



Prisoners'  
Education  
TRUST

# Great Expectations

Towards better learning outcomes for  
young people and young adults in custody





# Prisoners' Education TRUST

**Our vision is that every prisoner has the opportunity to benefit from education.**

## **Our beliefs**

- ▶ Education has the power to enrich, change and develop people throughout their lives.
- ▶ Offering prisoners access to education improves their self-esteem and enables them to choose a more constructive way of life – making it less likely that they will re-offend.

## **Our purpose**

- ▶ We support prisoners to engage in rehabilitation through learning. We do this by providing access to a broad range of distance learning opportunities and related services, to enable prisoners to lead more fulfilling lives and to contribute positively to society.
- ▶ We focus on those whose needs are not served by statutory prison education and who want to progress.
- ▶ We work to influence policy and practice so that education provision for prisoners becomes more effective; and we enable prisoner learner voice to be heard.

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## Foreword

My name is Christopher Syrus and I created the social enterprise Syrus Consultancy CIC in 2009. We deliver creative youth services, combining the arts with personal development to engage those considered 'hard to reach' from impoverished backgrounds.

My belief is that young people and young adults fall into criminal behaviour through a lack of self-belief and self-esteem, believing firstly that crime is the solution to better their situation and secondly that they can gain street credibility and respect from their behaviour.

I believe the first failure for young people is a dated education system, which does not suit all styles of learning and provide suitable personal and social development. Once in custody, efforts should be made to bridge learning gaps through practical, engaging teaching from teachers who are suited to the job in character, as well through qualifications.



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Education is vital to breaking the cycle of crime, as with knowledge and skills young people and young adults can create a future for themselves. Personal and social development is key to raising aspirations, so that they want to utilise their time in custody to better their potential.

I believe the arts are a great therapeutic and engaging way of breaking down barriers and supporting learning. Much research has been done on the benefits of art in rehabilitation from poetry and drama, to painting and playing instruments. In my work I see how engagement through arts creates transferable skills, builds self-belief and brings light and life back to individuals, particularly those who may be vulnerable, have learning needs or are suffering from unresolved trauma.

Young people are the best advocates to speak on what they require to learn and improve and there should be a forum to ensure young people's voices are listened to. Each individual will have their own journey, likes, dislikes and learning needs. Personalisation is important to make the type of impact that will change lives. Effective 'through the gate' support and educational opportunities are essential so that momentum from learning in custody can be continued in the community.

Ultimately education staff needs to be able to build trust and relationships with young people and young adults to overcome barriers to learning. Role models who have experienced the criminal justice system are ideal candidates to deliver these services as they are able to connect through shared experience and provide an example of what education, positive choices and belief in your potential can achieve.

I would encourage the new Justice Secretary and ministers to heed the recommendations of this report. As someone who has experienced the criminal justice system, and was funded through Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) to study a degree in Psychology while in custody, I owe my level of success and fulfilment in life to the power of education. If individuals can be supported to find their passion and then gain the education to pursue it, we will have a system that enables real change.

**Chris Syrus** · Syrus Consultancy CIC

# Executive Summary

## Great Expectations

This report is published at a time of 'great expectations'. Earlier this year we have seen the publication of two separate reports recommending the need to put education at the heart of custody; the Coates Report focusing on over 18's and the interim Taylor Report focusing on under 18's. The Interim Taylor report begins to set out a new vision and asks us to 're-imagine youth custody'. Importantly it puts aspiration as a key focus, as does the Coates report, challenging us to have greater expectations of the learners, the staff, the quality of education and of the leadership needed to drive an aspirational culture. However this report is also published at a time of great uncertainty. We have a new Secretary of State and ministerial team. As we go to print, the final report from Charlie Taylor has not yet been published. Whether we see a prison reform white paper is in doubt.

## Challenges and Opportunities

This report, focusing on improving education for young people and young adults in custody, has had a somewhat moving target. As well as a changing policy and political climate, new education contracts in the young people's estate have only started to 'bed in' one year on. However PET has been fortunate to speak to a range of experts over the last year, including many at a well attended academic symposium kindly hosted by London South Bank University. PET asked them to identify challenges and opportunities to help enable these 'great expectations' to be realised. It then carried out a thematic analysis of roundtables held at the symposium and the key areas are reflected in this report. There is a sense of optimism in researching this report that much of the academic evidence and reviews read as part of a literature review, point in a similar direction. However strong leadership, strategic and radical thinking and joined up action is needed to pull together the different threads and improve outcomes for young people and young adults in custody.

## Recommendations

This report makes ten recommendations, starting from the premise that custody should be a last resort and that further reductions to both young people and young adults in custody need to be a clear policy goal given the particular vulnerabilities of this age group outlined in the recent reviews by Harris, Laming and Young. However once in custody, despite some reported improvements in resettlement support and hours spent in education for young people, much more could still be done to develop a culture of learning and aspiration. As Coates and Taylor have both set out, this needs to come from the top and leaders of establishments need the autonomy to meet the needs of individual learners and importantly be held to account for outcomes both in custody and through the gate. A clear theory of change with underlying principles and values needs to underpin a new approach.

There needs to be much more strategic thinking about meeting the needs young adults in particular, who risk falling through the gap of the Taylor and Coates reviews. This report highlights some of the main themes from our symposium and reading about what works in education for young people and young adults in custody. Unsurprisingly, time and again, the importance of relationships, effective engagement and transitions came up. We look forward to working with the new Justice Secretary and ministerial team to realise these 'great expectations'.

## Recommendations

### 1. Context

*Recommendation 1:* Significant and welcome reductions have been made to children and young adult populations in custody. The Ministry of Justice and the Youth Justice Board should make it a clear policy goal to make further significant reductions to the number of children under 18 and young adults aged 18-24 held in custody.

*Recommendation 2:* A new joined up approach for young people and young adults should be developed, drawing on learning from the different reviews that have recently been undertaken. Part of this joined up approach should involve the Ministry of Justice appointing a lead person to take forward this area of work.

### 2. Culture

*Recommendation 3:* PET would like to see an urgent review of the new thirty hour contracts in the Young People's Estate. The lack of flexibility and the focus on output measures can divert attention away from the individual needs of young people and their long term outcomes. The Governor, Head Teacher or Leader of each institution should be in charge of each young person's learning journey from custody to community, being able to innovate for the needs of their population but also being held accountable for the outcomes in custody and through the gate.

*Recommendation 4:* A broad definition of education needs to be developed which is linked to a clear theory of change with underlying principles, demonstrating an understanding of how learning transforms the lives of young people and young adults.

### 3. Relationships

*Recommendation 5:* To get the best outcomes for young people, the Ministry of Justice should develop policies to ensure that the best people are recruited to work with young people. This includes: improving recruitment practices, pay and conditions and ensuring that training for all staff working with young people and young adults are psychologically and therapeutically informed with underlying principles and linked to a clear theory of change. It also includes accelerating security clearance processes to avoid losing high quality candidates.

*Recommendation 6:* Custodial establishments for young people and young adults should focus on participatory methods where young people's voices are listened to, valued and acted upon. Initiatives that involve families to a greater extent in learning should also be a priority.

### 4. Engagement

*Recommendation 7:* The engagement of reluctant learners has to be a key focus. Embedded learning, outside traditional classroom settings, should become the norm rather than the exception across the secure estate. The use of sports and the arts should be a key part of this approach, in order to provide 'hooks' for learning. Ways to employ more role models with experience of the criminal justice system should be explored.

*Recommendation 8:* Building on the recommendation that was put forward by the Coates Review and has been accepted by the Government, the Ministry of Justice should review the use of technology in the youth estate to facilitate more effective digital learning.

### 5. Learning journey

*Recommendation 9:* A range of options should be used to make each young person's and young adult's learning journey personalised and aspirational, including: ROTL, making use of community provision, linking with colleges and universities and ensuring access to a wide range of distance learning opportunities.

*Recommendation 10:* Resettlement needs to start from early on in a sentence to ensure there are smooth transitions to the community and re-offending is reduced for young people and young adults. A multi-agency approach is needed to ensure that all resettlement needs are covered. Where young people will be transferred to the adult estate forward planning is needed to ensure a smooth transition and continuation of their learning journey.

# 1. Context

In the last ten years the Youth Justice System has made considerable progress in reducing the number of children and young people in custody. The number of children under 18 has fallen by over two-thirds in the last seven years<sup>1</sup> with the current population now under 1000. Children are also committing fewer crimes with proven offences down by 72% from their peak in 2005–06<sup>2</sup>. However, these reductions in the population were not the result of an overt policy objective and have not been distributed evenly for example: 41% of children in custody are from a black or minority ethnic background whereas in 2008 they only accounted for 26%<sup>3</sup>. The population of young adults has also declined in recent years; between 2010 and 2015 the number of young adults aged 18-20 declined by 41% and the number of 18-24 year olds by 26% during the same period<sup>4</sup>. Whilst these reductions are to be welcomed, there are still too many young people and young adults in custody.

## Characteristics of young people in custody

Young people under 18 in custody have a range of neuro-developmental needs, mental health issues, experiences of care and disrupted education which will impact on their ability to engage in educational activities, as highlighted below:

- Rates of ADHD are estimated at 30% which is five times higher than in the general population<sup>5</sup>
- 20% have identified learning disabilities compared to 2-3% of the general population<sup>6</sup>
- 43-57% are estimated to have dyslexia compared to 10% of the population<sup>7</sup>
- 60% are estimated to have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) compared with 5-14% from a typical adolescent sample of the general population<sup>8</sup>. This can lead to difficulties in listening, processing instructions and to understanding age-appropriate vocabulary with children appearing rude or uninterested as they find educational contexts difficult to follow<sup>9</sup>
- 50-80% are estimated to have had a traumatic brain injury compared to 10% of the general population<sup>10</sup> with effects including fatigue and cognitive problems which may result in children being seen as lacking initiative (which could be mistaken for laziness), lacking inhibition (especially around inappropriate behaviours), or having difficulty following rules<sup>11</sup>
- The educational background of children in custody is poor—almost nine out of 10 boys (88%) said they had been excluded from school<sup>12</sup>
- Almost two-fifths (38%) said that they were aged 14 or younger when they were last at school<sup>13</sup>
- Fewer than 1% of all children in England are in care<sup>14</sup> but looked after children make up 33% of boys and 61% of girls in custody<sup>15</sup>.

