



A report by the Transition to Adulthood Alliance –  
committed to supporting vulnerable young adults  
in the criminal justice system

# **YOUNG ADULT MANIFESTO**

*The need for a distinct and radically  
different approach to young adults in the  
criminal justice system; an approach that  
is proportionate to their maturity and  
responsive to their specific needs.*

# T2A Alliance



The **Barrow Cadbury Trust** has a long-standing interest in criminal justice reform, with a particular focus on young adults. In 2004, the Trust established the Commission on Young Adults in the Criminal Justice System which produced a report entitled, *Lost in Transition*. The Trust has also funded many organisations over the years who work to improve the lives of young adults in the criminal justice system, including small grassroots groups in the West Midlands, national service-delivery organisations and campaigning bodies.

The Trust has convened 12 organisations to form the T2A Alliance:

## addaction

**Addaction**, Derby have established a drug and alcohol treatment service for young adults that is tailored to their specific needs, problems and lifestyles. Addaction have also provided the Alliance with policy input and guidance.



**Catch22** have led on the T2A Alliance policy campaign. They have held a series of meetings with key policy makers; organised an international conference on transition to adulthood bringing together experts on young adulthood and criminal justice; and have co-ordinated and drafted the T2A Alliance papers, *Universities of Crime*, launched in February 2009 and *A New Start: Young Adults in the Criminal Justice System*.

## CENTRE FOR CRIME AND JUSTICE STUDIES

The **Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (CCJS)** have produced three reports: the first is a review of coercive and non-coercive interventions in fostering change among young people and the safe transition to adulthood. The second explores the relative virtues of a risk-based versus needs-based approach to young people in transition and the third compares criminal justice institutional arrangements, in particular those arrangements that might be considered to be informed by social justice principles.



**Clinks** have developed a range of activities to promote the T2A Alliance work, including a T2A Alliance stakeholder database and a T2A Alliance e-newsletter. In partnership with the Criminal Justice Alliance, Clinks have organised policy panels on the issues facing young adult women, BME young adults and on the topic of drugs and alcohol. Clinks have played a major role in the consultation phased of *A New Start: Young Adults in the Criminal Justice System*, consulting widely with practitioners about their needs and key priorities.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

The **Criminal Justice Alliance** has consulted with its members and with ministers, the shadow justice teams, parliamentarians and sentencers on policy affecting young adults in the criminal justice system. They have also held policy panels, in partnership with Clinks, on the issues facing young adult women, BME young adults and on the topic of drugs and alcohol.

## the Howard League for Penal Reform

The **Howard League for Penal Reform's** young adult legal team provides access to justice for young adults in custody and leaving custody across England and Wales. The legal team are producing a report for the T2A Alliance looking at the community care entitlements of vulnerable young adults and a 'handbook' for empowering young people and professionals seeking to support them and ensure a safe home and support to lead a successful life.



changing lives  
reducing crime

**Nacro**, Preston have established a 'Street Law' peer mentoring programme which enables young adults to address issues which can lead to offending behaviour. The programme also enables the young adults to become trainers themselves, learn new skills and build confidence in public speaking. Nacro have also provided policy advice and guidance to the T2A Alliance.



The **Prince's Trust** is developing a One to One peer mentoring project with young adults in Northern Ireland. The One to One project aims to change the culture of dependency by young adult prisoners on statutory services and empower them to take control of their futures. A young adult is matched with a supporter who provides ongoing guidance and will meet the young person at the gate at the time of their release, take them to their accommodation and support them during their resettlement into the community. The Prince's Trust have also supported the T2A Alliance by providing policy suggestions.



The **Prison Reform Trust** have a five year programme to reduce child and youth imprisonment. They have provided the T2A Alliance with key policy advice and guidance.



**Revolving Doors Agency** are developing a model of flexible services, including a needs-based commissioning framework for young adults in the criminal justice system who have dual needs across mental health and addiction. RDA have recruited a voluntary team of young adult service users who have taken part in a series of best practice visits.



The **Young Foundation** have run four policy panels with key stakeholders and policy makers on policing, housing, education and employment and health and social care. They have produced reports of the panels which have highlighted the current issues, identified the inefficiencies of current strategies and made recommendations, based on the analysis of best practice and innovative approaches within the criminal justice field.



**Young People in Focus (YPF)**, formerly the Trust for the Study of Adolescence, have produced a publication exploring key data around young adults, 16-24, living in the UK today. It explores topics such as health and wellbeing; employment, education and training; family life; social life and crime. The publication has a specific focus on vulnerable young adults and the criminal justice system but locates them within the wider context of all young people in this age group. It will provide policy makers and practitioners with authoritative information and commentary about young adults today, with a unique focus on issues related to the transition to adulthood for young people who face multiple disadvantages.

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# Foreword



It has been my privilege to chair the T2A Alliance in its work to produce a better response to offenders in the young adult age range. This manifesto represents the fruits of a great deal of work by the thirteen organisations who make up the Alliance.

The work has its roots in the Barrow Cadbury Trust's Commission on Young Adults in the Criminal Justice System which produced a ground breaking report called *Lost in Transition* in 2005. Although the report's recommendations received a warm welcome from government and other interested parties, progress in introducing measures tailored to the needs of the age group was initially slow. Last year, the Barrow Cadbury Trust decided to reignite interest in the specific needs of 18–24 year olds by funding a variety of research, policy development and practical work designed to identify what improvements are needed, to demonstrate how they can be implemented and to build support for change. This includes three pilot schemes to test new approaches to the supervision of and support for young adult offenders in London, West Midlands and Worcestershire.<sup>1</sup>

Since the T2A Alliance was established in 2008, a range of work has been undertaken leading to the publication of a consultation paper in July this year called *A New Start: Young Adults in the Criminal Justice System*.<sup>2</sup> This contained a careful analysis of the problems caused by and faced by young adult offenders and a total of 21 recommendations for change. During a three month consultation period, views were sought from politicians, policy makers and practitioners. We are very grateful to over 300 individuals and organisations who contributed to the process, helping us to refine our thinking and develop our recommendations. These have included statutory and voluntary groups, young people and ex-offenders themselves. We are also grateful to Matrix Knowledge Group who undertook work to cost a number of our recommendations in response to questions about the affordability of our recommendations in a period of restraint in public spending.

This manifesto contains 10 recommendations which would serve to make the way in which we deal with young adult offenders more effective, fairer and less costly. The core of our approach is in four parts: first is to divert more young adults away from the formal criminal justice system into measures which can address the causes of their offending and provide reparation to victims; second to replace short prison sentences for non violent offenders with

constructive community sentences; third to make the experience of custody much more educational for those who really do need to be locked up; and fourth to intensify efforts at reintegrating these young people after release. At each of these stages, it is vital that measures properly address the disproportionate involvement in the criminal justice system of young people from black and minority ethnic groups and also the distinctive needs of young women who though relatively small in number require special attention.

While such changes are necessary they are not sufficient. The roots of offending by young adults lie beyond the reach of criminal justice agencies alone. It is our systems of education, health and social care, our policies in respect of training, employment and housing that need attention as much as what the Americans refer to as "cops, courts and corrections"

I am grateful to the members of the Alliance and in particular to Shan Nicholas and Alice Murray at the Barrow Cadbury Trust and Vicki Helyar-Cardwell at Catch22 who wrote this report.

