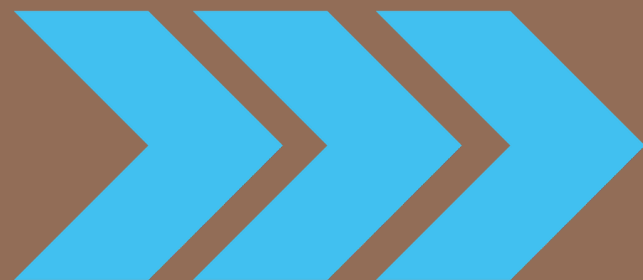




TRANSITION TO ADULthood (T2A)

Response to the Justice Committee's inquiry into Children and Young Adults in the Secure Estate

April 2026



Executive summary

The Transition to Adulthood (T2A) Alliance, managed and convened by the Barrow Cadbury Trust, submits this evidence to the Justice Select Committee's inquiry into children and young adults in the secure estate. This submission draws on over two decades of research, policy engagement, practice development, and lived and learned experience concerning young adults aged 18 to 25 in the criminal justice system.

The evidence presented in this submission establishes the following core findings:

- The current custodial estate is structurally ill-suited to the distinct developmental, welfare, and rehabilitative needs of young adults aged 18 to 25, who remain one of the most volatile populations in custody, with the longest average sentences and some of the highest rates of violence, self-harm, and restraint.
- Access to purposeful activity, education, and mental health care in custody falls critically short for young adults, with the psychosocial maturity screening tool reaching only approximately 2% of those assessed as requiring tailored interventions.
- Neurodivergence, neurodisability and trauma are severely under-identified and the means to address them under-resourced, with adult custodial estates lacking systematic universal screening equivalent to that used in youth custody.
- The staffing model is inadequate not merely in numbers but in composition and culture. A critically neglected issue concerns the significant proportion of frontline staff who are themselves aged 18 to 25, sharing many of the vulnerabilities of those in their care, and who are rapidly assimilated into institutionally punitive cultures that undermine their initial recruitment as youth-focused workers.
- Racial and gender disproportionality is worsening amongst young adults in the secure estate. At the same time, ethnicity recording reliability has deteriorated significantly since 2010, from 7% unknown to 37% unknown in 2024, undermining accountability.¹
- Oversight mechanisms, including HM Inspectorate of Prisons, Ofsted, and the Care Quality Commission, operate inconsistently and lack the powers or coordination necessary to trigger timely intervention in failing institutions.

The submission concludes with four radical but realistic proposals for structural change that would sustain reform to young adult custodial provision across electoral cycles and budgetary pressures. T2A invites the Committee to consider these proposals alongside the below recommendations.

Summary of recommendations

1. An independently evaluated programme of pilots testing dedicated young adult custodial units, including small therapeutic units and dedicated wings within adult establishments, should be commissioned without further delay, reporting findings to this Committee within two years. Pilots should be designed with reference to evidence on optimal population mixing and should include young women's provision.
2. Purposeful activity, education, and vocational training, including structured entrepreneurship education programmes designed for custodial contexts, should be accorded statutory minimum entitlement status for young adults in custody, with HM Inspectorate of Prisons required to report on compliance as a specific performance indicator.
3. HMPPS should commission an independently evaluated national pilot of structured entrepreneurship education in at least five custodial establishments holding young adults, including at least one gender-specific pilot for young women, reporting findings to this Committee within two years.
4. Universal, mandatory screening for neurodivergence and neurodisability, traumatic brain injury, and a recognition of the impact of adverse childhood experiences should be introduced across all custodial settings for young adults, with screening outcomes required to trigger documented, specific care planning.
5. The Care and Resettlement Officer role should be funded and implemented as a mandatory model across all establishments holding young adults, consistent with the recommendation made by Lord Harris in 2016 and endorsed by this Select Committee at that time.
6. The Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme should be replaced with a trauma-informed, trauma-responsive, culturally relevant, and person-centred positive support framework, developed in partnership with experts in culturally appropriate developmental psychology.
7. Mandatory annual reporting disaggregated by age, ethnicity, gender, and care experience status should be introduced for restraint, segregation, self-harm, and adverse custodial outcomes, with an improvement benchmark that holds ministerial accountability.
8. Establish a workforce strategy for the young adult secure estate to explicitly address the vulnerabilities of young adult staff, including mandatory clinical supervision, reflective practice, cultural induction programmes, and workforce wellbeing data published.
9. HM Inspectorate of Prisons should be given a statutory duty to inspect against a young adult specific inspection framework, and formal joint escalation protocols between the inspectorates should be established for establishments that fail to meet minimum standards for young adults.
10. Mandatory transitional protocols should be introduced requiring checks with youth justice services on all transfers at 18, co-ordinated care planning for care leavers, and explicit identification and management of all young adults known to statutory services as children.

11. The Bail Act 1976 should be amended to incorporate a distinct framework for young adults that mirrors the more protective provisions available for children; data on remand decisions should be disaggregated by age, ethnicity, gender, and religion and published routinely; and courts should be required to obtain a report addressing developmental maturity and the impact of remand before ordering custodial remand of any young adult under 25.
12. No child or young adult, especially girls or young women, should be placed in custody except as a genuinely verified last resort where no community alternative exists. Where custody is unavoidable, a developmentally trauma-informed, gender and trauma-responsive, and culturally appropriate regime must be operational, with the transition at 18 from youth to adult provision explicitly planned and fully and appropriately resourced in custody and upon release.
13. This Committee should call for a comprehensive whole-system review of the criminal justice system as it applies to young adults, covering policing, courts, sentencing, custody, probation, and community provision as part of an integrated framework. The details of this would inform any durable reform of the secure estate.
14. The Government should legislate to establish young adults aged 18-25 as a distinct statutory cohort within the criminal justice system through an 'Emerging Adult Transition Status', creating a legal presumption against standard adult custodial conditions, with specific sentencing protections, custodial regime entitlements, and post-release support obligations.