There are also specific issues for young adults aged 18-24, indicating the importance of young adult specific interventions in order to meet their needs:

- Neuro-scientific research has found that the parts of the brain associated with planning, verbal memory and impulse control and the process of cognitive and emotional integration 'continues to develop well into adulthood' and therefore is not 'mature' in this conceptual sense until the early to mid-twenties<sup>16</sup>
- Levels of psychosocial maturity relating to development and behaviour that involves personality traits, interpersonal relations and affective experience have also been found to vary between individuals with some young adults being more like under-18s in their maturity of judgement than they are like older adults, particularly those at the lower end of the age range<sup>17</sup>.

## Current challenges

Young people under 18 are often held far away from home and there are now far less small, local secure children's homes (SCHs) which have been found to provide the best care for young people<sup>18</sup>. There are concerns that many of the secure environments, in particular Secure Training Centres (STCs) and Young Offender Institutions (YOIs), are not safe places for children to be held in. There are similar concerns for young adults held in young adult institutions and adult prisons. Some of the findings below indicate the kind of environment young people and young adults are being placed in:

- Use of restraint on children is increasing. In 2013–14 there were 28 reported incidents of restraint per 100 children in custody, up from 18 in 2009–10<sup>19</sup>. 4350 injuries were sustained by children while being subject to restraint between 2011 and 2015<sup>20</sup>
- Between 2010 and 2016, 49 deaths of young people under 21 were identified as self-inflicted<sup>21</sup> as were 84 deaths of young adults aged between 18 and 24<sup>22</sup>
- Self-harm rates are high with 6.6 incidents of self harm per 100 children during 2013–14, a rise of a quarter on the year before. However, rates of self-harm are higher for girls. Girls account for 15 incidents of self-harm per 100 children, compared with 6 for boys<sup>23</sup>
- During 2014-2015 a quarter of children (24%) held in STCs said they had felt unsafe in their centre at some point and one in three boys (33%) held in YOIs said the same<sup>24</sup>
- HMIP Inspections revealed that two out of five YOIs during 2014-2015 were not safe enough<sup>25</sup>

- Assault rates amongst children in custody are rising. In 2013–14 there were 15 reported assaults per 100 children in custody, up from 9 in 2009–10<sup>26</sup>
- Children being victimised in custody often won't report this to staff. In STCs only half of children (51%) said they would tell a member of staff, in YOIs just over a quarter (27%) said they would<sup>27</sup>
- Young adults have the least time out of cell of all prisoners. 36% said that they had less than two hours out of their cell on a weekday, and only 6% said they had over 10 hours<sup>28</sup>
- In prisons that had integrated adults and young adults, inspectors found that outcomes for the young adults were generally worse. The levels of violence, use of force and segregation had grown among young adults as there was often no strategy to manage this distinct group<sup>29</sup>. However, inspectors found that the dedicated young adults prisons were generally less safe than integrated prisons with high levels of violence<sup>30</sup>.

Custodial sentences have the worst reconviction rates of any criminal justice disposal, particularly for young people and young adults. Over two-thirds (67%) of children (10–17) released from custody were reconvicted within a year of release<sup>31</sup>. Young adults also have a high rate of re-offending, 56% of 18-20 year olds re-offended within one year of release compared to 45% of prisoners aged 21 and over<sup>32</sup>. This reflects in part the vulnerable nature of the young people and the entrenched nature of their offending. However, the custodial experience itself can exacerbate problems, severing positive ties with the family and wider community and bringing additional trauma.

### Recommendation 1:

**Significant and welcome reductions have been made to children and young adult populations in custody. The Ministry of Justice and the Youth Justice Board should make it a clear policy goal to make further significant reductions to the number of children under 18 and young adults aged 18-24 held in custody.**

### Joined up thinking

In September 2015 the Ministry of Justice asked Charlie Taylor, an educational specialist, to lead a departmental review of the youth justice system. A large focus of the review has been to look at the current education provision for under 18's in custody and how well it meets their needs. An interim report of emerging findings was published early 2016 setting out a radical vision, which, if implemented, will create a number of smaller secure alternative provision schools with 'a productive and therapeutic environment'<sup>33</sup>. PET was a part of this review process, hosting an expert symposium in January 2016 where Charlie Taylor gave a keynote speech.

In September 2015, Dame Sally Coates, also an educational specialist, was asked to lead a review of education in prison and make recommendations as to how it could be improved. PET sat on the review panel feeding into the overall process and findings. A final report was published in May 2016<sup>34</sup> setting out many recommendations that have been put forward by PET and the Prisoner Learning Alliance (PLA)<sup>35</sup>. Building on the positive direction of both these reviews, PET would like there to be more join up between them and efforts made to understand the whole journey from young people, to young adults to adults rather than seeing them as separate. Neither review focuses specifically on young adults, even though research highlighted by groups such as the Transition to Adulthood suggests that young adults are a distinct group with needs that are different both from children under 18 and adults older than 25, underpinned by the unique developmental maturation process that takes place in this age group<sup>36</sup>. Furthermore, with the right intervention, young adults are the most likely age group to desist and 'grow out of crime', while the wrong intervention at this time can slow desistance and extend the period that a young adult is involved in crime<sup>37</sup>. The Coates Review has only a small section on young adults acknowledging that as learners, they are the group most likely to make the least progress, most likely to be withdrawn for safety reasons and most difficult to engage with. Despite this, there are no specific recommendations made in the Coates Report for how best to engage them. The risk is that the recommendations are implemented without due consideration to this point.

Alongside these two reviews, there have also been a number of other relevant reviews and enquiries that PET believes it is important to bring together in order for government to think strategically about reform for young people and young adults in custody.

These include:

Report of the Independent Review into Self-Inflicted Deaths in custody of 18-24 year olds chaired by Lord Harris<sup>38</sup>:

*'All young people in custody are vulnerable [...] it is clear that young adults in prison are not sufficiently engaged in purposeful activity and their time is not spent in a constructive and valuable way [...] Our evidence demonstrates that young adults do not have enough activities, such as education or work, which will enable them to live purposeful lives.'*

An independent Review chaired by Lord Laming about the over representation of looked after children in custody in England and Wales<sup>39</sup>:

*'As a looked after young person in custody, young people commented that they were 'bottom of the pile' and vulnerable to bullying. They described a lack of financial support, lack of educational support or careers advice and a tick box approach to preparing them for employment.'*

An Independent Review into the Over-Representation and Poor Outcomes for Young Black and/or Muslim Men in the Criminal Justice System<sup>40</sup>:

*'There are many more young BAME male prisoners than older ones, with the numbers, in the adult estate, being highest for 18-20 year olds and 21-24 year olds. In the youth estate BAME disproportionality is starker still, with 43% of 15-17 year olds coming from BAME backgrounds [...] According to a report published by Department for Education, black Caribbean pupils were nearly four times more likely to receive a permanent exclusion than the school population as a whole and were twice as likely to receive a fixed period exclusion.'*

## Recommendation 2:

**A new joined up approach for young people and young adults should be developed, drawing on learning from the different reviews that have recently been undertaken. Part of this joined up approach should involve the Ministry of Justice appointing a lead person to take forward this area of work.**

## 2. Culture

### Current context

PET supports the focus on putting learning, in its broadest sense, at the heart of the youth justice system. A big focus of both the Coates review and the Taylor review was the emphasis on creating a change in culture where autonomy, innovation and accountability are key aspects. The Taylor review interim findings highlighted that:

**Leaders of youth custodial establishments have little freedom to innovate or effect changes to their regimes, to commission the services they require, or even to recruit and train their own staff'. In Taylor's proposed model of secure alternative provision schools, 'Head teachers would have the autonomy and flexibility to commission services...and create a culture which would raise attainment and improve behaviour and rehabilitation in a productive and therapeutic environment. (p.6)<sup>41</sup>**

Similar findings were echoed in the Coates Review:

**Prison Governors should be given new autonomy in the provision of education, and be held to account for the educational progress of all prisoners in their jails, and for the outcomes achieved by their commissioning decisions around education and their leadership of the prison. (p.10)<sup>42</sup>**

PET and the Prisoner Learning Alliance (PLA) agree that governors and leaders of secure institutions need to be responsible and accountable for the journey from custody to the community. They also need to be responsible for the integration of education within the wider prison regime to achieve an institution wide learning culture and for improving outcomes, as set out in a briefing document produced by PET and the PLA in May 2015<sup>43</sup>. Accountability for outcomes needs to continue through the gate, as currently there is a lack of clarity over who is responsible for outcomes after release. The focus needs to shift from focusing on outputs to outcomes.

### 30 hour contracts

In the young people's estate in the four designated young offender institutions for children under 18, new education contracts were introduced in August 2015, which saw the number of education hours increase from 15 to 27 (plus 3 hours of P.E.). 60% of these hours are 'protected' and 40% are 'unprotected' (the so called 60/40 split rule). Prior to 2015 children in YOIs were on average receiving 11.4 hours of their mandated 15 hours of education a week<sup>44</sup>. Early findings suggest that currently young people are on average receiving 17 of these 30 hours<sup>45</sup>.