**Rob Allen**  
Chair T2A Alliance

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix for further information on the three T2A Young Adult Pilots.  
<sup>2</sup> The T2A Alliance, *A New Start: Young Adults in the Criminal Justice System*, 2009. Previous T2A Alliance report: *Universities of Crime, Young Adults, the Criminal Justice System and Social Policy*, 2009.

# Recommendations

## RECOGNITION OF YOUNG ADULTS AS DISTINCT

- 1. We recommend that all of the agencies that comprise the criminal justice system recognise young adults (aged 18–24) as a distinct group on account of their developmental stage, as well as the social, economic and structural factors that specifically impact on them.**

There should be particular recognition of the distinct and specific needs of young adult women, and young adults from black or minority ethnic backgrounds.

## DIVERSION OF YOUNG ADULTS AT RISK

- 2. We recommend the Triage model of diversion piloted in the London youth justice system be extended to young adults aged up to 24.** Diversion into mainstream services of those who have committed minor, non-violent offences, should particularly focus on vulnerable young adults with mental health problems, drug or alcohol misuse problems, and learning difficulties or disabilities. For young women this should be a conditional caution leading to attendance at a gender-specific service.
- 3. We recommend the expansion of the use of Restorative Justice Conferencing to deal with young adult offenders who have committed a minor crime.** Restorative Justice has a solid empirical evidence base. This approach should incorporate best practice from the youth system, including the use of Restorative Disposal ensuring early interventions that tackle the causes of offending.

## PROBLEM-SOLVING SENTENCING

- 4. We recommend the government consider how maturity and developmental stage could be taken into consideration in the sentencing of young adults.** We recommend a UK pilot based on maturity assessment, drawing on practice in Germany for sentencing those aged 18-21 (or even up to 24) under juvenile law, depending on the nature of the crime and level of maturity. This tailored approach to young adults would be consistent with the approach increasingly taken by other government departments. It would also be consistent with the existence of provisions made for those aged up to 21 in Young Offender Institutions.

## **REDUCED USE OF CUSTODY ALONGSIDE IMPROVED COMMUNITY SENTENCES**

### **5. We recommend the abolition of the use of short sentences of less than six months for young adults convicted of non-violent offences.**

These must be directly replaced with community sentences and safeguards introduced to ensure that longer sentences are not imposed instead.

### **6. We recommend the reinvestment of money saved from lower custody rates into community provision that addresses the specific needs of young adults and the causes of their offending.**

This would require the expansion of drug, alcohol and mental health treatment tailored to young adults, for example in the case of drug users including a focus on polydrug use.

### **7. We recommend improvements in transitional arrangements and communication between agencies working with young adults, with particular focus on Youth Offending Teams and the Probation Service.**

Both central government and local authorities need to rethink commissioning arrangements for projects working with young adults so that they can work across the arbitrary age boundary of 18. The T2A pilots offer models of working with young adults across the age boundary.<sup>3</sup>

## **MORE EFFECTIVE RESETTLEMENT**

### **8. We recommend that intensive support is made available for every young adult (aged 18-24) leaving custody, regardless of their length of sentence.**

Regular contact with prisoners needs to begin before release, and every young adult who requests it should have access to through-the-gate mentoring support upon release. Mentors can play the role of significant adult, in the absence of family and help provide extra support in accessing employment, training and housing. They can also help forge links where necessary with BME services and gender-specific support networks. Young adults should also have access to other key professionals to help access the services they need.

### **9. We recommend all Young Offender Institutions are actively twinned where possible with a local Further Education College, and that education, work or training becomes a key focus within custody and is expected to continue on leaving prison.**

Any ex-offender who wishes to continue their studies should be supported to do this on release – through college transfer agreements and/or flexible college starting dates.

### **10. We recommend a national employment initiative to improve the chances of employment of ex-offenders by the private, voluntary and public sector.**

Although work opportunities will be diverse and local, the government should take the lead in promoting the employment of ex-offenders. The National Care Advisory Scheme model 'From Care to Work' is an example of a large-scale scheme for vulnerable young adults. A similar initiative should be adopted by government as a means of encouraging employers to take on ex-offenders.

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

# Introduction

Young adulthood is an exciting time of life for many. Most young people enjoy new found freedoms, find their emerging identities and seek out opportunities, often with the support of their families behind them. However, for many, the transition to adulthood is a difficult, daunting and troublesome period. That transition is especially harsh for those young adults who on reaching the age of 18 suddenly find that the state views them as adults regardless of their level of maturity or vulnerability. Public authorities are poor at dealing with the transition between children, youth and adult services in general, but this is never more the case than in the criminal justice system which is failing those young adult offenders and indeed the rest of society.

The system lacks aspiration when it comes to dealing with young adults in trouble. Outside the world of criminal justice, young adults are largely viewed as having great potential but in need of some support from their family and community as they make their transition to adulthood. Many of this age group are heading to university, most are taking in exciting new experiences, forming their first serious relationships and establishing their own homes.

Yet at this key stage of life, many of our criminal justice policies do unnecessary damage to young adult offenders, making them more, not less, likely to reoffend. They make it harder for young adults to lead crime free lives and to adopt some of the very things that would help them to mature such as education, employment, housing, stable relationships and family support.

Young adults make up 9.5% of the UK population, yet they commit approximately one-third of all crime, take up one-third of probation caseload, and represent almost one-third of those sentenced to prison each year. Of these young adults in trouble, a significant proportion suffers mental ill health, have substance misuse problems and have learning difficulties or disabilities. Young adults from deprived areas are also highly likely to be the victims of crime.

Added to which young adults engage a large proportion of resources in a financially-squeezed system. The vast majority of those who are prosecuted are dealt with through magistrates' courts, the probation service, and then serve community sentences or short term prison sentences. A recent study by the University of York

estimated the cost of young adult crime at £20 billion per year<sup>4</sup> – a figure ten times greater than the original budget for the London 2012 Olympics or approximately 1 percent of all UK economic activity.

These proposals go with the grain of many recent calls for change in criminal justice, in particular the influential work of Lord Bradley on offenders with mental health problems<sup>5</sup>, Baroness Corston's work on vulnerable women offenders<sup>6</sup>, and the Integrated Offender Management pioneer areas.<sup>7</sup> This report also has application outside the criminal justice system, with the New Horizons strategy for mental health<sup>8</sup>, and recent government initiatives for unemployed young adults impacted by the recession. Alongside work on these important areas, a new focus on young adults could achieve significant improvements in and beyond the criminal justice system.

The evidence shows that there is a more ambitious, more effective and less costly way of dealing with young adults in trouble. This is particularly pertinent when all areas of government are curtailing budgets. With the right challenge and support, young adults can go on to contribute positively to society. The current approach only serves to criminalise them and in so doing, fails a generation. It is in all our interests to ensure we radically rethink our approach to ensure the potential of all our young adults can be realised, to reduce the number of future victims and reduce the wider costs to society.

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<sup>4</sup> Bowles and Praditpyo, *Commission on Young Adults and the Criminal Justice System: Summary of Costs and Benefits*, Centre for Criminal Justice Economics and Psychology, University of York, 2005

<sup>5</sup> The Bradley Report: *Lord Bradley's review of people with mental health problems or learning disabilities in the criminal justice system*, 2009

<sup>6</sup> The Corston Report, *A Review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the criminal justice system*, 2007

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/integrated-offender-management.htm>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/MentalHealth/NewHorizons/index.htm>



# *Chapter One: Young Adults as a Distinct Group*



# Young Adults as a Distinct Group

Young adults in trouble with the law have distinct needs that can make them more vulnerable than older offenders. These needs are complex and multiple, and commonly include poverty (many have not yet experienced work), educational failure, substance misuse, mental health problems, homelessness, young parenthood and leaving care. All are exacerbated by the sudden cliff edges faced at 18 and 21, where some support previously received is abruptly cut off. This huge legal and personal change happens while many young adults are still in the process of development.