About T2A

T2A is a cross sector alliance that advocates for a specific and developmentally informed approach to young adults 18-25 throughout the criminal justice process. The Alliance brings together more than 40 leading organisations spanning criminal, health, social, youth and young adult justice, and includes organisations such as the Howard League for Penal Reform, the Prison Reform Trust, the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, Spark Inside, Spark2Life, Revolving Doors, and Friends, Families, Travellers, amongst others.²

Drawing upon a substantial multidisciplinary evidence base produced over two decades informing best young adult practice, the T2A Alliance has consistently demonstrated that young adults 18-25 constitute a distinct group requiring a tailored approach at every stage of the criminal justice process. T2A aims to shift policy and practice away from arbitrary chronological thresholds toward a maturity-based model that addresses the root causes of offending, including poverty, trauma, and structural inequality. The Alliance's national influence is evidenced by the incorporation of maturity as a mitigating factor within Sentencing Council guidelines and Crown Prosecution Service guidance, and by its substantive contributions to successive Parliamentary inquiries, including the Justice Committee's 2016 inquiry into young adults in the criminal justice system.

This submission reflects the evidence base developed through T2A's programme of research, policy engagement, and practice development. It also draws on specific consultation with young adults with lived experience of the secure estate, held as recently as March 2026. Where evidence from individuals with lived experience of custody is referenced, all personal identifiers have been anonymised in accordance with established ethical practice.

Introduction

T2A welcomes this inquiry and commends the Committee for its continued scrutiny of the treatment of young adults within the secure estate. The Justice Select Committee's 2016 inquiry into the treatment of young adults in the criminal justice system established a landmark evidence base.³ Nearly a decade on, despite some incremental progress in principle, evidence demonstrates that the conditions and outcomes for young adults in custody have not fundamentally improved and, in some respects, have deteriorated.

Young adults constitute a neuro-developmentally and socially distinct group. Neuroscientific evidence confirms that brain maturation, including the prefrontal cortex responsible for impulse control, risk assessment, and executive function, continues until approximately the mid-twenties.⁴ Consequently, young adults in custody typically present with heightened impulsivity, limited capacity for long-term planning, and acute sensitivity to environmental stressors, including violence, instability, and isolation. These characteristics are compounded by the extraordinarily high levels of adverse childhood experience, care experience, traumatic brain injury, neurodevelopmental disorder, and mental ill-health that define this population.⁵

According to HMPPS' own data, between 70% and 90% of young adults in custody are estimated to have experienced a traumatic brain injury, 45% are screened as having learning difficulties or challenges, and over 25% of the adult prison population has previously been in care, with the proportion rising to 49% among young men under 21 in the criminal justice system.⁶ These are not peripheral characteristics but defining ones, and they demand a custodial response that is categorically different from that applied to older adults.

Current trends are clear: rising sentence lengths, collapsing community sentences, and worsening racial disproportionality. This submission argues that the Committee has both the evidence and the opportunity to recommend a different course. The reimagined system described in this submission is not unreachable.

This submission introduces three dimensions that T2A considers to have been under-discussed in previous inquiries into young adults: the vulnerability of young adult staff working in the secure estate; the urgent need for statutory foundations if implementation gaps are to be closed; and, crucially, the need for the system to be examined and reformed as a whole, rather than custody being treated as a discrete problem that can be treated in isolation.

The appropriateness and suitability of the youth estate for children and young adults

Fitness for purpose of custodial settings

The youth custodial estate has contracted substantially over the past decade. The population of children and young people in custody in England and Wales fell by approximately 70% between 2010 and 2021, resulting in a smaller but markedly more complex and higher-risk cohort in custody.⁷ This contraction has concentrated vulnerability, not ameliorated it. The estate now holds children and young adults who have committed more serious offences, present with more acute needs, and require more intensive intervention than at any point in recent history.

The current mix of custodial settings - Young Offender Institutions (YOIs), Secure Training Centres (STCs), Secure Children's Homes (SCHs), and the emerging Secure Schools model - is not fit for purpose in meeting the complex needs of young adults. While Secure Schools represent a welcome reform in principle, their scope and scale remain limited, and young adults fall almost entirely outside their remit. Notably, the country's first Secure School, which only opened in 2024, was closed in 2025 due to safety concerns, illustrating the fragility of reform without robust system-wide foundations.⁸

The interim policy extending youth estate custody to some 18-year-olds to alleviate adult estate pressures has exposed significant systemic weaknesses, including overstretched resources, deteriorating conditions, and settings structurally unprepared for this demographic.⁹ Heightened violence, reduced access to education, and inadequate mental health provision have been the documented consequences.

International comparators demonstrate that this is not an intractable problem. Germany and the Netherlands operate developmentally appropriate custodial regimes for young adults up to the age of 25, informed by maturity assessments, and have demonstrated measurably better safety and rehabilitation outcomes as a result.^{10 11} The United Kingdom has not achieved an equivalent structural reform, despite the recommendations of the 2016 Justice Committee.¹²

REC 1:

The Government should commission a time-limited, independently evaluated programme of pilots to test dedicated young adult custodial units, including small therapeutic units and distinct wings within adult establishments.

Previous attempts to create age-separated units have encountered a significant practical constraint: young adults themselves have frequently reported that some contact with older, settled prisoners can exercise a stabilising and moderating influence on the peer culture of younger cohorts. Participants in research with young adults serving long sentences described how mixing of age groups in adult establishments made conflict less likely and how older prisoners serving long sentences were valued as role models and mentors:

“Having some elders around makes people grow up” and “Good influences on the wing got me out of the YO mentality”
Young adult in custody (Prison Reform Trust, Being Young Inside, 2026)

Any model of separation must therefore be designed with reference to evidence on optimal population mixing, with a primary focus on therapeutic and developmental outcomes rather than administrative convenience.

Upstream diversion, robust community alternatives, and clear exit routes from custody must sit alongside any custodial reform — custody that functions as a last resort is categorically different in character and purpose from custody as a default response. The urgency of this reform cannot be overstated. Between 2010 and 2023, average custodial sentence length for young adults increased by 50%, community sentences collapsed by 75%, and young adults became twelve times more likely than under-18s to receive an immediate custodial sentence — despite prosecutorial numbers falling by 65% over the same period.¹³ The result is a custodial population that is simultaneously smaller and serving dramatically longer sentences under conditions unfit for developmental needs.