Whilst PET welcome the prioritisation of education, the focus on achieving the contracted numbers of hours of teaching as an end in itself can deflect attention from individual learners needs. Despite the 60/40 split rule giving some flexibility through the notion of protected and unprotected time, in practice this still restricts flexibility to incorporate other interventions such as psychological support. In theory the increase in hours spent in education is to be welcomed, however this does not tell us about the quality, appropriateness or learning outcomes of that time spent 'in education'.

In the Coates Review, recommendations include governors being given autonomy to design a framework of incentives that encourage attendance and progression in education and also that there should be no restrictions on the funding of arts, sports and Personal and Social Development (PSD) courses if the governor believes these are appropriate to meeting the needs of prisoners. Similarly, the Taylor Review advocates head teachers of the proposed new secure alternative provision schools commissioning a range of services to meet the needs of their populations, including mental health support and speech therapy which is to be welcomed.

At a roundtable discussion at PET's symposium, one delegate said:

*'Sometimes the system we work in doesn't allow us to have flexibility and creativity and I think a lot of that is driven politically and I would like to see a solution with the contracts moving forward that would allow for a much greater degree of flexibility'.*

However PET does have concerns that increased freedom could lead to an approach not based on a therapeutic focus if the governor or leader of the institution is not sufficiently aware of different educational models, for example, introducing 'boot camp' approaches, which the evidence shows are ineffective and do not have an impact on re-offending levels<sup>46</sup>. Therefore with increased autonomy also needs to come increased accountability for outcomes both in custody and after release. As recommended in The Coates Report, giving governors more autonomy over education would require professional development for the senior leadership team. As a further element of this new role, head teachers or institution governors would need space to develop the strategic vision rather than simply dealing with all the day to day prison issues. PET agrees with the Royal Society of Arts The Future Prison scoping paper<sup>47</sup> that autonomy is not inevitably a 'good thing' on its own and that institution leaders may need to become more outward and downward facing, rather than inward and upward facing. PET would like to see leaders of any new secure provision for young people to be supported to become more outward facing towards the community in order to develop a strong rehabilitative and learning culture throughout their institutions.

### Recommendation 3:

**PET would like to see an urgent review of the new 30 hour contracts in the Young People's Estate. The lack of flexibility and the focus on output measures can divert attention away from the individual needs of young people and their long term outcomes. The governor, head teacher or leader of each institution should be in charge of each young person's learning journey from custody to community, being able to innovate for the needs of their population but also being held accountable for the outcomes in custody and through the gate.**

### Broad definition of education

It is especially important when thinking about the needs of young people and the culture of the institution that a range and combination of learning opportunities are available including: academic, vocational, relationship, life skills, peer to peer and e-learning and they are not restricted to classroom learning, which is not appropriate for many young people. It is important for young people under 18 and young adults who are still developing, to be given space to 'learn to learn', with education provision and therapeutic interventions being interlinked. Education in isolation will not address all the underlying emotional, attachment and behavioural issues which are ingrained within young people because of their early year experiences. Young people need help to understand their own behaviours and how to articulate their anxieties in order to notice a step change in their education. Also education in a wide sense can involve supporting young people to live independently, for example: cooking and meal planning, cleaning, how to pay bills and how to effectively shop in the supermarket.

For the last year PET has worked across the sector to develop a theory of change that can be used by governors and education providers to formulate a vision, strategy and delivery model for education across the whole of their institution to make the most of its wide ranging benefits. This arose out of dissatisfaction with rather simplistic notions of what education could do; namely get a qualification, get a job and stop offending. The process of developing this theory of change was in collaboration with prison teachers, former prisoner learners and by reviewing some of the key literature regarding prison education and desistance; the process by which people stop offending and stay stopped. The diagram opposite sets out the way in which PET think that prison education 'works' with the five broad themes below being the benefits of education<sup>48</sup>.

Whilst this model has been developed with adults in mind, it could also be used to influence work with young people going forward. PET believes that these five themes collectively lead to longer term outcomes, including creating a culture that supports rehabilitation. PET would be happy to undertake further work to identify exactly what a theory of change might look like for young people and young adults, what might need to be amended and how. PET welcomes the inspection carried out by HM Inspectorate of Probation<sup>49</sup> looking at desistance as a specific theory of change for young people. They identified a number of important features, including: collaborative and multi-agency working; engaging with wider social contexts such as the family; motivating young people; creating opportunities for change, participation and community integration and addressing barriers such as exclusion from education. This report focused on Youth Offending Teams. A similar piece of work should be carried out with a focus on the experiences of young people and young adults in custody in relation to desistance themes and also to check the understanding of practitioners.



## Case Study - Diagrama

David Maguire from Diagrama custodial centre in Spain described their vision and approach as 'education as parenting'. He said that the focus was more on 'quality rather than quantity' of education and that 'engagement is key – ensuring young people can understand the purpose of education for their lives and futures'. He describes the educators as having a number of roles 'coaches, teachers, carers and parents'. Learners are able to use secure and controlled internet access to do a variety of online courses supervised by teachers in the classroom. They have good links to local schools and work towards young people going to school on day release. David says that most will do this before the end of their sentence and it is normal for them to go into mainstream education after release. They do lots of mediation work with families and from day one the family and young person meet together with a social worker and psychologist. They also have a parenting school where families help other families. He says every time parents visit the child they also meet with the social worker. 'It is all about relationships' says David.

Research by Hart<sup>50</sup> suggests that a key element missing from England's secure system is a clear theory of change. Hart found that Spain, Finland and parts of the USA have a more positive sense of what they wanted their establishments to achieve, and a theoretical framework for how they would do it. Diagrama's theory of change was based on love and boundaries; in one centre in the USA this was based on positive youth development and in Finland where a welfare based approach is adopted the theory of change was based on care, upbringing and education. Speaking at PETs symposium in January 2016 Dr Hart said: *'It's about going back to basics, asking the big questions about what custody is for and what will work to help young people to transform their lives. In comparison to the approaches taken in Spain, Finland and parts of the US, our use of custody in England and Wales looks very process driven and lacking in vision'*.

## Recommendation 4:

**A broad definition of education needs to be developed which is linked to a clear theory of change with underlying principles, demonstrating an understanding of how learning transforms the lives of young people and young adults.**

### 3. Relationships



*The tutor in the workshop, he went well over and above ordinary duties and therefore the atmosphere and environment we walked into was much more ready for us to be able to do something more dynamic. He put time into every different person. He didn't just teach me, he helped with a whole bundle of things and it changed my view of going to workshop dramatically.*

**(Young person with previous experience of an STC and YOI)**

In order for young people to get the most amount of benefit from education, both in custody and in the community, there needs to be a focus on the quality of relationships. This has been most apparent from discussions PET has had with a number of key experts and professionals working in youth justice throughout this year. Quality relationships formed between learners and staff are also central to ensuring that each institution, whatever their structure is in the future, develops an institution wide learning culture where learning is prioritised and seen as part of everyone's role, from custody staff through to education staff and all the way up to senior management and leaders of secure institutions. Focusing on quality relationships would also help to address issues with increasing levels of violence in secure institutions for young people.

Although relationships are key to successful outcomes, there are significant challenges to getting them right. Both young people and young adults may have experienced a disproportionate amount

of childhood and adolescent trauma such as: assaults and bullying, domestic violence, abandonment or separation, bereavement and witnessing family, school or community violence<sup>51</sup>. They are also more likely to have experienced head injury than young people not involved in the justice system<sup>52</sup> as well as having higher levels of speech, language and communication needs and specific learning difficulties<sup>53</sup>. It is most important that anyone working with young people and young adults in the justice system are aware of their needs including the effects of trauma and its implications, for example: it is more likely that they will have difficulties with forming attachments, limiting their ability to trust and open up to adults who may be able to help them<sup>54</sup>.

#### Good practice: Nurture groups

In mainstream education, nurture groups are small, structured teaching groups for pupils with behavioural, social or emotional difficulties, particularly those who are experiencing disruption or distress outside of school. They aim to provide a safe, comfortable, home-like environment, with clear routines and adults modelling positive relationships, so that pupils can build trusting relationships with adults and gain the skills they need to learn in larger classes. There is an emphasis on the systematic teaching of behavioural and social skills, on learning through play, and on sharing 'family-type' experiences, such as eating food together<sup>55</sup>. Children involved in nurture groups spend around half their week in a nurture group and the other half in their mainstream class with the aim being to support them to transition back into full time mainstream classes. A survey conducted by Ofsted<sup>56</sup> during a four month

period where inspectors visited 29 schools and spoke to 95 parents found that, when successful, the impact on young children and their families can be highly significant and far-reaching. Nurture groups could help pupils learn to manage their own behaviour, to build positive relationships with adults and with other pupils and to develop strategies to help them cope with their emotions. A nurture group approach has not been trialled in custodial settings but given the backgrounds of many of the young people in custody, a nurture group approach could work well and fit in with a more therapeutic approach advocated in Charlie Taylor's interim report. As part of this project PET facilitated a meeting between a nurture group expert and HMYOI Feltham. As a result they are due to introduce 'nurture group breakfasts' to pilot this approach.

A consistent relationship that recognises each young person as an individual and is able to respond to their particular risks, strengths and needs is important<sup>57</sup>. However, in terms of consistency, the youth justice system does not currently provide this stability either in custody or in the community as poor conditions leads to a high churn of staff. This can lead to young people further mistrusting staff and having a lack of faith in the system<sup>58</sup>.

