al., 2012), and despite integrated services and partnership working being acknowledged as key to effective resettlement (Taylor, 2016), delivering this on the ground has historically been particularly challenging. Largely due to differences in cultural working practices and differences in aims and targets (Souhami, 2009), manifesting themselves as a general lack of cooperation (Gray, 2011).

As discussed in this article, the majority of respondents felt that the four consortia did improve partnership working between the key agencies involved in resettlement in each of the consortia areas. The reported improvements appeared to be facilitated by: commonly agreed aims and objectives; a dedicated project manager; a senior head of service as a strategic lead; and, undoubtedly the funding from the YJB. As specified in the original criteria from the YJB, for many respondents, the consortia increased collaborative working between partners, encouraged information sharing, and utilised non-statutory as well as statutory agencies. Indeed, the development of closer working relationships between the secure estate and agencies and services in the community was widely identified by respondents as a key success of the consortia. Particularly as it better enabled the provision of community-based services to address young people's needs to be identified at the start of the custodial sentence rather than just prior to release; a factor that has been shown to be key to effective resettlement practice (Bateman et al., 2013; Hampson and Kinsey, 2016).

Research has also highlighted how important it is for young people to have continuity of service provision between custody and the community (Bateman et al., 2013). Particularly when it comes to successfully engaging young people in the resettlement process through the building

of relationships (Bateman and Hazel, 2013). Indeed, establishing continuity in relationships with the young person was also something that was specified in the original criteria for the consortia. To address this, a number of the consortia areas employed a link worker (based in the secure estate) to work with secure estate staff to support young people both in custody and in the community upon their release. Yet despite interventions such as link workers, in reality, the geographically dispersed nature of the consortia and the resulting logistical problems this created, significantly hampered this continuity. For two consortia in particular, this was due to the secure establishments that young people were sent to being many miles (in some cases, over 100 miles) from where they and their local Youth Offending Service were from. Unfortunately, and somewhat perversely, decreasing numbers of young people in custody (Youth Justice Board, 2016) has resulted in fewer youth custodial establishments; the knock-on effect being that young people are now being accommodated further from home (Taylor, 2016). This can undermine even the best efforts at establishing and maintaining continuity in relationships, making the delivery of successful resettlement practice even more challenging (Factor, 2016).

In addition to this, was the issue of availability of, and access to, services. One of the original criteria for the resettlement consortia was to improve access to services. As previously discussed, while this was achieved in relation to a number of resettlement pathways (Youth Justice Board, 2005), all the consortia faced difficulties with regards to accessing suitable accommodation. The difficulties experienced by the consortia were in line with those highlighted in the evaluation of the RESET project (Hazel et al., 2010) where a discrepancy between the identified need and the availability of appropriate services was evident. Thus, even though the consortia made progress when it came to having appropriate accommodation in place for those leaving custody, they still faced difficulties in terms of identifying suitable housing providers, and deciding which providers could best represent the whole of an often geographically diverse consortium area. It is clear that local solutions need to be developed to address this issue. However, the importance of tackling the issue of accommodation cannot be emphasised enough as it impacts upon all other aspects of the resettlement process. Although Bateman et al. (2013) highlighted the need for a holistic approach to resettlement, the fact remains that, as noted by one of the respondents, *'unless accommodation is secured, we then have difficulties with education and the rest of the resettlement pathways'*. Hence the need to arguably prioritise accommodation over the other resettlement pathways (Youth Justice Board, 2005).

As highlighted at the start of this article, the funding from the YJB was, as one of the strategic leads noted, *'pretty vital'* when it came to securing the engagement of partners into the consortia. Yet, despite this, as previously discussed, many of the consortia were cognisant of the need to put in place interventions that would be sustainable without continued funding from the YJB. Indeed, for many, the Charlie Taylor review of the youth justice system that was ongoing during the latter stages of the evaluation created a great deal of uncertainty when it came to the question of how to continue the implementation of those projects/services that had been commissioned by the YJB funding. Sustainable support to young people was one of the specified criteria outlined by the YJB; primarily to avoid any resettlement gains for the young person being diminished once the supervision period had ceased. The benefits of sustained resettlement support are well known (Bateman et al., 2013), and the provision of sustainable support to young people was certainly a driver for many of those involved in the consortia. For others, though, the main driver behind the consortia was to try and use the short-term funding from the YJB to achieve longer-term benefits for those practitioners involved in the resettlement of young people. For example, rather than using all of their YJB funding to provide

projects/services to young people, all four consortia pragmatically used some of the funding to commission services to train existing delivery staff. Thereby ensuring that the consortia had an impact beyond the funding period. Despite some respondents claiming that the benefits attached to being involved in the consortia were not necessarily tied to accessing funding - for example, the value of likeminded individuals simply meeting periodically to discuss resettlement - the fact remains that with the steady reduction in numbers of young people in custody (Youth Justice Board, 2016) and the resulting lack of emphasis on resettlement, it is likely that it will become increasingly difficult for a) staff to prioritise being involved in a resettlement consortium with no associated funding, and b) for agencies to justify the commissioning of smaller projects/services aimed specifically at working with those young people leaving custody. Looking to the future, perhaps there is the need to broaden the concept of resettlement to include those young people at risk of custody, rather than just those leaving custody. For example, the Resettlement Broker Project in Wales (Hazel and Hampson, 2015; Hazel et al., 2015) assumed that those at risk of custody would still have complex needs requiring complex solutions, and as such would benefit from an effective resettlement intervention; albeit one aimed at preventing custody. As Hazel et al. (2015) point out, this means that even with low numbers of young people in custody, investment in resettlement in general still makes sense.