A first step to correcting these failings is to recognise young adults as a distinct group. This would address the missed potential of young adults, and develop an approach that increases their chances of living positive lives and contributing to society rather than reducing them.

Yet the way the criminal justice system deals with young adults is substantially out of step with other government departments.<sup>9</sup> For instance, Departments including the Cabinet Office, DWP and DCSF already have distinct policies and practices for this age group, recognising that 18-24 year-olds are in a time of transition. There is very limited recognition of this by the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office.

Because the criminal justice system is ill-suited to those who are still in their transition to adulthood, it has a damaging impact on them. Current methods of addressing young adult crime exemplify many of the criminal justice system's worst failings: the fact is young adults have the highest re-offending rate of any adult age group in the system. They are the most likely age group to be serving short sentences and are in and out of prison with little to show for it. The much-lamented 'churn' of the criminal justice system is fuelled in large part by this age group.

Young adults are most likely to leave custody several times with little or no support from probation services or anyone else – a stark contrast to their contemporaries who at 18 are receiving large amounts of support from their families, communities and the state, for example when they head off to university. This is also unlike the

experience of any young person of 17 or younger who benefits from the intervention of a Youth Offending Team. For those young people who enter prison as a teenager and come out after their 18th birthday, the short sharp shock happens on release as they come out to virtually nothing.

Some of the worst failings in the criminal justice system relate to race issues, and are particularly spotlighted by this age group. Young black people are significantly over-represented in the system despite no evidence that they commit more crime.<sup>10</sup> In 2008, 27% of young offenders aged 15–29 in prison were from a black or minority ethnic (BME) background – this represents a 10% increase over the last decade.<sup>11</sup>

The paucity of support for vulnerable women offenders, and the increasing rates of females drawn into the criminal justice system, has also had a disproportionately damaging impact on younger women.<sup>12</sup> A recent Cabinet Office study cited young women under 30 as most likely to have complex and multiple needs of any female age group.

The provision that does exist for young adults is inadequate at addressing offending behaviour. Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) incarcerating young people aged 18–21 were intended to be a beacon of good practice, providing education and training for those whose contemporaries are finishing A levels and going to university. However, despite pockets of good practice, the overall YOI system reveals poor results, with high levels of prisoners reporting that they feel unsafe. Dame Anne Owers' inspection report on Rochester YOI showed that half the prisoners spent the day merely locked in their cells.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, although this report deals with the criminal justice system, much of the solutions lie elsewhere. Young adult offenders often come from disadvantaged areas where poverty and social exclusion are rife. In deprived areas in Scotland, for instance, one in 29 young men aged 23 were in prison.<sup>14</sup> Many young offenders are themselves

<sup>9</sup> Other departments have a distinct approach to young adults, for example through Public Service Agreement 16, the Cabinet Office has engaged Local Authorities in providing ongoing support for defined groups of vulnerable young adults. There are also varying levels of housing benefit for young adults, as well as promised extra support through raising the participation age, and guaranteed jobs, apprenticeships or training for unemployed young adults.

<sup>10</sup> Home Office *Minority Ethnic Groups and Crime: Findings from the Offending, Crime and Justice Survey 2003, 2004*. The BME population is on the whole younger than the white population in Britain. For example, in 2007 the mean age of the BME population was 27 years old, compared to 40 years old for white population.

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Justice's *Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System 2007/08*, p. 174 (prison population by ethnicity and age group, as of 30 June 2008)

<sup>12</sup> The Cabinet Office, *Short Study on Women Offenders*, May 2009

<sup>13</sup> HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, *Report on an unannounced short follow-up inspection of HMYOI Rochester*, 16–18 February 2009

<sup>14</sup> Houchin R, *Social Exclusion and Imprisonment in Scotland*, Caledonian University, 2005.

the victims of crime. Indeed, young adult men are most likely to be victims of crime of any group in society. In 2006, 50 percent of 18–24 year-olds who had offended in the previous month had also been the victim of personal crime in the same period. Recent Edinburgh University research shows that being a victim is an influencing factor in becoming a perpetrator of crime.<sup>15</sup>

## **RECOGNITION OF YOUNG ADULTS AS DISTINCT**

### **Recommendation 1**

**We recommend that all of the agencies that comprise the criminal justice system recognise young adults (aged 18-24) as a distinct group on account of their developmental stage, as well as the social, economic and structural factors that specifically impact on them.** There should be particular recognition of the distinct and specific needs of young adult women, and young adults from black or minority ethnic backgrounds.

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<sup>15</sup> Smith, D. The Links Between Victimization and Offending, Centre for Law and Society, Edinburgh University, 2004

# *Chapter Two: Diversion of Young Adults at Risk*



# Diversion of Young Adults at Risk

Many young adults at risk of or already involved in crime have high levels of need and a range of vulnerabilities. For many their family, community and society have all failed them in the first place. For example a quarter of those in prison have been in the care system. This is a stark contrast to others in their late teens who have family and state support.

Vulnerable groups include young adults with drug or alcohol addictions, those who are homeless or who have a background in care, and young adults with mental health problems, disabilities or learning difficulties.<sup>16</sup>

These groups are greatly over-represented in the criminal justice system. A major study focusing on 16–20 year-olds found that young adults in custody have some of the highest levels of diagnosable mental health problems in the criminal justice system, higher than any other age group.<sup>17</sup> Young adult offenders are three times more likely to have a mental health problem than someone of the same age who is not an offender.<sup>18</sup> Outside the criminal justice system, the young adult age group is seen as a priority for proactive early intervention with evidence showing that early prognosis and treatment of mental health issues can save long-term costs.<sup>19</sup>

Drug and alcohol misuse could be better dealt with outside the criminal justice system. Still 20% of indictable offences of those aged 15 to 20 are drug offences. More could be done to divert young adults with addictions away from a system that is not suitable to deal with them. According to the Home Office, for every £1 spent on drug treatment, £9.50 is saved in health and crime costs.<sup>20</sup>

Another group requiring a particular strategy for diversion are young women. Their routes into the system, and their needs once in it, are distinct from those of young male offenders. Some 75% of women in the criminal justice system have a mental health problem. As with the general population, deliberate self harm is most common among young people and women, and 30 percent of women in prison (of all ages) self-harm each year.

Together Women Programmes show how offending behaviour can be better addressed by community-based interventions and mainstream services.

## Together Women Programme

The Together Women Programme works with both women offenders and women at risk of offending in community-based women's centres. Projects are run by the voluntary sector with funding from the Ministry of Justice.

Within the community centres, women can access advice on health, education and training, housing, substance misuse, finance and family issues. Women can access almost every service they need in one single place, meaning that they are not sent elsewhere in order to get help. All the centres provide crèche facilities so that women can focus on the issues they need to address while their children have fun in a safe environment.

Part of their success has been multi-disciplinary working, with referrals from agencies outside the criminal justice system. There are a range of providers from the statutory and non-statutory sectors based at the centres offering a variety of group work and individual surgeries to women on site.