## Case Study - Genius Within

Genius Within is a social enterprise established in 2011 to help people with neuro-diversities and Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) fulfil their potential. Neuro-diverse conditions and SpLD such as: dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (AD(H)D) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) affect a high percentage of young people in custody. Genius Within work with young people and adults who are experiencing problems in custody to receive the diagnosis, coaching and support that they need. They focus on literacy and building up their strengths so that they are able to recognise their potential.

Central to this approach are the specialist case managers who work with people in custody. They understand the struggle and communication limits of neuro-diverse individuals, and how to extract an awareness of strengths from people with low levels of self-belief. They take their time in building up a relationship and rapport with each individual, grounded in things that are identified as important to them. This individualised approach works well with young people with complex needs, who often refuse to engage with anyone in the prison. Genius Within are currently working in HMYOI Portland and run training over London, the South East and South West area.

Quite often the specific needs of young adults are overlooked because once they turn 18 they are treated as adults. However, as already highlighted, brain development and neurological, emotional and social maturation typically continues into the mid-twenties<sup>59</sup>. Young adults in the justice system often face the challenges similar to those under 18 as a result of abuse or neglect in childhood, making it difficult a trusting relationship with a professional<sup>60</sup>. They are more likely to engage with a professional on the basis of the key qualities of that person. It is therefore crucial to get the recruitment, training and ongoing development of staff right.

### Key qualities of staff important to young people

Recent research emphasises the importance of relationships to young people in getting the right outcomes:

A Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) conducted by the Ministry of Justice<sup>61</sup> highlighted that practitioner ways of working with young people, the 'therapeutic alliance' is important to young people as they value a relationship that is warm, open, and non-judgemental, indicating that this helps them to engage with the intervention and work towards change. Successful interventions also made sure that communication between staff and young people was strengthened through mutual understanding, respect, and fairness.

A recent report by HM Inspectorate of Probation into desistance and young people<sup>62</sup> cited the importance of relationships. Young people who had successfully desisted from crime, told inspectors that a trusting, open and collaborative relationship with a Youth Offender Team worker or other professional, was the biggest

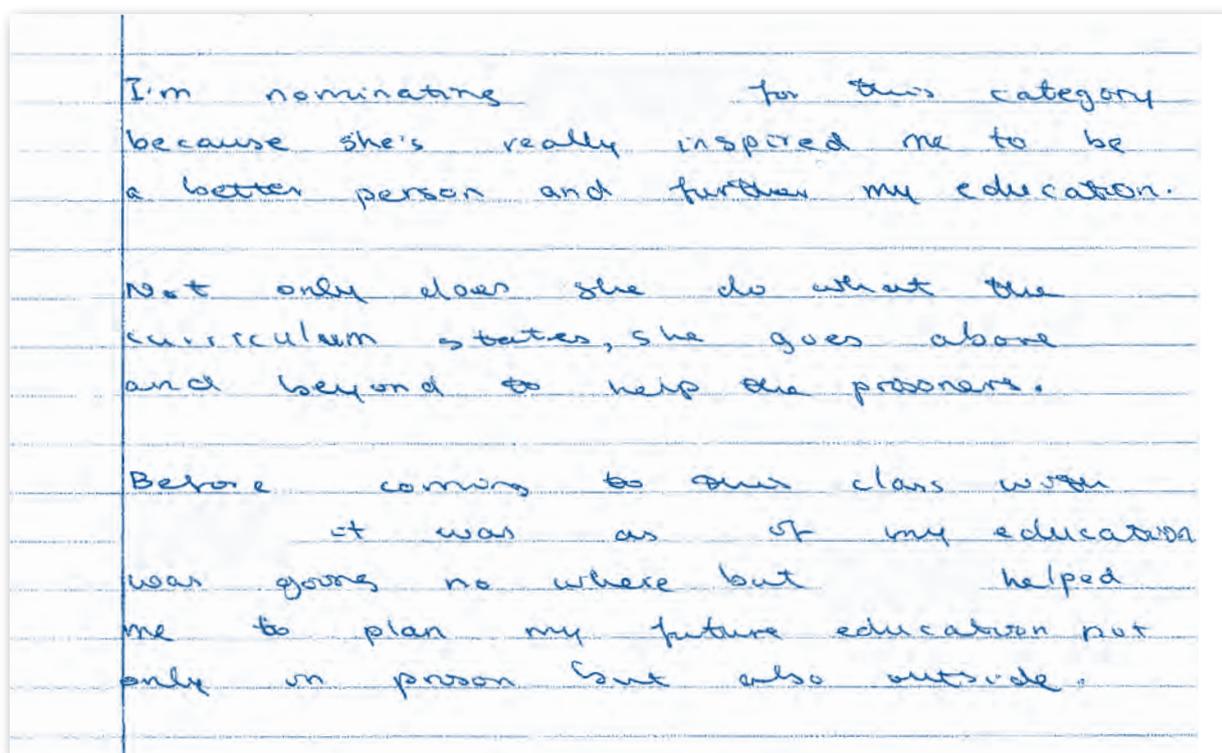
factor in their achievement.

Hart<sup>63</sup> highlighted the importance of relationships in a study which looked at secure systems for 'young people in trouble' in England, Spain, Finland and the USA. She found that good quality relationships were important; not just between staff and children but within staff and peer groups. Good relationships could give staff a clear sense of how they can use a positive relationship to help a child 'Learn how to live' and within which children could begin to feel safe and learn new ways of thinking and feeling about their lives. Hart highlighted good practice at Diagrama in Spain where frontline staff would go into the classroom with the young people and be involved in all their activities, hence building relationships with them the whole time.

The importance of relationships and getting the right people to work effectively with young people was a strong theme from the roundtable discussions held at PET's expert symposium in January 2016. There was a sense that there is a lack of wider understanding of all staff of some of the underlying issues for young people. Although the Charlie Taylor interim report had not been published at that point, there was agreement with the early findings that many staff working in YOIs and STCs do not have the skills and experience to manage the most vulnerable and challenging young people in their care, nor have they had sufficient training to fulfil these difficult roles. Whilst PET has seen some evidence of this in our initial scoping phase, it has also found many examples of committed and dedicated staff working hard in challenging environments to get the best results for the young people in their care.



PET, as part of the Prisoner Learning Alliance, have recently introduced the Prisoner Learning Alliance awards, with an awards ceremony taking place at an annual lecture to celebrate and recognise and celebrate outstanding teachers, officers and individuals who go the extra mile to promote learning. We received a number of nominations from young people in custody who shared with us what they valued about teachers:



There is much to be learnt from alternative school provision outside the secure estate, where the young people share many of the characteristics of young people in custody. An Ofsted Outstanding rated alternative provision school in Surrey that PET visited told us that relationship building is key with the first few minutes of every class being used to find out how the young people are.

## Training and recruitment

PET would like to see the development of a set of principles for relational work with children and young people with experience of youth justice and care agencies that are adapted by all agencies working with them. These principles need to be underpinned by psychologically informed approaches, which should include attachment theory, trauma informed approaches and developmental psychology including emerging evidence relating to the adolescent brain. Trauma informed practice would include preparing key staff with knowledge about trauma and its effects and supporting them in their work with potentially traumatised young people – both by ensuring that there are mechanisms in place for individual monitoring and debriefing and by promoting multi-disciplinary teamwork. Furthermore, staff working intensively with young people should be given opportunities to build their own psychological resilience, be able to disclose and explore their emotions in a supportive environment in order to manage their feelings effectively<sup>64</sup>. Qualitative findings highlighted in the MoJ Rapid Evidence Assessment<sup>65</sup> indicated that practitioner training, experience and supervision were important if the benefits from an intervention were to be realised.

PET understands that Public Sector Prisons are currently developing a supervision model for staff working with young people in custody but it has yet to be approved. This model aims to promote learning and skills development whilst also promoting psychological well-being. PET would like to see the introduction of this approach as soon as possible.

PET also stress the need to improve the recruitment practices, training and conditions in order to recruit and retain high quality staff who can successfully engage with young people. Delegates at PET's academic symposium felt that better pay will attract better quality staff and that pay must reflect the complex role, responsibilities and expectations. As also recommended in the Coates Review, PET would like all staff, from officer to senior management level, to be given appropriate professional development to support them to deliver high quality education. Poor conditions lead to the high churn of staff, such as officers and YOT workers, which then impacts on young people as they do not experience consistent relationships with one key person.

One young person who spoke to PET said: *'[Prisons] need to pay more attention to who they hire and make sure that the people they hire want to help people and not just get a job and get paid and go home'*.

### Involve young people in staff recruitment

Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE) published a campaign report<sup>66</sup> which was developed with a Young Campaign Team (YCT), made up young people aged 16-20 with direct experience of custody. The YCT came up with three campaign ideas they wanted to develop in order to reduce violence in custody, one of which was focusing on improving staff recruitment practices. As part of this they came up with an 'ideal job description'

for staff working in youth custodial settings including: key personal qualities, key responsibilities and the training required. They also called for direct involvement of young people in the recruitment process, including; suggesting questions to be included in the interview and creating opportunities for young people to be involved in interview panels.

Other young people at Feltham who spoke about their learning experiences to the Prisoner Learning Alliance in February 2016 said that they needed teachers who could connect with them and get them involved. They felt more able to engage with teachers who *'genuinely want to help'*.

A person who attended PET's expert symposium in January 2016 involved in education provision in the justice sector said:

*'In terms of education staffing, in a prison we operate 52 weeks a year – the only days we do not deliver education is on Bank Holidays'. Wages [...] you can't actually compare with working in mainstream. Retention of good staff, you have to have policies in place that will actually incentivise those people to be able to stay. It doesn't work for a lot of people'*.