References

- Bateman T (2016) *The State of Youth Custody*. National Association for Youth Justice Briefing.
- Bateman T and Hazel N (2013) *Engaging Young People in Resettlement: Research Report*. London: Beyond Youth Custody.
- Bateman T and Hazel N (2015) *Custody to Community: Supporting Young People to Cope with Release*. London: Beyond Youth Custody.
- Bateman T, Hazel N and Wright S (2013) *Resettlement of Young People Leaving Custody: Lessons from the literature*. London: Beyond Youth Custody.
- Ellis T, Haydon C and Jenkins C (2012) *Evaluation of the Wessex Resettlement Consortium: Final Report*. London: Youth Justice Board.
- Factor F (2016) *Proving 'Effectiveness' in Resettlement*. London: Beyond Youth Custody.
- Farrant F (2006) *Out for Good: The resettlement needs of young men in prison*. London: Howard League for Penal Reform.
- Gray P (2010) The resettlement needs of young offenders leaving custody: an emotional dimension. *Prison Service Journal* 189: 25-28.
- Gray P (2011) Youth custody, resettlement and the right to social justice. *Youth Justice* 11(3): 235-249.
- Hagell A (2004) *Key elements of effective practice - resettlement*. London: Youth Justice Board.
- Hampson K and Kinsey T (2016) *Resettlement Broker Project – final report*. Cardiff: Llamau.
- Harding J (2006) Some reflections on risk assessment, parole and recall. *Probation Journal* 53(4): 389-396.
- Hazel N, Liddle M and Gordon F (2010) *Evaluation of RESET: A major programme for young offenders*. London: Catch 22.
- Hazel N, Wright S, Liddle M, Renshaw J and Gray P (2012) *Evaluation of North West Resettlement Consortium: Final Report*. London: Youth Justice Board.
- Hazel N and Hampson K (2015) *Youth resettlement in North Wales, and the Resettlement Broker Project*. Cardiff: Llamau.
- Hazel N, Hampson K and Kinsey T (2015) *Youth resettlement in Southern Wales, and the*

- Resettlement Broker* Project. Cardiff: Llamau.
- HM Inspectorate of Probation (2015) *Joint thematic inspection of resettlement services to children by Youth Offending Teams and partner agencies*. Manchester: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation.
- Jacobson J, Bhardwa B, Gyateng T, Hunter T and Hough M (2010) *Punishing Disadvantage: A profile of children in custody*. London: Prison Reform Trust.
- Ministry of Justice (2014) *Transforming Youth Custody: Government Response to the consultation*. London: Ministry of Justice.
- Ministry of Justice/Youth Justice Board (2014) *Youth Justice Statistics 2012/13*. London: Ministry of Justice.
- Ministry of Justice/Youth Justice Board (2016) *Youth Justice Statistics 2014/15*. London: Ministry of Justice.
- Smith D (2006) Youth crime and justice: research, evaluation and 'evidence'. In Goldson B and Muncie J (eds) *Youth Crime and Justice*. London: Sage.
- Souhami A (2009) Doing youth justice: Beyond boundaries? In: Barry M and McNeill F (eds) *Youth Offending and Youth Justice*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Taylor C (2016) *Review of the Youth Justice System: An interim report of emerging findings*. London: Ministry of Justice.
- Wright S, Hazel N, Liddle M, Renshaw J and Gray P (2012) *Evaluation of South West Resettlement Consortium: Final Report*. London: Youth Justice Board.
- Youth Justice Board (2005) *Youth Resettlement: A framework for action*. London: Youth Justice Board.
- Youth Justice Board (2016) *Monthly Youth Custody Report May 2016: England and Wales*. London: Youth Justice Board.

ⁱ The following local authorities were involved in each of the consortia: East Midlands - Derby, Derbyshire, Leicester City, Leicestershire, Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire; South London - Lewisham, Lambeth, Croydon, Greenwich, Wandsworth and Southwark; North East London - Waltham Forest, Hackney, Enfield, Newham, Redbridge and Islington; and, South and West Yorkshire - Leeds Kirklees, Bradford, Wakefield, Calderdale, Sheffield, Doncaster, Barnsley and Rotherham.

ⁱⁱ The seven 'pathways' are: case management and transitions; accommodation; education, training and employment; health; substance misuse; families; and, finance, benefits and debt.

ⁱⁱⁱ Release on temporary licence.