T2A has recently undertaken an extensive consultation process, grounded in co-production with people with lived experience of the justice system. Initial outcomes have articulated a clear alternative vision: a system in which custody, where it remains necessary, functions not as a warehouse but as a therapeutic and holistic space that “heals the soul, heals the person, heals their personal economy, enabling them to fulfil their capacity” — with even the most serious cases held in therapeutic detention rather than standard prison conditions, and with built-in mechanisms for progression, review, and exit. This is the standard against which the Committee should measure any proposed reform of the custodial estate.

Access to purposeful activity, education and healthcare

Young adults in custody face severe and well-documented deficits in accessing purposeful activity, education, and healthcare. HM Inspectorate of Prisons¹⁴ found that young adults spend significantly less time out of cell than older prisoners. As of 2024, 34% of prisoners in young adult institutions reported spending less than two hours out of their cells on weekdays,¹⁵ compared with 17% of older prisoners in 2021.¹⁶ Only 46% of young adults reported that their prison experience had reduced the likelihood of their reoffending.¹⁷ These figures represent a catastrophic failure of the rehabilitative purpose of custody.

Where individual officers may try to introduce more initiatives to support young adults, they are reportedly held back by a wider institution that is already struggling with existing workload, as demonstrated by recent lived experience consultation:

“I’ve literally heard some officers say this — that they want to do more to help but they don’t get the support from the other officers. So you’ve got officers trying to do the right thing but it’s hard for them.”

Peer support worker, formerly in custody (Spark2Life, 2026, anonymised)

Mental health provision is particularly fragile. Approximately one third of children and young people in custody present with identified mental health disorders.¹⁸ Despite initiatives including the Secure Stairs trauma-informed care framework, provision remains fragmented and is especially inadequate at the point of transition from youth to adult custody, where co-ordination with forensic mental health services frequently breaks down entirely.^{19 20 21}

The disruption to education and vocational training caused by regime instability, inadequate and inconsistent staffing, violence, and significant reductions in time out of cell is severe. Education should not be a supplementary benefit but a core mechanism for identity formation and desistance; depriving young adults of education is itself a form of institutional harm that compounds the social disadvantage that could have brought these young adults into contact with the justice system in the first place. Research consistently shows that young adults in custody disproportionately arrive with histories of school exclusion, interrupted education, and unmet special educational needs – factors that must be actively addressed, not passively tolerated.²²

REC 2:

Purposeful activity, including education, vocational training, and explicitly entrepreneurial pathways should be given statutory minimum entitlement status for young adults in custody, with HM Inspectorate of Prisons required to report on compliance as a distinct performance indicator.

Evidence compiled through the authoring of a forthcoming chapter on entrepreneurship education in children and young adult custodial and justice settings²³ demonstrates that entrepreneurship education – when properly designed and culturally grounded – offers a uniquely effective vehicle for identity transformation among justice-involved young adults. The “learn, earn, save” framework integrates vocational competencies, financial literacy, and life skills in ways that speak directly to the economic realities and aspirations of this cohort. Unlike traditional prison education, which often reproduces the passivity and compliance demanded by custodial regimes, entrepreneurship education builds agency, self-efficacy, and transferable skills that support desistance.

REC 3:

HMPPS should commission an independently evaluated national pilot of structured entrepreneurship education in at least five custodial establishments holding young adults, including at least one gender-specific pilot for young women, reporting findings to this Committee within two years.

Neurodivergence and neurodisability, trauma, and identification of complex needs

Identification, assessment and tailored provision

Neurodivergent conditions and complex trauma are endemic in the young adult custodial population, yet identification and appropriate support remain gravely insufficient. The prevalence of neurodivergence amongst adults within the prison population is disproportionately high, with estimates putting it between 50-75%.²⁴ These rates are estimated to be even higher amongst children in contact with the criminal justice system.²⁵ Additionally, it is estimated that up to half of adults in prison have experienced a traumatic brain injury (TBI).^{26,27} These conditions profoundly shape behaviour, engagement with interventions, and risk of violence and self-harm. They are not adequately reflected in the system's approach to this cohort.

The Youth Justice Board's Comprehensive Health Assessment Tool (CHAT), deployed in youth custody, provides a systematic screening mechanism with no adult estate equivalent. The psychosocial maturity screening tool embedded in OASys and accessible via NOMIS was piloted from 2019 and represents a welcome, if belated, development.^{28,29} However, its reach is strikingly limited: only approximately 2% of those assessed as requiring the related "Choices and Changes" intervention resource actually receive it.³⁰ This is not a minor implementation gap; it is a systemic failure.

Prevalence of TBI among young people in custody is estimated at between 50% and 80%, with speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN) affecting approximately 63%, ADHD around 30%, and autism further adding to the neurodevelopmental profile of this cohort.^{31,32,33} These conditions profoundly impair attention, memory, planning, emotional regulation, and social communication. Where needs go unidentified, behaviour is systematically misread as defiance, leading to sanctions, restraint, and escalation rather than support.

Current screening processes are too dependent on meeting clinical diagnostic thresholds, which fail to capture the full level of need given established access barriers to diagnosis for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. A wider approach: screening all young adults for needs across key domains including memory, attention, social communication, and motor skills, and responding to those needs rather than to diagnoses, would more accurately reflect the scale of need and ensure that no young adult falls below the threshold for support by virtue of diagnostic accident rather than developmental reality.^{34,35}

Behavioural presentations arising from trauma, neurodivergence and neurodisability, or brain injury are routinely misread as deliberate non-compliance within custodial settings. Research by Dr Niquita Pilgrim³⁶ illustrates how behaviours associated with trauma such as hypervigilance, withdrawal, and emotional dysregulation are categorised within OASys as "attitudinal risk", inflating risk scores particularly for Black and care-experienced young adults, with downstream consequences for sentence planning, licence conditions, and recall.