High levels of bureaucracy can result in delays in teachers and other professionals gaining security clearance. PET have heard of instances where there has been a wait of five to six months by which time the person has found other employment. No doubt any highly skilled teachers and other professionals would be put off by such long waiting times.

## Recommendation 5:

To get the best outcomes for young people, the Ministry of Justice should develop policies to ensure that the best people are recruited to work with young people. This includes: improving recruitment practices, pay and conditions and ensuring that training for all staff working with young people and young adults are psychologically and therapeutically informed with underlying principles and linked to a clear theory of change. It also includes accelerating security clearance processes to avoid losing high quality candidates.

### Participatory relationships

A recent submission by Clinks to the review of the Youth Justice System highlighted the importance of listening to children and young people. They urged the review to develop specific proposals to ensure that children's voices are heard, both individually and collectively. Clinks consulted with young people, in collaboration with social justice charity, Peer Power to ensure that young people's voices were heard. Young people told Clinks<sup>67</sup> that:

*'No-one sits you down and asks what you can improve on, and make positive contributions...they should ask advice from young people 'cos they know how to help young people'.*

*'We're not listened to; the majority don't want to listen'.*

### Case study - Kinetic Youth

Kinetic Youth works with young people under 18 in HMYOs Cookham Wood, Feltham, Werrington and Wetherby and with young adults at HMP Rochester using a youth work model. They also work with young people as part of their resettlement in the community. Kinetic train young people on representation and participation, and support them to work with adults to improve services for young people. Kinetic delivers this within the secure estate and have supported young people's councils' to work with senior management teams of YOIs. Kinetic also delivers participation work within the community supporting young people to have their say, improve services and make changes that benefit them and other young people in communities. Kinetic also ensures that young people's views are at the heart of the organisation and its development by training and involving them in the recruitment of all staff. They have Young Advisors who advise managers and prioritise the organisations' development, and employ young people as peer mentors and apprentices.

PET had similar findings when we consulted with young people in two secure establishments in 2013<sup>68</sup>:

*'There should be more one to one. I like 'reflective learning' when you get help one to one and also they talk to you about your feelings so your can get stuff off your chest which helps. But you only get to do reflective learning when you have been in a fight. It should be available for everybody'.*

*'My YOT worker doesn't listen to what I'd like to do. She refers stuff to me that I'm not interested in'.*

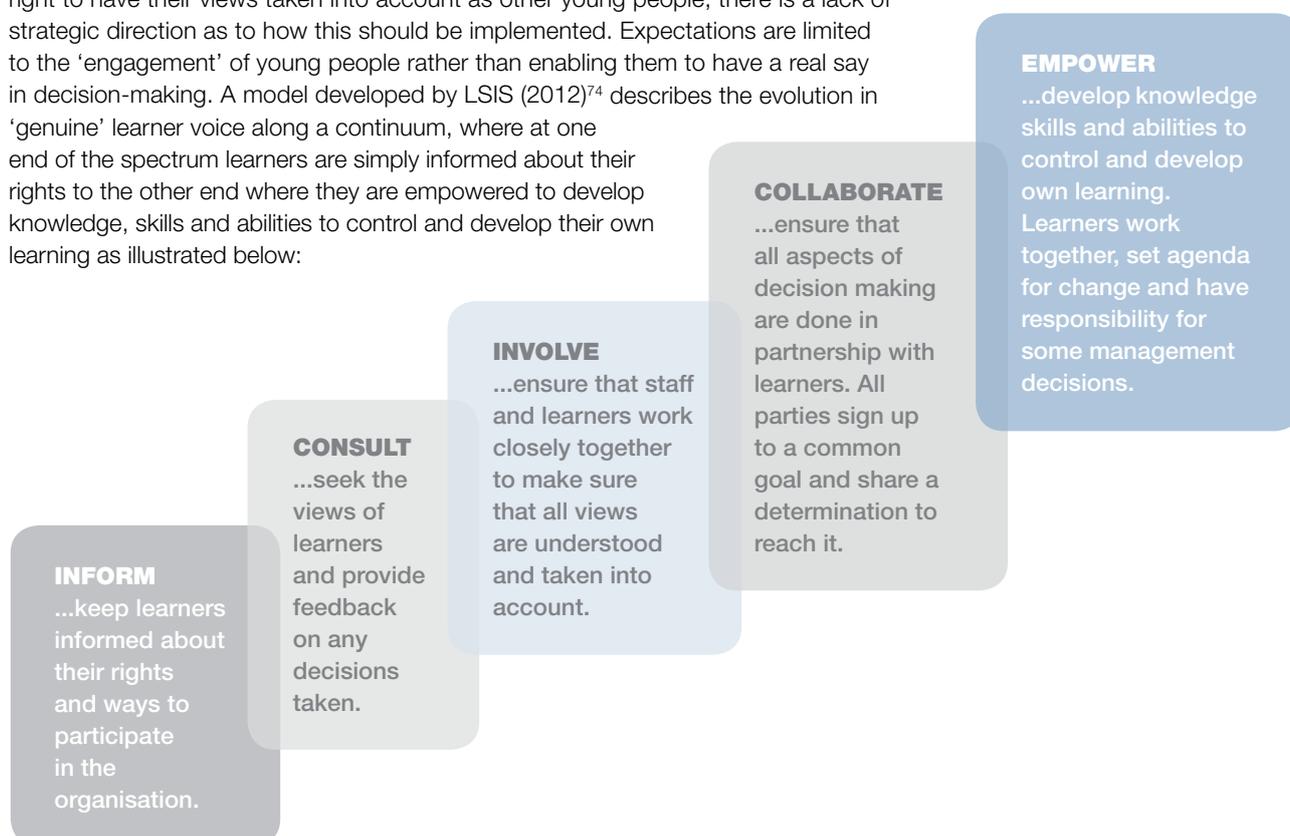
### Learner Voice

At PET's expert symposium, Dr Caroline Lanskey delivered a presentation about using a multi-layered learning culture model to understand and facilitate learning that is of value to young people in custody. Right at the centre of the model is the young person with everything else coming out from that centre. Dr Lanskey stressed that there is an absolute need to use Learner Voice models of participation so that young people remain at the heart of the system<sup>69</sup>.



Since 2013 PET has been leading on work to promote and advance Learner Voice initiatives in secure institutions including in YOIs. A toolkit<sup>70</sup> promoting a wide range of different Learner Voice initiatives, including a youth council at a YOI, was published to encourage and support staff in a variety of institutions to develop and enhance their Learner Voice initiatives. Learner Voice can be a powerful tool for young people as well as institutions in helping them to '*develop a culture and processes whereby learners are consulted and proactively engage with shaping their own educational experiences*'<sup>71</sup>.

Little (2015)<sup>72</sup> argues that there has been limited development of participatory practices in the field of youth justice during a period when youth civic participation has experienced significant development in other fields, such as health, local government and youth work more broadly. Hart and Thompson (2009)<sup>73</sup> state that although young people have the same right to have their views taken into account as other young people, there is a lack of strategic direction as to how this should be implemented. Expectations are limited to the 'engagement' of young people rather than enabling them to have a real say in decision-making. A model developed by LSIS (2012)<sup>74</sup> describes the evolution in 'genuine' learner voice along a continuum, where at one end of the spectrum learners are simply informed about their rights to the other end where they are empowered to develop knowledge, skills and abilities to control and develop their own learning as illustrated below:



PET advocates using approaches that give young people meaningful opportunities to have their voices heard, moving towards the far right of the continuum. Successful initiatives in the past include the U R Boss project, previously run at the Howard League which gave young people opportunities to become 'young advisors'. They helped decide priorities, became advocates for other young people in the criminal justice system and helped shape policy and practice through, for example, the writing of a manifesto, attendance at political party conferences, meeting politicians and shaping campaigns<sup>75</sup>. A relatively new social justice charity Peer Power also empowers children and young people to actively use their voices. They create platforms for the voices of those with lived experience of the issues, through storytelling and peer engagement to improve empathy, public perception and better understanding, care and compassion for those who rarely have a stake in society.

## Family relationships



The importance of family is well-established both in terms of the creation of social bonds as part of the desistance process and practical and emotional family support helping in the transition from custody to community<sup>76</sup>. A range of interventions that aim to improve family relationships and parenting have been found to reduce re-offending<sup>77</sup>. Interventions are well needed in custody, given that a large amount of young people and young adults are themselves parents; 19% of young adults (18–20 years old) surveyed said they had children under 18 years old, which compares to 4% of the general population<sup>78</sup> and more than one in ten (11%) children in young offender institutions told inspectors that they had children themselves<sup>79</sup>.

### Case Study - Safe Ground

#### Father Figures HMYOI Brinsford Pilot Parenting Programme

Since 2014, a parenting programme working with young fathers at HMYOI Brinsford has helped them to consider their relationships with partners, ex-partners and families. The programme employs an experienced family worker and facilitator who supports participants to explore ways of communicating and build on their strengths through a combination of intensive, tailored one-to-one sessions and a one-off group programme. Some of the young fathers' partners, ex-partners, and families are concurrently supported out in the community, utilising outside partner agencies. The programme is in the process of being evaluated. Interim findings suggest that it is helping reduce re-offending as well as improving relationships, communication and thinking skills.

Additionally only 37% of boys said it was easy for their friends and family to visit them with 21% saying they didn't receive visits from friends and family at all<sup>80</sup>. We know that a large proportion of young people have been in local authority care and many experienced neglect and abuse. It will not always be appropriate to try and build family relationships. However, where it is appropriate, PET would like to see the acceleration of initiatives that support positive family relationships.