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/together-women.htm>

Diversion strategies need to be implemented widely. Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups are less likely to be diverted away from the criminal justice system at almost every stage. BME groups are first more likely to be subject to stop and search procedures – for black people this is eight times more likely than for white people, and twice as likely for Asian people. Black people are 3.8 times more likely to be arrested than white people. Once arrested, we know that black people are less likely to be given a caution and more likely to get a custodial sentence.<sup>21</sup> And BME groups suffering

<sup>16</sup> Nacro: *Liaison and diversion for BME service users*, June 2009; The Bradley Report: Lord Bradley's review of people with mental health problems or learning disabilities in the criminal justice system, 2009; Sainsbury's Centre for Mental Health, *Diversion: A better way for criminal justice and mental health*, 2009

<sup>17</sup> National Institute for Mental Health in England, *Personality Disorder: no longer a diagnosis for exclusion*, 2003

<sup>18</sup> Young People in Focus, *Young Adults Today*, 2009, p.45

<sup>19</sup> McCrone P, Dhanasiri S, Patel A, Knapp M, Lawton-Smith S, King's Fund, *Paying the Price: the cost of mental health care in England to 2026*, 2005

<sup>20</sup> Home Office, [http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/drug-interventions-programme/strategy/communications/key-messages/overarching\\_KM](http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/drug-interventions-programme/strategy/communications/key-messages/overarching_KM)

<sup>21</sup> The Runnymede Trust, TZA Green Paper Consultation Response, 2009

from mental health issues are disproportionately more likely to enter the criminal justice system when they should be treated by health professionals.<sup>22</sup>

Vulnerable young adults could be better dealt with by the community – preferably before a criminal conviction is administered, and low level offending should be dealt with in such a way as to prevent entrenching a pattern of criminal behaviour. Local Authorities and their partners have a significant role in auditing need among young adults in local areas, and ensuring adequate opportunities are available to encourage young people to lead a law abiding life, as well as making sure provision is available to assist those who have particular needs.

In addition to wider community support provided through mainstream services, there are specific pilots within the youth justice system that could be adapted to divert at risk young adults. We recommend the adaption of some of these tried-and-tested models, for example the triage approach used by the London Criminal Justice Board and the Youth Restorative Disposal piloted by the Youth Justice Board and Ministry of Justice. These approaches could be used to work with young adult offenders by challenging their offending behaviour and giving support to move away from crime.

## Case Study of Triage by London Criminal Justice Board

The Triage approach diverts young people under 18 in Greenwich and Lewisham who have committed minor offences into positive activities and mainstream services. The interventions aim to prevent reoffending, by providing more extensive supervision than would be given with a criminal justice disposal such as a reprimand or final warning.

The police custody officer and the Youth Offending Team (YOT) Triage worker decide eligibility by jointly considering:

- Police Intelligence, including details of any previous convictions
- YOT Information, including previous engagements or any concerns or risks about the young person
- Investigation detail, including admission of guilt and severity of offence

Young people who are eligible for this approach, such as being a suspect in a low-level offence, undergo a rapid assessment by a YOT worker in the custody suite.

Young people can be diverted into a restorative intervention, such as by making an apology to their victim as well as by making reparation or into one-to-one key working and courses to address risks, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, basic skills support, parenting support programmes or drug and alcohol treatment. In both Greenwich and Lewisham, where triage is in operation, there has been a much greater than average reduction in first time entrants to the criminal justice system.

<http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/News/TriageToHelpPreventYouthOffending.htm>

<sup>22</sup> [www.blackmentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.blackmentalhealth.org.uk)

As part of the triage process, young people can be diverted into restorative solutions. This approach has been highly effective. Among young people under 18 in Northern Ireland, for example, 40% who had gone through the restorative justice conferencing order committed another crime within a year, compared to 71% of those who had been put in prison.<sup>23</sup> A 2007 Home Office evaluation of Restorative Justice noted:

*"The evidence on restorative justice is far more extensive, and positive, than it has been for many other policies that have been rolled out. Restorative justice is ready to be put to far broader use."<sup>24</sup>*

**Diverting young adults from community orders into pre-court Restorative Justice conferencing schemes (following a police triage service) is likely to produce a lifetime cost saving to society of almost £275 million (£7,050 per offender). The costs of RJ conferencing are likely to be paid back within the first year of implementation. During the course of two parliaments, implementation of such a scheme would be likely to lead to a total net benefit to society during this period of over £1 billion.<sup>25</sup>**

<sup>23</sup> Prison Reform Trust, *Making Amends: restorative youth justice in Northern Ireland*, October 2009, (Figures showed four in ten 10 to 17 year-olds)

<sup>24</sup> Sherman and Strang, *Restorative Justice: The Evidence*, 2007

<sup>25</sup> Matrix Evidence, *Economic Analysis of interventions for young adult offenders*, November 2009. See report for full details - 'lifetime cost saving to society' is defined as benefits gained within the period of the sentence and over the 26 years following release.

## Youth Restorative Disposal (pilot scheme)<sup>26</sup>

The Youth Restorative Disposal (YRD) scheme gives specially trained police officers on-the-spot discretion to deal with young people who have committed certain minor offences. It is only possible to use a YRD for a first offence, and both the victim and young person must agree to participate.

A young person has to face up to the impact of their actions, offer an apology and examine why the offence took place. Where appropriate the young person makes good the wrong that was done. By identifying young people on the cusp of further offending, it also allows youth offending teams (YOTs) to get support to them to help address their behaviour.

Where a YRD is issued, it is recorded locally and not on the Police National Computer so it does not give the young person a criminal record. Police forces inform their local YOT that a YRD has been issued which provides an earlier opportunity to act on the first signs of risk of criminal activity. For example, YOTs may follow up with a letter to the young person's family offering voluntary support.

<http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/practitioners/CourtsAndOrders/Disposals/YouthRestorativeDisposal/>

An expansion of Restorative Justice Conferencing would be of direct benefit to young women. Women are more likely to be sentenced to custody on their first offence. More than a third of women in prison have no previous conviction, double the figure for men.<sup>27</sup> The high use of remand for women is also costly and often non-productive. Two-thirds of women are held on remand, 59% of whom go on to receive non-custodial sentences.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Current pilot sites of the YRD are Avon and Somerset, Cumbria, Greater Avon and Somerset, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, MetroManchester, Lancashire, MetroNorth Wales, Nottinghamshire.

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Justice (2008) *Offender Management Caseload Statistics 2007*. London. The Stationary Office

<sup>28</sup> *Women in Prison website* ([www.womeninprison.org.uk](http://www.womeninprison.org.uk)); Prison Reform Trust, *Bromley Trust Briefings*, 2009

For triage diversion schemes to work, the police as well as local agencies must play a crucial role in identifying and signposting young people at risk. The London Triage evaluation found that a champion in the police as well as strong local links was important to its success. Police training, albeit already extensive, could be better used to include specific training on methods of dealing effectively with vulnerable young adults, taking account of gender and BME factors. Sir Ronnie Flannigan's recent comprehensive review recommended more focus on 'problem-solving policing'.<sup>29</sup> The extension of conflict management and problem solving techniques into current police training would help to improve interactions between the police and young adults on the streets and contribute to the effective implementation of triage and restorative justice measures.