Lord Harris of Haringey’s recommendation for designated Care and Resettlement Officers (CAROs) dedicated to young adults, to provide personalised co-ordination and support, remains largely unrealised nearly a decade after the Justice Committee endorsed it.³⁷ Lived experience evidence corroborates this: participants in a recent focus group stated that their key worker was effectively inaccessible throughout their sentence:

“There are supposed to be keyworkers in prisons, but I literally saw my key worker once or twice during my whole sentence. I don’t even know if she was working there, I had no idea how to find her even if I did want to talk to her.”

Young adult with lived experience of custody (T2A, 2026, anonymised)

REC 4:

The Government should introduce universal, mandatory screening for neurodivergence and neurodisability, traumatic brain injury, and adverse childhood experiences across all custodial settings holding young adults equivalent to the CHAT in youth custody. Screening results should be required to trigger documented, specific care planning.

REC 5:

The Care and Resettlement Officer role should be funded and implemented as a mandatory model across young adult establishments.

HMPPS should additionally develop a “staged” approach to sentence management for young adults serving long sentences, with individualised plans, clear milestones, and genuine progression opportunities, developed in partnership with those with lived experience.

Violence, safety and disorder in the secure estate

Key drivers of violence, self-harm and restraint

Young adults are disproportionately affected by violence, restraint, and segregation within custody. HMPPS' 2021 thematic report found that young adults were three times more likely to have been subject to physical restraint and twice as likely to have been segregated within the preceding six months compared to those aged 25 and over.³⁸ Additionally, young adults accounted for over one in five self-harm incidents in prison in 2024.³⁹ This is not primarily a reflection of the characteristics of young adults; it is a reflection of the settings in which they are held and the absence of any developmentally appropriate response to their behaviour.

Lived experience evidence provides a stark account of how the conditions of custody actively generate violence rather than containing it:

“If you want to get support, you have to kick off, it’s the only way you’re going to get their attention. It’s like they’re encouraging that chaos and violence.”

Young adult with lived experience of custody (T2A, 2026, anonymised)

“I feel like initially, I just wanted to get my head down and move quietly, get on with my sentence, but you start to realise that sometimes the only way to get things done, get support, get requests responded to is just to kick off.”

Young adult with lived experience of custody (T2A, 2026, anonymised)

The principal structural drivers of violence and disorder are overcrowding and restricted regimes that leave young adults with excessive unoccupied time; the continued use of the Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) scheme, which is punitive and ineffective for a population who respond poorly to delayed rewards; inadequate staffing in both numbers and quality; and the absence of any developmentally appropriate behaviour management framework that takes account of impulsivity, brain injury, and trauma.

Race is not a peripheral concern in this analysis. Systemic racism compounds harm at every stage. The Lammy Review⁴⁰ documented disproportionate use of force against Black and Muslim young men, a pattern corroborated by subsequent HMPPS data. A 2022 HM Inspectorate of Prisons report on Black male prisoners and staff found that in 2018-19, young Black prisoners were involved in 39% of all baton draws and 49% of any subsequent baton strikes, and were over three times more likely than other ethnic groups to be struck by batons.⁴¹ The adultification of Black young people – the misattribution of adult characteristics and culpability to children and young adults by virtue of their race – drives harsher responses to behaviour that, in a white young person of the same developmental profile, might attract therapeutic rather than punitive intervention.⁴²

REC 6:

The IEP scheme should be replaced for young adults with a trauma-informed, trauma-responsive, culturally relevant and person-centred positive behaviour support framework, developed in partnership with experts in culturally appropriate developmental psychology and the young adult custodial context.

A mandatory deescalation training framework specific to young adults should be introduced, and racial disproportionality in the use of restraint and segregation should be subject to mandatory annual reporting disaggregated by age and ethnicity.

Data collection on restraint and disproportionality

Data on restraint and segregation within young adult custodial settings is inconsistently collected and incompletely published. Young Offender Institutions in particular lack systematic publication of disaggregated segregation data, which limits transparency and prevents targeted accountability.⁴³ HMPPS has committed to improving ethnicity-disaggregated reporting, but persistent concerns about small sample sizes and confidentiality constraints mean that meaningful analysis of disproportionality is severely hampered.

A particularly significant data failure is the deterioration in ethnicity recording across the justice system since 2010. Recently the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies has found that the proportion of young adults in custody recorded as ethnicity “unknown” rose from 7% in 2010 to 37% in 2024.⁴⁴ This deterioration is not a technical inconvenience; it is a structural barrier to monitoring and addressing the racial inequities that are known to pervade the system.

REC 7:

The creation of a mandatory equity baseline dashboard, incorporating disaggregated data on restraint, segregation, self-harm, and adverse outcomes by age, ethnicity, gender, and care-experience status, published annually, with an improvement benchmark that holds ministerial accountability.

Staff, training and workforce culture

Training adequacy, staffing ratios and regime reform

The current training model is not adequate to ensure competent deescalation and proportionate use of restraint with young adults. Training in adult male custodial settings, where the majority of young adults are housed, lacks specific focus on developmental maturity, trauma-informed practice, and neurodiversity awareness.⁴⁵ While youth and female custodial estates have made greater progress in trauma-informed training, this remains inconsistent and geographically patchy across the wider estate.

The staffing model requires fundamentally greater resourcing for young adults than for any other adult custodial population. Young adults are one of the most volatile and vulnerable populations in the estate; they are serving increasingly long sentences; their needs are more complex and intensive than those of older adults; and relationship-based practice requires consistent, higher staff-to-prisoner ratios than those currently in operation.

The vulnerability of young adult staff: an under-discussed crisis

T2A draws the Committee's specific attention to a dimension of the staffing crisis that has not received sufficient scrutiny: the vulnerability of young adult staff working within the secure estate. A 2019 Freedom of Information request found that approximately 10.2% of Band 3-5 Prison Officers were aged 18-24. This figure goes up to 16% for female Prison Officers.⁴⁶

The problem is not simply that these young staff are undertrained or insufficiently supported. The deeper problem is one of institutional culture and chronic underfunding, resulting in high staff turnover and the loss of more experienced officers. Staff may be recruited as youth-focused workers, with values and approaches aligned to developmental practice. Once deployed within custodial settings characterised by punitive norms, persistent violence, minimal clinical support, and a compliance-dominated culture, those values are rapidly eroded. What is recruited as a youth-justice-oriented worker is systematically transformed, by the culture and conditions of the setting, into a role that is neither culturally relevant nor fit to meet the complex needs of those in custody. This transformation is not incidental; it is a predictable consequence of structural conditions that have never been adequately addressed.