### Family work at HMYOI Feltham

Feltham has recently introduced a number of initiatives to support the development of positive family relationships:

- Termly parent/carer and teacher mornings which run every six weeks. These are similar to a parents evening in a mainstream school but take place in the day time.
- Phone calls home to parents to improve relationships and communication regarding the students schooling, including sharing positive examples of their learning. For some families this may be the first time they have had positive feedback about their child's learning.
- Storybook families have recently been introduced. Recordings made by the boys reading a story to a sibling/child which are sent out with a new copy of the book for them to read along with at home.

### Family Voice

At PET's symposium in January 2016 we heard from the sister of a serving prisoner who started out in a YOI. In the past ten years she has seen the transformation in her brother through the process of him engaging in a range of learning opportunities and offers her views on how families can be involved more in the process:

*'As the sister of a serving prisoner, I have seen first hand the transition someone takes from a YOI to adult institutions, and how education and family support provide the positive influence many people need in order to complete their sentence. Letting families engage in the process provides further support to the prisoner and justice system and enables families to actively contribute to the rehabilitation process. Whether it's the introduction of a learning day similar to a family day, a joint course offering, learning a skill together or listening to a lecture; a way to combine efforts will encourage focus and determination, and these are the attitudes that society want to see in people leaving prison.*

*I for one have seen the difference education has made to my brother and to our family watching him progress. He has successfully completed an honours degree, began studying for his masters, is a member of a number of initiatives aimed at improving the prison experience and has found real empowerment in his achievements. This is a real life example of what education can do for you and I hope other people can follow suit'.*



***Role models who have experienced the criminal justice system are ideal candidates to deliver learning as they are able to connect through shared experience and provide an example of what education, positive choices and belief in your potential can achieve. As someone who has experienced the criminal justice system, and was funded by Prisoners' Education Trust to do a degree in Psychology while in custody, I owe my level of success and fulfilment in life to the power of education. If individuals can be supported to find their passion and then gain an education to pursue it, we will have a system that enables real change.***

**Chris Syrus, Founder of Syrus Consultancy CIC which delivers creative youth services.**

### Recommendation 6:

**Custodial establishments for young people and young adults should focus on participatory methods where young people's voices are listened to, valued and acted upon. Initiatives that involve families to a greater extent in learning should also be a priority.**

## 4. Engagement

There are significant barriers to engaging young people and young adults in education whilst in custody. As already highlighted, YOIs and STCs are increasingly unsafe places to house young people. A Lead Inspector for Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons told PET that the biggest challenge facing institutions was managing the violence and behaviour so that young people can learn and attend education. These safety and violence issues are having a negative impact on the running of institutions with policies such as the use of 'keep apart' lists, paralysing the ability of education to be effectively run.

Furthermore, many young people and young adults have experienced disruptions to their education including:

- Nine out of 10 boys (88%) said they had been excluded from school<sup>81</sup>
- Almost two-fifths (38%) said that they were aged 14 or younger when they were last at school<sup>82</sup>
- 33% of boys and 61% of girls in custody have spent time in care<sup>83</sup>.

The Coates Review also highlighted that in the adult estate, the young adult population of age between 18-20 can be one of the most challenging groups to engage in education and that it is important to 'provide learning with content and in settings that engage with young adults' interests and aspirations'<sup>84</sup>.

### Personalised learning

At PET's symposium in January, roundtable discussions highlighted the need to move away from a 'cookie cutter' and 'one size fits all' approach and to focus increasingly on the individual needs of each young person. This call for a more 'personalised' approach was also a key theme in Dame Coates' review. Inductions and individual learning plans are key to ensuring each young person reaches their learning goals and potential. The more personalized the learning plan, the more likely the individual needs will be met resulting in better outcomes. The learning plan should be integrated with other plans including the sentence plan and should be accessible to all staff involved in a young person's learning journey so that all can work towards the best outcomes for each young person.

### Case study - Clayfields House Secure Children's Home

PET visited Clayfields House Secure Children's Home during the initial scoping phase, consistently rated as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. At Clayfields staff carry out very detailed initial assessments of learning support needs and potential barriers to learning immediately on arrival. The results of assessments and information retrieved from previous schools and colleges are used to ensure that programmes of learning match young people's needs very well. Educational staff use the results to skillfully plan learning and anticipate areas of challenge for each young person. As a result young people develop clear educational and training aspirations and become well motivated to progress.



### 'Hooks' for learning

'It's about getting the young person ready for education' Delegate, PET symposium.

Many young people in custody may be reluctant learners, making it important to find a 'hook' with which to engage them. The 'hook' can be a way to get them to engage in areas they enjoy, subsequently exposing them to learning in a comfortable environment. Apprehensions about attending education and training often stem from previous negative and disrupted educational experiences, which young people involved in the justice system are more likely to have experienced. Some young people will avoid going to the education department of a prison - which will typically contain traditional-style classrooms and predominantly use conventional teaching methods - due to the negative connotations these rooms and teaching styles have for them. A conventional classroom based approach should not be the only option for children and young adults with these past experiences of school. A symposium delegate said:

*'One thing we've all talked about is how to get people back into a classroom. They've avoided it for so long and I'm not convinced that is the right idea to get people back into a classroom. If it is the classroom then it has to be a different classroom'.*

Embedding basic skills development in activities which interest each young person can make the subject appear more relevant and less intimidating. Wider activities can therefore provide the 'hook' to engage young people in English and maths. This can support the development of an institution-wide learning culture and move learning away from the education department. It may also help with violence and disruption by reducing the frustration caused by staying in a classroom for three hours at a time. However there remains a need for some learners, particularly those who aspire to further and higher qualifications, to study maths and English as standalone subjects. There is much to be learnt from some mainstream educational establishments who have developed good practice in teaching discrete English and maths in an engaging way.

#### **Polmont example of project based learning**

*'This approach embeds core skills within the fabric of courses across a range of subject areas meeting the aspirations of young people and highlighting the relevance and benefits of cross curricular learning'* (James King, Head of Offender Learning, Scottish Prison Service).

HMYOI Polmont bases its curriculum around several themed projects and embeds learning of basic skills into topics such as World War One, International Women's Day and even National Bike Week. The topics are suggested by the young people and run across all subject areas for twelve week terms. At the end of the topic there is a celebration and display of work connected to that topic. Contextualising learning into projects engages the young people and enables them to develop academic skills, but also crucially to learn and think critically about current affairs, history, humanities, science and politics. This approach is resource heavy, requiring sufficient time for teachers to plan lessons and gather resources, however the

benefits are found in greater engagement in classes and workshops, improved behaviour and improved educational outcomes. HMYOI Polmont also use peer mentoring, which is not found in the young people's estate in England. The construction workshop involves young people constructing a small building over the course of the twelve weeks from scratch which builds a sense of progress and achievement. Every week images of the building and learners are projected across the establishment so the progress is shared and celebrated across the prison building a sense of pride amongst the learners. At the end of the twelve weeks, two or three learners are chosen to become peer mentor buddies for the next group. The advantage is that they help build rapport and facilitate the relationship between the young people and staff. It also gives the mentors a sense of responsibility and experience of being seen as a role model for others. Lessons in basic skills are embedded and contextualised into the workshop and take place at tables in the workshop, rather than a separate classroom.

#### **Engaging young people through animal care**

Research by Little (2015)<sup>85</sup> suggests that education for young people in a secure setting could achieve a lot more. Little's research involved questionnaires, discussion groups and interviews with a total of 75 young people in a YOI about their experiences of education. The most positive comments by children about the educational opportunities available were related to a specialist 'Raptor' project in the YOI; a programme that was accredited and integrated English, mathematics and geography into work young people carried out with a large range of birds of prey, which they cared for. The project was also highlighted as an example of good practice by Ofsted who said that the project *'uses care and display of predatory birds to engage young people who traditionally don't engage in learning activities. The Raptor Project builds self-confidence, personal development and team-working skills and improves academic skills such as English and mathematics'* (Ofsted, 2014)<sup>86</sup>.

Many of the young people who were successful on the project had significant barriers to learning, mental health issues and with little formalised learning which acted as a barrier to more traditional learning. Despite these barriers the progress they made in developing their personal skills was significant.

Another example of this was The Horse Course at HMYOI Portland, evaluated by Dr. Rosie Meek (2012) who found that *'participants consistently gain observable skills in managing emotion, maintaining attention, perseverance and confidence. The Horse Course seems particularly appropriate for those who have failed to engage with interventions, learning and activities and are medium to high risk'*<sup>87</sup>



## Engaging young people through sports

In September 2015 PET visited HMP & YOI Parc's Fitness Academy where they run a structured 12 week programme combining fitness and learning for young people under 18. During their time at the Academy young people can achieve over 25 qualifications alongside developing valuable personal development skills. One young person told PET about his experience of being on the academy:

### Case study - Young person on Sports Academy HMYOI Parc

*'I am 16 years old and this is my first time in prison; I was sentenced to three years six months. When I was in the community I wasn't doing anything; I wasn't in work and I wasn't in mainstream school. I was a drug user and all I generally wanted to do was feed my habit. I have lots of convictions related to my drug use.*

*I've now been in prison for eight months and the education programme called Parc Fitness Academy has changed the way I look at myself. I'm now involved in the Academy as a mentor to other young people as I finished the programme myself. I have achieved numerous qualifications within this time which have not only helped me think about my health but making me more employable. I've also linked in with numerous agencies from the community such as Second Chance project. They have given me an idea of what I want to do when I'm released which is go into the fitness industry and pass on my knowledge and get a full time job.*

*After being on the academy for 12 weeks and then as a mentor for another 10 weeks I feel fitter, healthier, more knowledgeable and more confident in myself and this is all down to my education programme and how it has helped me. I now see myself as a role model for other young people and I hope this continues for the remainder of my sentence and into the community also'.*

### Research summary: Sports programme for young adults

Meek (2012)<sup>88</sup> conducted an evaluation of a project run by Second Chance Project that worked with 81 young adults over a two year period through a series of cohorts of Sports Academies. The Academies were delivered over 12-15 weeks, incorporating intensive football or rugby coaching with personal development and formal qualifications. Individually tailored resettlement case work was also available to facilitate a successful transition back into the community. The project was found to have a positive impact on one year re-offending rates with only 18% being recalled or reconvicted compared with the 48% prison average. The project also helped many of the young people move on to further education, training and employment opportunities after their release from custody.