**It would cost an estimated £13 to £17 million<sup>30</sup> for the police service to take a new approach to young adult offenders by implementing additional training on conflict management and establishing a voluntary mentoring scheme.<sup>31</sup>**

More young adults should be diverted away from the criminal justice system and into meaningful support. At this stage in a young adult's life, there is an opportunity to intervene before problems spiral and a pattern of crime becomes ingrained. It is also a more effective use of resources to divert those who should not be in the criminal justice system away from it: not simply 'diversion from' but 'diversion into' programmes that address the root causes of early offending behaviour.

## **DIVERSION OF YOUNG ADULTS AT RISK**

### **Recommendation 2**

**We recommend the Triage model of diversion piloted in the London youth justice system be extended to young adults aged up to 24.** Diversion into mainstream services of those who have committed minor, non-violent offences, should particularly focus on vulnerable young adults with mental health problems, drug or alcohol misuse problems, and learning difficulties or disabilities. For young women this should be a conditional caution leading to attendance at a gender-specific service.

### **Recommendation 3**

**We recommend the expansion of the use of Restorative Justice Conferencing to deal with young adult offenders who have committed a minor crime.** Restorative Justice has a solid empirical evidence base. This approach should incorporate best practice from the youth system, including the use of Restorative Disposal ensuring early interventions that tackle the causes of offending.

<sup>29</sup> Sir Ronnie Flannigan, *The Review of Policing*, 2008, p73

<sup>30</sup> Matrix Evidence, *Economic Analysis of interventions for young adult offenders*, November 2009

<sup>31</sup> Costings include two additional training hours on conflict management when dealing with young adult offenders for all police constables (PCs) who are not new recruits and may include all sergeants. A voluntary mentoring scheme that would take place outside of police time and would enable new PCs to understand the challenges of working with young adult offenders. It has been assumed that all new PCs would be mentored as part this scheme with either existing PCs or sergeants acting as mentors.



# *Chapter Three:* **Problem-Solving Sentencing**



# Problem-Solving Sentencing

In 2007, young adults aged 18-24 were responsible for 28% of indictable offences. For those young adults who cannot be diverted and need a response from the courts, sentencing should be proportionate to the seriousness and persistence of offending, as well as taking into account the maturity of the offender.

Despite the developmental stage and particular vulnerabilities of young adults, the courts' approach towards them has become harsher in recent years. The use of fines and conditional and absolute discharge has decreased since 1997. At the same time, there has been a rise in the number of community sentences and the introduction of the new Suspended Sentence Order. Yet this increase in the use of community sentences has not reduced custody rates as much as might have been expected. Many commentators conclude that community sentences have replaced the 'lesser end' fines and discharges, and point to an overall 'up-tariffing' across the system.<sup>32</sup>

The Sentencing Advisory Panel's recent consultation on the sentencing of juveniles did not mention the young adult age group at all. However, the principles of the review found that there were mitigating factors that should influence sentencing of those under 18, including:

- the disproportionate impact of a conviction on a young person's ability to find employment and a worthwhile role in society
- young people may be more receptive to changing the way they conduct themselves
- young people will probably be more susceptible to the contaminating influence of custody

These principles of proportionate sentencing for juveniles should be adapted for the young adult age group as well. The T2A Alliance was most convinced by the model of sentencing of young adults in Germany that allows sentencers a level of discretion in trying young adults up to age 21 under juvenile law depending on the seriousness of the crime and the maturity of the offender.<sup>33</sup> In our consultation, approximately 80 percent of respondents agreed that maturity rather than age should be taken into account in sentencing.

## Case Study: German Sentencing Model

In Germany young adult offenders aged 18 to 21 can be sentenced under juvenile or adult law if the court considers them to have the intellectual development status of a juvenile (defined as aged 14–17) or if motives and circumstances of the offence are typical of juvenile crime.

The court must be of the opinion that the young adult is not as mature and responsible for their actions as full adults.<sup>35i</sup> Thus the decision on whether to sentence a young adult offender under juvenile or adult law is taken by the court. To assist the court in making this decision, a psychologist's report may be requested. In practice, around two-thirds of young adults are sentenced as juveniles. This means they are more likely to receive a community alternative to prison.

The tendency among judges is to use prison as a last resort for those aged up to 21. There is considerable variation between states in the proportion of young adults sentenced as juveniles – with 88% in Schleswig Holstein, but 48% in Baden Württemberg, for instance. On the whole, it is the more serious cases that are dealt within the juvenile jurisdiction, while minor, particularly traffic offences, are dealt within the adult system.<sup>35ii</sup> The approach in Germany seems to be working. They have a lower crime rate, a lower incarceration rate of young people, and lower re-offending rates than the UK. They have had particular success in reducing the number of juveniles and young adults in prison.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Justice, Sentencing Statistics, 2008

<sup>33</sup> This process would specifically not include young adults convicted of violent, sexual or motoring offences

<sup>34</sup> Prison Reform Trust, *No-One Knows*, 2007.

<sup>35</sup> The Maturity Assessment Framework is outlined in the Marburg Guidelines. These can be viewed on the T2A website: [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)

<sup>i</sup> p.3: Council of Europe Committee of Ministers (2003) *Recommendation 20 of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning new ways of dealing with juvenile delinquency and the role of juvenile justice* - [http://www.coe.int/t/e/legal\\_affairs/legal\\_co-operation/steering\\_committees/cdpc/documents/1Rec\\_2003\\_20E\\_Juvenile\\_delinq.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/e/legal_affairs/legal_co-operation/steering_committees/cdpc/documents/1Rec_2003_20E_Juvenile_delinq.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> Rob Allen and Prison Reform Trust; *Young Adults and the Criminal Justice System, International Norms and Practice*, 2009

<sup>36</sup> British Journal of Criminology, Vol 30, Spring 1990, Decarceration in West Germany.; Muncie, J. *Youth and Crime*, 2009, Chapter 10, Comparative and International Youth Justice;

In addition to developmental issues, young adults in the criminal justice system are very likely to have learning disabilities and difficulties, as well as high levels of speech, language and communication difficulties that affect their level of understanding. Some 20–30 percent of prisoners have identifiable disabilities or learning difficulties such as dyslexia or autism spectrum disorders that interfere with their ability to cope in the system.<sup>34</sup> Those with learning disabilities may also have lower levels of developmental maturity. Current sentencing practice does not acknowledge, let alone cater for, young people who may function at a lower level than their age suggests they should.

**Introducing measures that would allow young adults to be tried under juvenile law following a maturity assessment is likely to produce a lifetime cost saving to society of almost £5 million (£420 per offender). During the course of two parliaments, the implementation of such a scheme would be likely to lead to a total net benefit to society of almost £473,000.**<sup>37</sup>

## **PROBLEM-SOLVING SENTENCING**

### **Recommendation 4**

**We recommend the government consider how maturity and developmental stage could be taken into consideration in the sentencing of young adults.** We recommend a UK pilot based on maturity assessments and drawing on practice in Germany for sentencing those aged 18-21 (or even up to 24) under juvenile law, depending on the nature of the crime and level of maturity. This tailored approach to young adults would be consistent with the approach increasingly taken by other government departments. It would also be consistent with the existence of provisions made for those aged up to 21 in Young Offender Institutions.

<sup>37</sup> Matrix Evidence, Economic Analysis of interventions for young adult offenders, November 2009

# *Chapter Four: Custody and Community*



# Custody and Community

## Custody

If the previous interventions at triage and sentencing stage have not worked, then still the most cost-effective way of dealing with 18-24 year-olds convicted of non-dangerous crimes is in the community. The stated aims of the criminal justice system are punishment, protection of the public, and rehabilitation of the offender. Current prison regimes are failing to rehabilitate young adults: many more young adults go on to re-offend than desist from crime after prison.