Participants in lived experience focus groups noted:

“Some of them were barely older than me.”

Young adult with lived experience of custody (T2A, 2026, anonymised)

In extreme cases, this dynamic results in serious misconduct and even criminal offences committed by staff themselves, as recent high profile cases have illustrated.⁴⁷ The system effectively places two developmentally vulnerable populations – one detained, one employed – in proximity to each other without the support structures that either population requires.⁴⁸

High turnover, inadequate training in trauma-informed and neurodiverse care, a lack of supportive supervision, and a punitive risk-focused organisational culture collectively undermine relational practice, leaving staff and young adults alike isolated and vulnerable. Addressing this requires building a workforce that is not merely trauma-informed but actively trauma-supported and trauma-responsive.

REC 8:

The workforce strategy for the young adult secure estate should explicitly address the vulnerabilities of young adult staff.

Mandatory clinical supervision and reflective practice should be introduced for all frontline staff in establishments holding young adults. Staff recruitment processes should be matched by sustained cultural induction programmes sufficient to prevent the rapid institutional assimilation that currently destroys developmentally oriented values, and staff wellbeing data should be published as part of institutional accountability frameworks. This should sit alongside a comprehensive workforce strategy review and culture change programme informed by evidence on the institutional conditions required to sustain humane, effective, and anti-racist custodial practice.

Oversight and scrutiny of the secure estate

Effectiveness of oversight and intervention mechanisms

The oversight and scrutiny arrangements for the secure estate, whilst valuable in generating evidence and raising standards, do not currently constitute an effective mechanism for triggering timely intervention in failing institutions. The inspectorates – HM Inspectorate of Prisons, Ofsted, and the Care Quality Commission, and IMBs – operate within fragmented accountability structures and lack the co-ordinated powers of formal joint intervention that the complexity of custodial settings housing children and young adults demands.

Inspection cycles are annual, and the preparation period of six to twelve weeks leaves too short an interval between inspections for meaningful improvement to be assessed. Critically, post-inspection accountability is reactive rather than preventative. The absence of a continuous monitoring and escalation function means that damning reports are received, action plans are written, and the conditions that generated the damning findings frequently persist. HMPPS staff have direct experience of circumstances in which institutional reform, agreed across multiple layers of senior leadership, trade unions, and inspectorates, has failed to reach ministers or the public domain due to political and structural barriers at the ministerial interface. This pattern illustrates the extent to which short-term political incentives can operate against, rather than in support of, sustained systemic improvement.⁴⁹

Safeguarding arrangements are markedly inconsistent across establishments. Young adults frequently report feeling unsafe and perceive their treatment as inequitable, perceptions that are particularly pronounced among Black and minoritised prisoners.^{50 51} Unresolved grievances and poor complaints outcomes compound institutional disengagement and are themselves drivers of violence.

The absence of statutory mandates requiring dedicated young adult provision means that inspection findings, however damning, do not trigger mandatory systemic reform. The contrast with the youth justice system – which benefits from statutory Youth Offending Teams, protected governance through the Youth Justice Board, and dedicated data systems – is stark and indefensible given the overlapping characteristics of the two populations.

REC 9:

The introduction of a statutory duty on HM Inspectorate of Prisons to inspect against a young-adult-specific inspection framework, and formal protocols for joint escalation between the inspectorates where establishments fail to meet minimum standards for young adults.

Transition, race, gender and structural inequality

The cliff edge at 18 and the failure of transitional safeguarding

The transition at age 18 from youth to adult custody represents a systemic failure of considerable magnitude. At 18, young adults simultaneously lose access to the better-resourced and more developmentally responsive youth justice system, see their care-leaver entitlements threatened or rendered inaccessible by custody, and are transferred into an adult estate with no mandatory protocol for continuity of information, care, or relationship. Care leavers face a compounded “double cliff edge” as statutory support diminishes in both the justice and care systems simultaneously.⁵²

Lived experience evidence illustrates the human reality of this systemic failure with clarity and urgency:

“Going from a YOI to an adult prison, there was no preparation or support. I knew coming up to turning 21 that I was going to be moved, but I didn’t know when. I found out I was being moved a week in advance and was never told where I was being moved to.”

Young adult with lived experience of custody (T2A, 2026, anonymised)

“Moving from a YOI to an adult prison, it was daunting, it was scary. There’s no support when you do get there, you’re very much just left to fend for yourself.”

Young adult with lived experience of custody (T2A, 2026, anonymised)

HMPPS consistently evidences that at least 25% of those in custody have care experience, with the proportion rising to 49% of young men under the age of 21 in the criminal justice system.⁵³ Despite this, in over two thirds of inspected cases there were no checks with youth justice services on transfer, even though 54% of the young adult cohort had prior youth justice experience.⁵⁴ This is not a resource problem alone; it is a cultural and structural failure to treat the transition as a moment of acute vulnerability requiring proactive rather than passive management.

REC 10:

The introduction of mandatory transitional protocols requiring checks with youth justice services on all transfers at 18, co-ordinated care planning for care leavers, and explicit identification and management of all young adults known to statutory services as children, regardless of whether formal care proceedings were initiated.

A critical and under-discussed dimension of the 18 to 25 cliff edge is the lack of availability of dedicated youth justice worker provision in both estates.

Young adults currently lack access to dedicated youth justice workers: such roles are restricted to the youth estate and do not follow young people into adult provision. This gap already represents a significant failure of continuity. However, evidence available to T2A indicates that dedicated youth justice worker provisions are now being phased out for both estates, creating a permanent structural gap in transition support at precisely the point at which developmental vulnerability is at its highest. This is not a question of resources alone; it is a question of institutional commitment to recognising young adults as a distinct cohort requiring specialist support. The phasing out of these roles, without equivalent replacement, is incompatible with any genuine commitment to a distinct approach for young adults.