At HMYOI Werrington they have successfully created a 'sports pathway' employing a specialist Sports Science tutor.

## Engaging young people through the arts

A piece of work that specifically focused on engagement was the Summer Arts College (SAC) Programme. The SAC is an intensive, full-time programme offered over the summer holiday period, intended for young people at high risk of offending. Summer Arts College is a partnership between youth offending teams (YOTs), arts organisations and literacy and numeracy tutors and was a national partnership between the Youth Justice Board and Arts Council England. Between 2007 and 2012, over 1500 young people took part and out of those, over 1200 completed the programme. An evaluation was completed by Unitas with results indicating positive results in terms of continued engagement with education, training and employment (ETE) as well as re-offending rates. Four weeks after completion of the project, 71% of young people who had completed the Summer Arts College were attending some form of education and training provision, which was significantly higher than the proportion attending ETE in the four weeks immediately before the programme (54%). In terms of re-offending the average rate of offending in the 13 weeks before participating in the Summer Arts College was 8.9 (standardised to represent offences per 100 weeks at risk). This rate fell to 4.9 while the young people were attending Summer Arts College and only rose to 5.7 in the 13-week period following the Summer Arts College.



### Engaging girls and young women – Clean Break

Clean Break works with women and girls with experience of the criminal justice and those at risk of offending. Clean Break's education programme offers a range of courses and training opportunities throughout the year from their safe, women-only space. They have also worked in a range of women's prisons across England, including: Low Newton, Send, Styal and New Hall.

Through theatre, students are able to explore their creativity and imagination, and work collaboratively to develop their skills and build their confidence.

Clean Break have a number of programmes specifically for young women including:

- **Brazen** A young women's theatre group for 17-24 year olds that gives participants a chance to develop confidence and creativity whilst working with other young women. It includes drama games, vocal and physical warm-ups and improvisation. Participants who complete the programme can gain an OCN London Entry Level 3 qualification which could act as a 'hook' for further learning.
- **Play in a week** A performance based course for young women and girls who over the course of a week work to create a play, using drama skills to develop characters and devise scenes. The final sharing is presented to an invited audience, helping to build skills and confidence.

### Recommendation 7:

The engagement of reluctant learners has to be a key focus. Embedded learning, outside traditional classroom settings, should become the norm rather than the exception across the secure estate. The use of sports and the arts should be a key part of this approach, in order to provide 'hooks' for learning. Ways to employ more role models with experience of the criminal justice system should be explored.



## Engaging young people through technology

Opportunities to develop learning through technology, including secure and controlled internet access, should also be available for young people and young adults as part of a blended model of learning combining one to one, group work and individual study. Technological competence is not only a key skill required for learning but also for the successful transition to adulthood. Digital literacy is crucial in preparing young people for education, employment and life skills and being able to offer them like for like learning offered in the mainstream system. Improving engagement will also improve behaviour as we know that teachers face huge struggles trying to manage behaviour.

### Potential technology at Medway STC

Nacro are taking over the delivery of education in Medway STC from September 2016. They have developed a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) which is currently being used with some of their learners in the community with similar educational backgrounds to young people in custody. They are planning to use this technology with young people in Medway as a way of engaging them, developing their digital skills and giving teachers access to better resources to work with. They will also be delivering learning through this platform in other secure settings and in forensic mental health units with young people.

A key part of Nacro's VLE is 'Cloud Classroom'; an Office 365 application which allows teachers to create a 'virtual classroom' where they can engage with their

learners. Staff members can create assignments, add students, access teacher resources and view reports on the class performance. Students accessing a virtual classroom will only be able to see information relevant to their learning, such as their assignments and the class notebook. Teachers can assign work which can then be edited by the student in a browser. Once the work has been assigned, the teacher can monitor the work being completed in real time using the co-authoring tools, allowing them to see where the students are typing at that moment in time as well comment on the work. This technology will allow learners to access their work and assignments anywhere they can log on to a computer, taking away the need for learning to happen in a traditional classroom.

The Coates Review recommends an urgent review of the Virtual Campus (VC) to assess if and how it can be made fit for purpose, as well as to review the security arrangements that underpin the use of ICT across the prison estate. PET know that resources have been put into developing a specific Virtual Campus (VC) for young people in custody but also understands that YJB data shows that there are low numbers of users. PET would like the review of technology for adults to also include the young people's estate.

Education provider Novus have been developing a specific Virtual Campus for young people in custody (YPVC) which is much more user-friendly. It has additional educational and personal/social development content and a useful search facility. Unfortunately due to some technical issues at some of the sites it is only just starting to be utilised and so there are currently low numbers of learners using it. However there is great potential, for example HMYOI Wetherby are making good use of the YPVC particularly to support exams and practice exams. Additional educational content is being sourced and it is hoped that the YPVC will help young people leave being 'e-confident' and also aware of e-safety. Given the importance of leaving custody 'e-confident' and also awareness of e-safety issues, we would like the review of technology for adults to also include the young people's estate.

### Recommendation 8:

**Building on the recommendation that was put forward by the Coates Review and has been accepted by the Government, the Ministry of Justice should review the use of technology in the youth estate to facilitate more effective digital learning.**

## 5. Learning Journey

Within each secure establishment, there will be young people and young adults of varying abilities and with differing learning needs. It is essential that each learning journey is unique to that young person. The current 30 hour contracts offer little room for flexibility and variety of delivery as already highlighted. PET welcomes the prioritising of education as indicated through the introduction of the 30 hour contracts; however it is clear that this has in some ways driven behaviours that are more focused on meeting contract output targets rather than the individual needs and progression of each young person. In order to meet the diverse range of needs of young people in custody, it is essential that a flexible, joined-up and multi-disciplinary approach is adopted.

### Progression

A lot of focus is placed on engaging young people with low literacy and numeracy levels. This is understandable given the strong links between education and offending and the disrupted educational background of many young people in custody. However, there should be opportunities for young people to continue and progress their learning to higher levels if they have the time and capabilities. Research published in 2012<sup>89</sup> found that under the old education contracts, only a small number of young people appeared to be leaving custody with Level 2 qualifications or above, which was disadvantaging them in their search for employment or further training. We are not aware of any published data on the levels of qualifications young people are achieving since the implementation of the new contracts but we would like to see increased opportunities for progression.

Where limited opportunities are available within the establishment, release on temporary licence (ROTL) should be used where appropriate so that learning can take place in the surrounding community. One delegate at PET's symposium said: *'You're never going to be able to fund within a prison what you need for everyone. But that doesn't mean to say you're not within five or six miles of where you could'*.

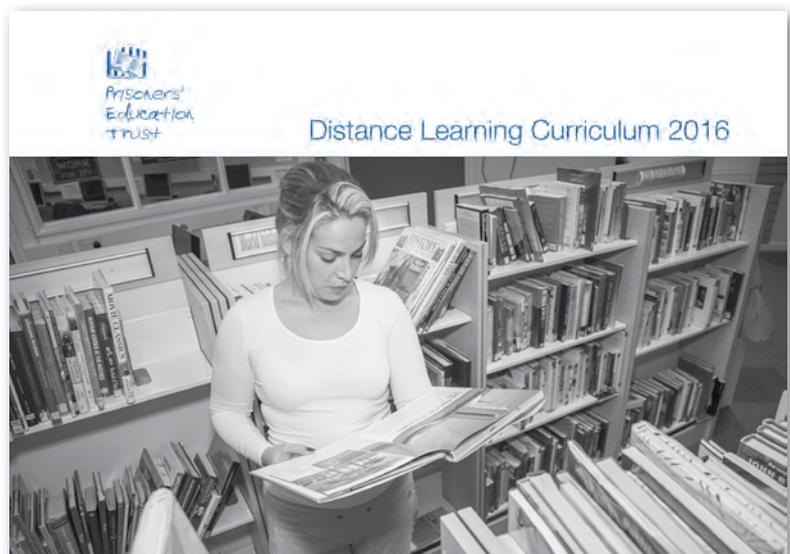
A Resettlement worker from a Youth Offending Team also said: *'I am working with one young man where ROTL has given him many opportunities, including completing a ten week motor course'*.

One young person who spoke to PET had been in the middle of his GCSEs when he was remanded into custody. He was academically able, but was stuck doing level 1 and 2 literacy and numeracy whilst in custody which he did three times. He found there to be low aspirations of young people, which was something Charlie Taylor highlighted in his interim report. This young person is now half way through a degree but faced significant challenges to get there. PET would like to see learning that is aspirational so that once engaged, young people will develop a thirst for learning and progress to higher levels. We would like to see work to promote university learning amongst young people in custody start to take shape as it is currently starting to in the adult estate.

In order to support learner progression, PET is conducting a pilot project where a small number of young people under 18 are being funded to access distance learning. One young person who PET has recently funded to study a distance learning course said:



***During my sentence I need to try and advance my learning at the right level and attempt to make something positive of my sentence. With the lack of activities in here, I think I could devote my full attention to the course. I'm looking to gain a practical qualification for when I leave here, to help towards me being a productive member of society.***



## Recommendation 9:

A range of options should be used to make each young person's and young adult's learning journey personalised and aspirational, including: ROTL, making use of community provision, linking with colleges and universities and ensuring access to a wide range of distance learning opportunities.