Despite widespread concerns, the past decade has seen a huge increase in the use of prison. The number of young adults aged 18-24 in prison under sentences has grown from 14,319 to 16,977 between 1997 and 2007, an increase of 19%.

The make up of our prison population is an indictment on our society. Poverty and social exclusion are key drivers in ending up in prison. In addition, of the British national prison population, 11% are black and 5% are Asian. For black Britons this is significantly higher than the 2% of the general population they represent.<sup>38</sup> And 25% of those in prison have a background in the care system, compared to just 2% of the general population.

Prison has an inter-generational impact too – 65% of children who have a parent in custody go on themselves to offend. The benefits of reducing the use of custody and keeping families together where appropriate are significant. A quarter of men in YOIs are, or are shortly to become, fathers.<sup>39</sup> Some 60% of women in custody are mothers, with 45% of those having parental responsibility at the time of the imprisonment.<sup>40</sup>

Prison impacts disproportionately on women, creating a cycle of problems for their children and families. Some 160,000 children a year are affected by parents being given custodial sentences in the UK with a majority of children of mothers in prison having to leave the family home. Women are often held further from home than men because of the geographical dispersal of women's prisons. Despite this, the number of young women aged 18–20

sentenced to custody each year has risen by 21% since 1997.<sup>41</sup> For young men in the same period it has decreased 11%.

Young adults with mental health problems are over-represented and poorly treated in prison. Although specialist services are available, models of provision vary from area to area. The Sainsbury's Centre for Mental Health is currently working with the Scottish Prison Service and the Personality Disorder Institute to examine the impact of adopting a systematic approach to working with young adult women with Borderline Personality Disorders.

## Short sentences

Short custodial sentences of less than twelve months are responsible for the highest rates of reoffending among all age groups, with approximately 60% reconvicted within a year in 2007. In that year, the average sentence length for young adult offenders was 11.6 months, and the vast majority of people sentenced to this length of time had *not* committed a violent offence.

There is a growing consensus (including the Scottish National Party and the Prison Governor's Association) that short term prison sentences are so ineffective that they ought to be scrapped. They are not long enough to provide any proper rehabilitation, yet long enough to break links with the community and other stabilising factors that reduce crime.

Women are disproportionately likely to receive short sentences: 64% of women sentenced to custody in 2008 were given a sentence of six months or less (compared to 54% of men).<sup>42</sup> For young women aged 18-20, this was 67%. This is despite efforts by Government to encourage the use of community rather than short custodial sentences.<sup>43</sup> Damagingly, nearly 40% of women prisoners lose their home while in prison, as women are less likely than men to have a partner maintaining a shared home while they are in prison.

<sup>38</sup> The Runnymede Trust, *TZA Green Paper Consultation Response, 2009*; Prison Reform Trust, *Bromley Briefings*, June 2009

<sup>39</sup> Ministry of Justice and Department of Children, Schools and Families *Children of Offenders Review*, June 2007

<sup>40</sup> Maria Eagle MP speech on Together Women Programme, October 2008 in Liverpool.

<sup>41</sup> Young People in Focus, *Young Adults Today*, 2009

<sup>42</sup> Home Office, *Offender Management Caseload Statistics 2008* London: p.52–53

<sup>43</sup> NOMS, *Offender Management Guide to working with Women Offenders*, May 2008

**Replacing custodial sentences of less than six months with community orders for young adults<sup>44</sup> via changes in sentencing guidelines is likely to produce a lifetime cost saving to society of more than £12 million (£1,032 per offender). The costs of changing sentencing guidelines are likely to be paid back within three years of implementation. During the course of two parliaments, implementation of such a scheme would be likely to lead to a total net benefit to society during this period of almost £33 million.<sup>45</sup>**

### John's Story\*

John has been in and out of prison from a very young age. He has served three custodial sentences: the first was for 4 months when he was 13 years old, the second for 6 months when he was 15, and the third for 4 months aged 19.

When John went to college the first time he was still committing offences and was in and out of court. He was issued with an electronic tag for a short time, but this caused him to miss a lot of college due to court appearances. John didn't focus on studies because of problems at home with his family, and he was also suffering from depression. In his own words, he was "totally messed up".

John is now getting support in a T2A pilot project in West Mercia. He has matured since the last time he was at college and has not re-offended for several months. He now realises that to get a job in the motoring industry he dreams of, he needs to gain qualifications to give him a better future.

\* all names are changed

## Community sentences

The number of young adults receiving community sentences has increased over the past ten years. In 2003, a specific community sentence for young adults was created – the Intensive Control and Change Programme – recognising that this age group has specific needs. However, this was replaced by the generic Community Order created by the Criminal Justice Act 2003, and the recently introduced Suspended Sentence Order.

Community Orders offer a menu of twelve requirements. The two most commonly prescribed to young adults are unpaid work and supervision, followed by an accredited programme. The availability of the mental health treatment requirement and alcohol treatment requirement are cited by probation officers as the least available.<sup>46</sup> Mental health treatment orders are used in less than one percent of Orders, despite evidence showing the high levels of mental health need of offenders.

Community sentences are not working as well as hoped for young adults (currently two-fifths end up in breach). Breach can have an impact on work being carried out, such as the disruption of community-based drug interventions if a person goes into prison for breach. It is particularly costly and wasteful to stop a treatment programme mid-way in order to put someone in prison for a very short sentence.

Community Orders need to work better for vulnerable women with chaotic lives, childcare responsibilities and debt or financial worries. Gender specific provision, especially for women with mental health problems, should be available in the community. Research into the Community Order and Suspended Sentence Order for women found that:

*"style and content of the sentence and the way it is managed are at least as important for women as the form and type of requirements".<sup>47</sup>*

<sup>44</sup> Only young adults that received an immediate custodial sentence from a Magistrate's court for a non-violent offence would be eligible. Summary and Indictable motoring offences are also excluded.

<sup>45</sup> Matrix Evidence, *Economic Analysis of interventions for young adult offenders*, Nov. 2009

<sup>46</sup> George Mair and Helen Mills, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, *The Community Order and the Suspended Sentence Order three years on: The views and experiences of probation officers and offenders*, March 2009

<sup>47</sup> Patel, S. and Stanley, S. *The Community order and Suspended Sentence Order for Women*, CCJS, May 2008

Some of the arguments in favour of custodial rather than community sentences point to a 'democratic deficit' and the desire for society and the victim to see justice done. Work by Victim Support has shown that victims of *non-violent crime* favoured sentences which are effective at reducing reoffending over purely punitive sentences.<sup>48</sup> This would include the majority of young adults currently serving short custodial sentences.

Finally, the government's new 'Think Family' strategy<sup>49</sup> is particularly appropriate for this age group serving sentences. Although legally defined as adults, 18-24 year-olds can often still need or desire the support of their own parents. Government research has found that maintaining quality family contact has a significant impact on the successful resettlement of ex-prisoners: prisoners who received visits from their family were twice as likely to gain employment on release and three times more likely to have accommodation arranged as those who did not receive any visits.<sup>50</sup>

For those young adults without family support, a significant adult in their life can help bridge that gap. The T2A pilots offer a model of more intensive wrap-around support that addresses the needs young people have making their transition to adulthood, and provides help across the difficult age boundaries of other services, for example youth offending teams and probation.<sup>51</sup>

## **REDUCED USE OF CUSTODY ALONGSIDE IMPROVED COMMUNITY SENTENCES**

### **Recommendation 5**

**We recommend the abolition of the use of short sentences of less than six months for young adults convicted of non-violent offences.** These must be directly replaced with community sentences and safeguards introduced to ensure that longer sentences are not imposed instead.