Racial disproportionality

Nine years after the Lammy Review, racial disparities in the criminal justice system have not narrowed, but widened. Barrow Cadbury Trust-funded research by the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies has tracked these trends systematically, finding that while the overall number of young adults in custody has declined, those who remain are serving longer sentences, face harsher conditions and greater racial disparities than at any previous point in the evidence record.⁵⁵

The adultification of Black and mixed race young adults – the misattribution to them of adult characteristics and culpability – represents a form of institutional racism that pervades the system from point of arrest through to custodial treatment.⁵⁶ Black and mixed race young adults report disproportionate use of force, segregation, and disciplinary sanctions, and their behaviours are more likely to be interpreted through a punitive rather than a therapeutic lens.^{57 58 59}

T2A further draws the Committee's attention to the disproportionate prosecution of Black young men under joint enterprise provisions. Three major reports^{60 61 62} have established that Black young men aged 18 to 25 are the largest demographic prosecuted under joint enterprise, with the Crown Prosecution Service having agreed, following legal challenge, to monitor such prosecutions.

Muslim young adults represent a further significantly over-represented and under-served group within the custodial estate. Muslim young adults are disproportionately subject to use of force, adjudications, and segregation,⁶³ and evidence from the Young Review⁶⁴ found that nearly all Muslim and Black young adults reported experiencing differential treatment due to their faith or ethnicity. Significantly, 73% of children and young people in youth custody identify with a faith, with 12% identifying as Muslim – yet faith is frequently viewed with institutional suspicion rather than recognised as a resource for identity formation and desistance.⁶⁵

Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) young adults face some of the most entrenched and historically rooted forms of criminalisation in Britain. GRT children remain vastly overrepresented in secure training centres and youth custody.⁶⁶ Nomadic cultural practices are routinely mis-categorised by probation as risk factors. The custodial estate has no systematic response to the specific cultural, identity, and wellbeing needs of GRT young adults, and this absence must be addressed as a matter of equality and justice.⁶⁷

Remand: Disproportionality, futility, and the gendered cliff-edge

The overuse of custodial remand for young adults represents one of the most costly, counterproductive, and disproportionate features of the current system. Young adults aged 18 to 24 make up 21% of the remand population in prisons compared to approximately 12% of the sentenced population.⁶⁸ Despite a reduction in overall young adult prisoner numbers, the number of remanded young adults has increased significantly: there was a 30% increase in remanded 18-20-year-olds and a 56% increase in remanded 21-24-year-olds between 2019 and 2023.⁶⁹ Young adults are spending longer and longer on remand in conditions that are, in many cases, among the worst in the prison estate.

The majority of children and young people remanded into custody – 62% – do not subsequently receive a custodial sentence, and one in six receives an acquittal or a non-custodial outcome.⁷⁰ For adults, 14% are acquitted, and 16% are given a non-custodial sentence.⁷¹ The fiscal and human cost of this pattern is indefensible. Each remand day that precedes an acquittal or non-custodial sentence represents not only a waste of public resources but an act of harm against a young adult who, in law, remains innocent. Ending the routine use of custodial remand for young adults, except where it is genuinely necessary in the most serious cases, should be treated as an immediate priority and would materially reduce pressure on the already chronically overcrowded adult prison estate.

Remand is used disproportionately against Black, Brown, and racially minoritised young adults. In June 2023, 26% of remanded 18-20-year-olds and 18% of remanded 21-25-year-olds were Black, compared to less than 6% and 5% respectively in the general population.⁷² GRT young adults face compounded disadvantage at the point of remand: nomadic lifestyle and lack of fixed address are treated by courts as indicators of flight risk, resulting in a pattern of custodial remand that reflects cultural bias rather than objective risk assessment. GRT young adults, already disproportionately represented in youth custody and secure training centres,⁷³ face a remand process that pathologises their identity rather than assessing their individual circumstances. The Bail Act 1976 applies to all adults without any special provision for young adults, meaning the more protective framework available for children, which includes a statutory duty to consider best interests and welfare and requires that a custodial sentence be “very likely” before remand is granted, does not extend beyond the age of 18. Turning 18 should not be a cliff edge in relation to remand, any more than it should be in relation to any other aspect of the criminal justice process.⁷⁴

Remand is also a gendered issue, with 26% of women in prison being held on remand as of 2024.⁷⁵ In the absence of young adult-specific provision for women, young women on remand are placed in adult prisons alongside significantly older women, without the developmental, relational, or therapeutic support that their age and circumstances demand. This gap must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

REC 11:

The Bail Act 1976 should be amended to incorporate a distinct framework for young adults that mirrors the more protective provisions available for children.

Data on remand decisions should be disaggregated by age, ethnicity, gender, and religion and published routinely; and courts should be required to obtain a report addressing developmental maturity and the impact of remand before ordering custodial remand of any young adult under 25.

Gendered need

As of 2025, following the Hancock review, girls are no longer placed in Young Offender Institutions – rather, they are placed in Secure Children’s Homes or Secure Training Centres.⁷⁶ At 18, however, girls transition directly to adult women’s custodial provision – not to dedicated Young Offender provision as offered within the male estate, making their transition from the youth estate starker and more abrupt than that experienced by young men. Girls who transition to the adult women’s estate report feeling unprepared and anxious, and are placed into environments with little continuation of the intensive support they had previously received, a marked decrease in purposeful activity, and little awareness of their needs amongst staff – thereby increasing their vulnerability.⁷⁷

Young women in the justice system face compounded and intersecting vulnerabilities that the current custodial model is poorly equipped to address. In 2022, the number of self-harm incidents in custody amongst women aged 21 to 24 surpassed all other female age groups.⁷⁸ Approximately 80% of young women in custody report mental health problems, and fewer than one third of these report feeling cared for by prison staff.⁷⁹ Sixty-three per cent of young women serving sentences in the community have experienced rape or domestic abuse in an intimate partner relationship,⁸⁰ and between three quarters and ninety per cent of girls in the youth justice system have experienced abuse from a family member or trusted person.⁸¹

The following is an anonymised account from a young woman who has been involved in T2A’s consultations, referred to here as ‘C’:

C experienced sexual abuse from early childhood and was raised in a household marked by domestic violence, parental substance misuse, and paternal imprisonment. After her family home broke down, C moved into the care of an older sibling and was subsequently brought to social services attention but was assessed as insufficiently high-risk. She was arrested during a runaway episode at age 11, referred to a youth offending programme that did not address the root causes of her behaviour, and permanently excluded from school. From age 15, C was groomed and exploited by a local gang, who provided the care and belonging the statutory system had failed to offer. At 18, C received a custodial sentence for drug offences. Social services were unable to provide appropriate housing on her release.