### Through the gate support

Re-offending rates for children and young adults remain stubbornly high. Over two thirds of children reoffend within 12 months of release from secure institutions<sup>90</sup> and re-offending rates are also substantially higher amongst young adults in the criminal justice system than older adults<sup>91</sup>. Where appropriate support is available and agencies work together in a joined-up way, custody can provide young people with the learning and interventions they need to start the process of building a better life. Unfortunately, in many cases this does not happen. Less than half (47%) of sentenced boys consulted by the HM Inspectorate felt they had done something to make it less likely they would offend on release<sup>92</sup>. Research by Beyond Youth Custody on resettlement suggests that the two major problems to effective resettlement are the lack of joint working between custody and community agencies, and a lack of sufficient partnership work between agencies in the community on release<sup>93</sup>.

The period of transition from custody to the community can provide a window of opportunity when young people are enthusiastic to change. This can however be reversed by a lack of sufficient, relevant and timely support, leading to disillusionment and a return to offending<sup>94</sup>. The interim report from Charlie Taylor emphasises that ensuring children are in full-time education or employment can be one of the most effective ways to prevent youth crime. Although young people who are not in education or employment are twenty times more likely to commit a crime<sup>95</sup> many young people will leave custody without knowing where they are going to live, making it extremely difficult to plan for their learning in the community. A range of resettlement studies in the last 15 years<sup>96 97 98 99</sup> indicate that despite the importance of education, training and employment (ETE) in resettlement, only between one third and two thirds of young people have any arrangements in place by the time they are released. Even when education was in place before release, very often it was not able to form part of a continuous education or training programme with as little as 13% - 18% of young people having a continuous education experience<sup>100</sup>.

A young person we spoke to at one YOI in February 2016 who was six weeks from release, said he wanted to go to college to do GCSEs but would not find out where he was going to be living until two weeks before his release. A Head of Education at one YOI told us they try to keep up links with schools and teachers, offering video links and teacher visits to find new school and college places for release, but *'it is hard when you don't know where someone will be going back to'*. This lack of join-up between different aspects of resettlement can decrease the chances of young people building that better life.

Under the new education contracts an Engagement and Resettlement (E & R) team has been developed in the four YOIs. E & R workers can provide support around educational opportunities within the establishment and liaise with community providers to contribute to a continuous and consistent learning journey from custody into the community. PET sees these roles as crucial in addressing some of the issues that have been identified in the last 15 years and in enabling young people who have gained qualifications in custody to continue. These roles are particularly important for young people who are serving short sentences and do not have the time to complete courses whilst in custody. We hope that when data is available, it will show that these roles have contributed towards better educational and resettlement outcomes for young people through the gate. PET would like these roles to be extended to work with young adults also.

## Case study - Kent Youth Offending Team Resettlement workers

Kent Youth Offending Team currently employs two resettlement workers who support young people throughout their sentence in custody and up to six months after their licence ends. They work with young people in HMYOI Cookham Wood, Medway, Rainsbrook and Oakhill STCs and Swanick Lodge SCH. Kent is one of the only counties providing this tailored service but the role is under review and may not continue for much longer as funding is not ring-fenced. Resettlement workers can support young people with a range of resettlement needs, including: education, accommodation and leisure activities. They can also pick young people up on their day of release to ensure a smoother transition.

Whilst in custody, Resettlement workers support young people to access a range of opportunities, including sports programmes and training opportunities in the community through Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL). They also take education and training providers into establishments to meet with young people before their release in order to arrange college places and apprenticeships.

One of the Resettlement workers said: *'I strongly think ROTL is the key to getting young people back into a form of ETE when leaving custody. They are more prepared and confident when ROTL has worked well'*.

## Case study - 'One Spirit' programme at HMYOI Feltham

One Spirit is a project for young people delivered by Hackney Music Development Trust (HMDT) which engages participants in a skills development and rehabilitation programme, using a framework of music and creative arts activities, including drama, song-writing and music business. One Spirit delivers an alternative curriculum, which enhances personal well-being and helps young people develop a range of skills, such as: literacy (creative writing, CV writing), numeracy (finance) to self-exploratory: confidence, communication, teamwork and social interaction, self-analysis, problem solving, presentation, life-planning and entrepreneurial skills in preparation for the workplace.

The project is delivered inside Feltham through week long intensive courses, during which time artist facilitators build relationships with participants that serve as the foundation for continued one to one work in a mentor/mentee relationship throughout their time in custody and back into the community.

One young person who accessed the project said:

*'A week after I got out I got in contact with Charlie (Project Manager) and we've been working on different things, including a project about discrimination and the media. They don't want to show good news about young people and my project is trying to change that. I've also been looking into universities. If I didn't have Charlie I wouldn't have done half the things I've done. It's helped me out a lot; it's the one thing I'm thankful for from prison'*.



©Hackney Music Development Trust

PET has concerns that unless transitions are consistently well managed young people face a cliff edge. This is especially so if their access to education and interventions have improved during their time in custody but then drop off following their release from custody.

*'You can have the greatest education going on in custody, but it won't end up with the positive outcomes after release if no one is there to continue the support on the other side.'* (Head of Education, YOI)

### **Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)**

As part of a young person's learning journey, there should be opportunities for a range of learning opportunities through a range of providers. However, roundtable discussions at PET's symposium revealed that VCS organisations felt that the 30 hour contracts were creating rivalry and causing a lack of communication between different agencies with some feeling like they were *'stepping on providers toes'*, affecting the work that could be done for young people both in custody and through the gate. Another delegate at the symposium said, *'We know that there are services to help prepare young people and look at the causes but it's about having them work together. It's about how do we enable these different service providers to work together in the interests of the young person. Some of the work that my organisation does crosses over into other streams of funding – they get upset because it means that they can't tick their box [...] it doesn't matter to us but it's that conflict there that is the issue'*.

As part of an urgent review into the education contracts there should be a greater scope for VCS delivery in the future and ways for them to be more engaged and recognised for their role in supporting delivery of additional learning and support in custody and the community.

## Moving into the adult estate

Not all young people under 18 will be released back into their communities; some will be transferred to adult prisons to continue their sentences. Although the numbers of young adults in custody have significantly reduced, there are many serving out longer sentences with over 100 young adults currently in prison serving an indeterminate sentence<sup>101</sup>. There is therefore the need to join up not only between youth establishments and the community but also between youth establishments and the adult estate so that there is the continuation of a learning journey and continued progression.

Findings from the Chief Inspector of Prisons latest Annual Report (2015-16) indicate that young adult's needs are not being adequately met:



*By the end of March 2016, the number of young adult men aged 18–20 in prison had remained broadly static at 4,547. However, those who remained in custody were inevitably some of the most vulnerable and troubled young adults.*

*There should be a clear and coherent strategy to ensure the management of young adult men in the wider prison population, and that this needed to be based on the individual needs of the young adult men themselves.*

*Time out of cell for young adults continued to be very disappointing, and in our survey 38% said they spent less than two hours a day out of their cell.*

*In several prisons, the contracted provider of learning and skills and work activities failed to provide cover for staff shortages, resulting in cancellations and closures, even in establishments holding long-term young adults.*

The transfer of young adults to young adult establishments or adult prisons needs to be properly managed. Their individual learning plan needs to be transferred with them to avoid repetition of courses and to encourage progression. There should also be an increased focus on how to specifically engage young adults. The Coates Review highlights that young adults are the most difficult group to engage in education but does not offer any suggestions on how to engage them better. There are good reasons for getting young adults engaged in learning in custody. They have high levels of re-offending and are the group most likely to desist out of crime. Data has consistently shown there to be a sharp incline in offending during early adolescence, peaking during the mid-late teenage years and then declining, steeply at first (to the mid 20s) and, thereafter, more steadily<sup>102</sup>. Therefore there is a need to have the right interventions together with positive relationships that will support engagement, based on findings highlighted throughout this report.

### *Recommendation 10:*

**Resettlement needs to start from early on in a sentence to ensure there are smooth transitions to the community and re-offending is reduced for young people and young adults. A multi-agency approach is needed to ensure that all resettlement needs are covered. Where young people will be transferred to the adult estate forward planning is needed to ensure a smooth transition and continuation of learning journey.**

# Acknowledgements

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Angus Mulready-Jones · HM Inspectorate of Prisons  
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## Learner Voice

The young people in custody who contributed  
to this report

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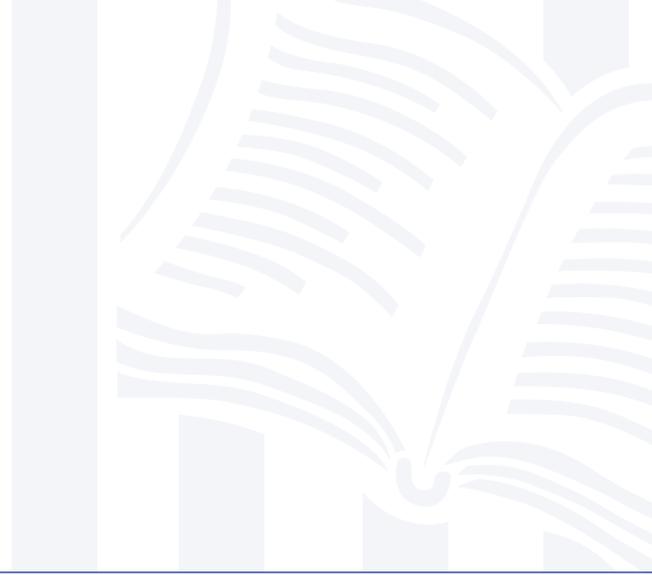
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