### **Recommendation 6**

**We recommend the reinvestment of money saved from lower custody rates into community provision that addresses the specific needs of young adults and the causes of their offending.** This would require the expansion of drug, alcohol and mental health treatment tailored to young adults, for example in the case of drug users including a focus on polydrug use.

### **Recommendation 7**

**We recommend improvements in transitional arrangements and communication between agencies working with young adults, with particular focus on Youth Offending Teams and the Probation Service.** Both central government and local authorities need to rethink commissioning arrangements for projects working with young adults so that they can work across the arbitrary age boundary of 18. The T2A pilots offer models of working with young adults across the age boundary.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Survey by Victim Support and the Ministry of Justice, <http://www.justice.gov.uk/news/newsrelease161107a.htm>

<sup>49</sup> The Cabinet Office, *Think Family: Improving the Life Chances of Families at Risk*, 2008

<sup>50</sup> Home Office, *Resettlement Outcomes on release from prison*, 2003

<sup>51</sup> See appendix for further information on T2A pilots.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

# *Chapter Five:* **Effective Resettlement**





# Effective Resettlement

There is a window of opportunity when young adults leave prison to re-establish links with family and community, to get a stable income, meaningful employment, secure housing and all the other factors that contribute to successful resettlement.

Yet the barriers to resettlement are significant and many problems surface almost immediately after custody. Currently half of young adult offenders aged 18–20 go on to re-offend within one year of leaving custody.<sup>53</sup> The single most common offence committed by re-offenders in 2007 was theft, followed by motoring offences, non-serious violence and bail offences. With the total cost of re-offending estimated at £1 billion per year, any progress on reducing re-offending will create vast benefits for taxpayers and for society.

For those who go on to re-offend with theft, this occurs an average of just three months after release. Furthermore, the highest numbers of drug-related deaths occur among prison leavers. Unplanned discharge from prison can scupper community support that would be available for ex-offenders with drug or alcohol problems.

Two critical factors identified by the Ministry of Justice for resettling vulnerable young adults under probation supervision are settled accommodation and education, employment and training.<sup>54</sup> These areas provide the focus of this chapter. However, missing from the Ministry of Justice equation is that vulnerable young adults also need intensive support in order to access and maintain these services. *Yet young adults on sentences of less than one year receive no supervision on release from prison.* Where support does exist, the level required is often greater than can be delivered by an over-stretched probation service. In London, for example, in 2007 Offender Managers had an average caseload of 48.2 offenders.<sup>55</sup> This high work load necessitates a focus on risk management, rather than long-term rehabilitation.

## Marie's Story\*

Marie is 25 years old and lives back home with her parents after spending the past 11 years in local authority care or in prison. Marie has spent years in and out of the criminal justice system, mainly for drug related offences, and has undiagnosed learning difficulties which impact severely on her social skills and ability to understand.

Marie is now being supported by a T2A project worker who meets with her two or three times a week. The support worker meets Marie at home and goes with her to probation to help make sure Marie makes her appointments and doesn't breach.

Marie is working with the Community Drug Team and meets with them weekly for drug testing. Marie asked her T2A worker to come along to these appointments with her, as she is anxious about going alone and fears being approached by her old peers who still use drugs and try to persuade her to meet up with them.

The relationship built between the worker and Marie is helping Marie to build resilience and independence, so in future she can get to appointments on her own, and avoid contact with her old peer group.

*\* all names are changed*

Education, training or employment provided during a community or custodial sentence should be appropriate to the offenders' ability and useful to gain or continue employment after prison. A 2008 research report by the Department for Work and Pensions found that most prisoners wishing to undertake training in order to find work after release were interested in the building trade or another trade that would enable them to set up their own business.<sup>56</sup> However, a new focus on specific trades must not overlook prisoners with high potential. The same report found that many prisoners on English and maths courses found the

<sup>53</sup> Ministry of Justice 2007 Cohort, 48.3% reoffend within one year.

<sup>54</sup> Public Service Agreement 16, [www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/finalnationalindicators](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/finalnationalindicators)

<sup>55</sup> See PQ 9th Sept 09, Dominic Grieve MP.

<sup>56</sup> Hartfree, Y., C. Dearden and E. Pound (2008). High hopes: supporting ex-prisoners in their lives after prison. Department of Work and Pensions paper.

offer too basic, and there is a paucity of higher level skill development (above NVQ levels 1 & 2).<sup>57</sup>

There is a need to forge better direct employer-prison links. Evidence indicates that employers are more concerned about whether ex-offenders will make good employees, rather than whether they will repeat their offences in the workplace.<sup>58</sup> Engaging employers as partners would help to increase their awareness of the skills of ex-offenders and allow their input into training in prison. Research by the Chartered Institute of Professional Development found that employers' concerns focus on the soft skills of honesty, reliability and personal behaviour, but in fact employers with experience of employing ex-offenders reported satisfaction with ex-offenders' performance in these areas.<sup>59</sup>

There are existing models of national employment programmes, for example promoting the employment of care leavers, as well as a large amount of good practice in different local areas that could be adapted and expanded. What is needed is the political vision to encourage expansion and reward the efforts of employers. A national employment initiative would allow businesses to network and to emphasise existing positive examples of ex-offender employment, as well as to mitigate the risks of 'putting heads above parapets' and being criticised in public.<sup>60</sup>

**A national employment scheme for ex-offenders has been estimated to save taxpayers up to £300 million per year. Even in a time of economic difficulty, initiatives to get offenders back into work will save the tax payer money in the long-term through reduced costs across the system as ex-offenders go on to lead more productive lives.**<sup>61</sup>

There are particular education, work, training and resettlement needs for young women. Some 71 percent of women in prison have no qualifications at all. The particular needs of women involved in sex work need to be addressed and specific exit programmes adopted to help women out of sex work into employment, counselling and support.

### From Care 2 Work

'From care 2 work' forges links with employers at local, regional and national level, encouraging them to provide opportunities for care leavers, including work experience, training and employment.

Opportunities are developed for work in the private, public and voluntary sectors. Young people who need support get extra mentoring and advice as they start their new role.

The organisations taking part sign up to promoting the involvement of care leavers across the organisation, and to continue to provide opportunities for personal development and career progression for care leavers working for them. Organisations also get a 'quality mark' for their work with care leavers, gaining them national profile.