C's account is not exceptional – it illustrates the intersecting pathways that characterise many young women's entry into and movement through the criminal justice system. It is representative of a pathway that recurs with striking consistency in the wider evidence base. Each intervention point offered the system an opportunity to redirect this young woman away from custody. Each was missed. T2A submits that this pattern reflects not individual failure but systemic inadequacy.

REC 12:

No girl or young woman should be placed in custody except as a genuine last resort where no community alternative is available, and only then in response to the nature and seriousness of the offence rather than on welfare grounds.

Alternative placements must always be actively sought, to address the drivers of crime for young women in contact with the criminal justice system. Where custody is unavoidable, a gender-responsive, trauma-informed, culturally appropriate regime must be in place. The transition of girls and young women from Secure Children's Homes or Secure Training Centres to adult women's prisons at 18, without specialist gender-responsive transitional provision, has been independently identified as significant and particularly harmful, and must be addressed as a priority.⁸²

The implementation gap and the need for whole-system statutory reform

The principal challenge facing the young adult justice system in England and Wales is no longer primarily one of evidence. The evidence base is extensive, robust, and consistent. The 2016 Justice Select Committee inquiry, the 2021 children and young people in custody report, HMPPS thematic reports, the Lammy Review, and two decades of T2A evidence synthesis collectively identify the same structural deficits and point in the same direction. The challenge is implementation, and the fundamental explanation for the persistent implementation gap is the absence of statutory foundations.

Gilmour's 2025 analysis of implementation failure across the period 2016 to 2024 identifies eight distinct causal factors: the absence of a statutory mandate; austerity-driven resource constraint; structural governance failure; organisational change disruption; information system inadequacy; policy and practice decoupling; the absence of specialist pathways; and a co-commissioning vacuum. The analysis concludes that "implementation failure is neither mysterious nor accidental. Rather, it results from predictable organisational dynamics in the absence of implementation architecture."⁸³ Each of these eight factors remains unresolved. The Committee should require the Government to address each explicitly in its response.

There is, however, a further and under-examined dimension of this failure. Previous inquiries, including this one, though with good intention, have necessarily focused on a discrete segment of the criminal justice pipeline: the secure estate. But the conditions that produce poor outcomes in custody are not generated solely within custody. They are produced by a system that is fragmented, misaligned, and internally contradictory. Reforms to the custodial regime that are not accompanied by complementary reform of policing, courts, sentencing, probation, and community provision are reforms that improve one stage of a failing pipeline whilst leaving the structural dynamics of that pipeline intact. This is why custody reform in England and Wales has repeatedly failed to hold: the gains made within one part of the system are undermined, overturned, or absorbed by dysfunction elsewhere.

A genuinely holistic approach to young adult justice: one that spans policing, courts, custody, probation, prevention, and community, cannot be achieved within a departmental structure that silos each of these functions and subjects each to separate, competing political priorities. The Committee should call for a cross-government young adult justice strategy, with a dedicated ministerial lead, accountable to Parliament on an annual basis.

REC 13:

This Committee must call for a comprehensive whole-system review of the formal criminal justice system as it applies to young adults, covering policing, courts, sentencing, custody, probation, and community provision in an integrated framework, alongside upstream prevention, early intervention, diversion, and reintegration.

Reform of the secure estate, whilst urgent and necessary, cannot deliver transformative improvement unless it is embedded within a wider ambition to reduce the over-criminalisation of marginalised young adults, reinvest in community-led civil society provision, and treat justice as a dimension of public health rather than a mechanism of social control.

Four proposed mechanisms for structural change: a case for piloting and evaluation

Previous advisory and governance boards, including the Women's Justice Board and various expert groups, have not yet translated commitment into lasting change. Without statutory mandates, dedicated governance with powers of enforcement, and ring-fenced budgets, there is no structural mechanism to sustain reform across electoral cycles and budgetary pressures. T2A therefore proposes four interrelated mechanisms for structural change, described below, in place of a further advisory board.

1. A Statutory Young Adult Commissioner with powers of intervention

The establishment of a Statutory Young Adult Commissioner with a legal right of entry to all custodial settings holding young adults, a legal right of reply to inspection and HMPPS reports and, critically, a statutory power to trigger a temporary admission pause to a specific facility where the Commissioner determines that safety standards are not met. This 'power to pause' would create a legal obligation on the Ministry of Justice to act within a specified timeframe rather than file a report and wait. It transfers accountability from advisory function to enforcement function. The Commissioner would publish an annual report to Parliament on outcomes by age, ethnicity, gender, and care-experience status, with a ministerially accountable response required within 60 days.

This model draws on analogues in other sectors: the Children's Commissioner's powers to investigate matters affecting children, and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration's powers of inquiry.

2. A National Young Adult Care, Education and Employability Fund

The budget for young adult custody can be restructured through the creation of a National Young Adult Care, Education and Employability Fund, jointly governed by the Ministry of Justice, the Department for Education, the Department of Health and Social Care, and the Department for Work and Pensions as well as relevant, experienced and culturally appropriate 'by and for' Civil Society organisations, brought in as equal status partners. Under this model, custodial provision for young adults would be commissioned and funded primarily as a residential therapeutic, educational, and employment preparation service, with security as a feature of the environment rather than its defining purpose.