[www.leavingcare.org](http://www.leavingcare.org)

A safe and stable home is essential to allow young adults to study, maintain a job, establish a relationship and participate in society. Young people now leave home at the average age of 24, receiving the support of their family until ready to live independently, yet one in five men (age 15-21) leaving prison don't know where they are going to live on release.<sup>62</sup>

BME young adults experience even higher levels of homelessness, and are even less likely to have a family or support system to return to.<sup>63</sup> There are additional racial influencers that can impact

<sup>57</sup> Hartfree, Y. et al (2008), *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Bushway, S. (2003). Employment Dimensions of Re-entry: Understanding the nexus between prisoner re-entry and work. *Urban Institute Re-entry Roundtable discussion paper.*

<sup>59</sup> Chartered Institute of Professional Development, 2007

<sup>60</sup> CIPD (2007). *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Policy Exchange, *You're Hired*, 2005

<sup>62</sup> HM Inspectorate of Prisons, *Young People: A Thematic Review*, 1999

<sup>63</sup> *Race on the Agenda*, The Visible and Hidden Dimensions of London's Homelessness: A Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Account, 2007  
*Race on the Agenda Report*, 2008

rehabilitation and resettlement. For example, Asian inmates are less likely to seek help with alcohol misuse and therefore may need tailored support to tackle this.<sup>64</sup>

The Barrow Cadbury Trust has established three T2A pilots to test different approaches to improving services and support for young adults in the criminal justice system. In 2009, the Trust set up two voluntary sector led pilots, one in London, delivered by the St Giles Trust, and one in Worcestershire, delivered by YSS, as well as a third pilot in Birmingham, delivered by the West Midlands Probation Service. The T2A pilots bridge the gap between the youth and adult justice systems and ensure that young adults have access to the services they need. All three pilots are being evaluated by the Oxford Centre for Criminology.<sup>65</sup>

## **MORE EFFECTIVE RESETTLEMENT**

### **Recommendation 8**

**We recommend that intensive support is made available for every young adult (aged 18-24) who leaves custody, regardless of their length of sentence.** Regular contact with prisoners needs to begin before release, and every young adult who requests it should have access to through-the-gate mentoring support upon release. Mentors can play the role of significant adult in the absence of family and help provide extra support in accessing employment, training and housing. They can also help forge links where necessary with BME services and gender-specific support networks. Young adults should also benefit from other key professionals, who can help them to access the services they need.

### **Recommendation 9**

**We recommend all Young Offender Institutions are actively twinned where possible with a local Further Education College, and that education, work or training becomes a key focus within custody and is expected to continue on leaving prison.** Any ex-offender who wishes to continue their studies should be supported to do this on release – through college transfer agreements and/or flexible college starting dates.

### **Recommendation 10**

**We recommend a national employment initiative to improve the chances of employment of ex-offenders by the private, voluntary and public sector.** Although work opportunities will be diverse and local, the government should take the lead in promoting the employment of ex-offenders. The National Care Advisory Scheme model 'From Care to Work' is an example of a large-scale scheme for vulnerable young adults. A similar initiative should be adopted by government as a means of encouraging employers to take on ex-offenders.

<sup>64</sup> The Runnymede Trust, T2A Green Paper Consultation Response, 2009  
<sup>65</sup> See appendix for further information on T2A Young Adult Pilots.

# Conclusion

It is clear that in their late teens and early twenties young adults go through a huge transition from adolescence to adulthood. For many this is an exciting time, but for those vulnerable young adults who experience multiple and complex needs, the transition can be fractured and chaotic. Our approach to dealing with this group is damaging to them as individuals and it is not one of which we should be proud.

This time of transition coincides with the peak age of offending (18 to 19 years old for young men).<sup>66</sup> Most young adults desist from crime by their mid-20s as they settle into relationships, establish their own homes, gain employment and mature. At this critical and transitional stage of life, young adults who end up in the criminal justice system rather than in support are statistically less likely to ever make it out. Those who do find a way back are the exception. This should not surprise us, as young adults on the fringes of crime experience a combination of educational failure, mental health problems, drug and alcohol addictions, unemployment, family difficulties, and learning difficulties or disabilities.

It is in all our interests to ensure that these young adults go on to lead crime free lives, fulfil their potential and give back positively to their communities. But the current criminal justice system is simply failing young adults, often making them more not less likely to commit crime.

Many of the recommendations in this report are based on existing pockets of best practice. It provides models of where our recommendations are already proving to work on the ground. This report has sought to highlight areas for immediate action – within just one term of any government. Our detailed costings demonstrate that these proposals would produce significant savings to the tax payer within a few years.

Although we have focused on immediate and realistic proposals, we do not underestimate the need for political will and leadership. We need the government to be passionate about helping vulnerable young adults lead fulfilling lives and contribute to society. This will also require courage to counter those arguing for a harsher approach.

We have provided evidence in this report of a more effective and a more cost effective way of tackling these issues. The T2A Alliance urges whichever party forms the next government after the general election to seize hold of this important agenda and show the political leadership required.

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<sup>66</sup> Home Office, RDS, *A Guide to the Criminal Justice System in England and Wales*, p.47

# Appendix: The T2A Pilots

## London T2A Pilot

The London T2A Pilot, run by St Giles Trust, is based in Southwark and Croydon. It was launched in January 2009 and works with young adults in prison prior to their release and during and after release into the community. It provides intensive support to divert young people – principally young men – away from offending and enables them to build a new life for themselves. Support offered includes help with housing, accessing training and employment, as well as emotional support with issues such as relationships, behaviour, self esteem and self perception.

The service is delivered by staff who are all ex-offenders, which helps to provide a level of trust and credibility with the young adults. St Giles Trust also train young offenders both in custody and in the community as volunteers who can support the work of the paid staff on the project, which enables them to reach larger numbers of young offenders who need the service.

The London T2A teams have been welcomed by the Youth Offending Team and Croydon Probation Service. Croydon Probation makes direct referrals to the service, and the local YOT team have invited the T2A teams to work alongside their key workers on some cases. The T2A teams have also built up good relationships with the local police, who also refer young people directly to the T2A teams.

[www.stgilestrust.org.uk](http://www.stgilestrust.org.uk)

## West Mercia T2A Pilot

The West Mercia T2A pilot is run by YSS and is based in Worcestershire. It has been receiving referrals since February 2009 and works with young adult offenders with high needs in the community. The pilot offers a flexible, community based, one to one support and mentoring service, using a mixture of paid staff and local volunteers.

Each young adult on the T2A pilot determines what level of support they require, including support for family members. The key worker steers them through the available provision, overcoming any barriers (real or perceived) and provides feedback to agencies to influence service practice and policy development. Each young person develops their own action plan with smart objectives. Staff are responsive to need and flexible in their approach due to the potential changing and chaotic lifestyles of the young adults involved.

In Worcestershire, YSS has established a robust multi-agency T2A steering group with senior management representation from across the criminal justice system, including the Youth Offending Service, Police, Probation, Connexions, Courts and Children's Services. The T2A pilot encourages regular discourse between the West Mercia Probation Trust and the Youth Offending Service and key workers are regular visitors at team meetings and will often meet up to discuss T2A referrals.

[www.yss.org.uk](http://www.yss.org.uk)

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<sup>67</sup> The London T2A Pilot is part of St Giles Trust's SOS Project.

## **Birmingham T2A Pilot**

The Birmingham T2A Pilot is delivered by the West Midlands Probation Service and was launched in July 2009. The T2A pilot is aimed at young people aged 17-24 years of age identified as posing a medium risk of re-offending.

The pilot enables intervention to be tailored to the maturity and needs of the individual young adult and offers mentoring, as well as specific help with accommodation, employment, relationships and substance misuse, depending on their needs. The pilot also aims to instil change in the young adults' lives, to enhance their life opportunities, to influence their choices and to move away from crime, reduce worklessness and improve their emotional well-being.

The T2A pilot has met with 17 Probation Teams and 3 Youth Offending Teams to raise the T2A profile in Birmingham. The pilot has also built relationships with Connexions, Leaving Care Services, local further education colleges, the police, HMPYOI Brinsford, Birmingham City Council and voluntary agencies.

[www.westmidlands-probation.gov.uk](http://www.westmidlands-probation.gov.uk)



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