The radical implication of this model is a financial incentive structure that actively discourages the unnecessary use of custody. If the Ministry of Justice must "purchase" a custodial placement from a jointly governed fund that prioritises community-based care, education, and employment, the financial and governance logic of the system becomes oriented towards keeping young adults in the community wherever possible. Every custodial day becomes a cost that must be justified against an alternative. This represents a fundamental shift in the institutional incentives that currently sustain over-incarceration.

Independent analysis of reoffending costs supports the economic case for this approach. The average annual cost per prisoner per year is £53,801.⁸⁴ Reoffending following prison release is estimated to cost the economy between £15 billion and £18 billion per annum.

Evidence from T2A and others demonstrates that developmentally appropriate, relationship-based community provision consistently outperforms custody on reoffending measures. Investment in the Fund would reduce long-run custodial costs whilst improving social outcomes. This is not a counsel of naivety; it is a counsel of fiscal prudence.⁸⁵

3. Emerging Adult Transition Status (18–25)

REC 14:

The Government should introduce primary legislation to establish young adults aged 18 to 25 as a distinct cohort within the justice system, conferring on them the introduction of a new statutory category of “Emerging Adult” status for those aged 18 to 25, which would create a legal presumption against the placement of any person under 25 in standard adult custodial conditions.

This presumption could be rebutted only by a court on specified grounds relating to the nature of the offence and the absence of any suitable alternative. The effect would be to shift the burden of proof: the system would be required to justify adult penal treatment of a young person under 25, rather than to justify alternatives.

“I’m 24 now and thinking back even to when I was 19, I was just a kid. There are decisions I made that I look back at now and think, what was I thinking? There should be a different approach to them. It’s crazy that decisions can be made about you when you’re 18 that could ruin your life for the next 10, 15 years.”

Young adult with lived experience of custody (T2A, 2026, anonymised)

Emerging Adult Transition Status would mandate that young adults under 25 be managed under developmentally informed principles, including maturity-based placement, access to trauma-informed and trauma-responsive provision, and sentencing that explicitly considers developmental maturity as a mitigating factor. It would provide the legal architecture within which the National Fund (Mechanism 2) and the Commissioner (Mechanism 1) would operate. International comparators, particularly in Germany and the Netherlands, demonstrate that such statutory frameworks are both legally coherent and operationally effective.

In Germany, the Jugendgerichtsgesetz (Youth Courts Act) explicitly provides that juvenile court procedures may be applied to young adults aged 18 to 20 where a court finds, through individual assessment, that the young person’s maturity and development are comparable to those of a juvenile. In practice, this means that a significant proportion of young adults in Germany are sentenced under youth justice principles, including shorter sentences, a stronger rehabilitative focus, and placement in youth-appropriate facilities, rather than being automatically treated as full adults by virtue of their chronological age. Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands are among the European jurisdictions that have all developed distinct provisions for young adults, typically extending youth justice principles to age 21 or beyond on the basis of maturity assessment.⁸⁶

The Netherlands model is particularly instructive: under Dutch law, young adult offenders aged 16 to 23 can be sentenced under either juvenile or adult law, with courts required to consider developmental factors in every case. The system emphasises rehabilitation over punishment and makes extensive use of community-based intervention, with custody treated explicitly as a last resort. These approaches embody a “Child First” principle that extends meaningfully beyond the 18th birthday. The evidence demonstrates that these models produce measurably better outcomes in terms of reoffending, violence reduction within custody, and long-term social reintegration.⁸⁷ The United Kingdom is therefore not merely lagging behind international best practice; it is applying an approach that the evidence base has conclusively shown to be less effective, more harmful, and more costly than the available alternatives.

4. Community-led Regional Oversight Hubs

The piloting of Regional Young Adult Justice Oversight Hubs could be explored as an alternative to national advisory structures. Each Hub would bring together people with lived experience of the justice system, potentially victims of crime and their advocates, and statutory and civil society sector experts including community-led organisations. The precise composition and governance arrangements would be developed through co-production, drawing on established community scrutiny principles already operating in policing and prosecution contexts, working with the communities most over-represented in the young adult custodial estate.⁸⁸

These Hubs would not function as advisory bodies alone. They would have a statutory “value for money” veto over the renewal of contracts for young adult custodial provision within their region, triggered when an establishment’s outcomes data demonstrates persistent failure to reduce reoffending or meet minimum safety standards. This model draws on analogues in health commissioning, where patient and community voices have statutory roles in commissioning decisions. It represents a meaningful transfer of accountability from centralised bureaucratic structures to the communities most affected by the justice system’s performance.

Together, these four ideas shift power, money, and legal status in ways that previous incremental reforms have not, and that the evidence base conclusively demonstrates to be necessary.

Conclusion

The Justice Select Committee's 2016 recommendation that cross-government recognition be given to the need to promote desistance among young adults, and that legislative change be pursued if necessary to extend statutory support to up to 25-year-olds, remains unfulfilled.⁸⁹ The 2025 Sentencing Review provides a further opportunity to address this, alongside the broader ambitions of the National Youth Strategy. T2A urges the Committee to make it unambiguously clear in its forthcoming report that incremental, non-statutory reform has been tried and has failed: the time for legislative action is now.

Critically, this inquiry like many before it, risks addressing only one segment of a deeply interconnected system. Piecemeal reform of custody in isolation from policing, courts, sentencing, probation, prevention, and community infrastructure has been a defining cause of systemic misalignment and repeated failure. Reforms that improve one stage of the pipeline whilst neglecting others produce contradictions: a more rehabilitative prison regime undermined by breach-heavy probation; trauma-informed practice in custody erased by a punitive return to a police cell. The formal criminal justice system must be reviewed and reformed as a whole, and any review of the secure estate must situate custodial change within a comprehensive account of upstream prevention, diversion, community alternatives, and reintegration.

The context for the recommendations made in this submission could not be more urgent. The Government is currently investing £4.7 billion to deliver 14,000 new prison places by 2031, described by Ministers as "the biggest jail expansion programme since the Victorian era."⁹⁰ Without a fundamental reorientation of the system's underlying logic, this investment will embed the current failing architecture for another generation. The overarching recommendation of this submission is that the Government must legislate to establish young adults aged 18 to 25 as a statutorily recognised distinct cohort within the justice system, supported by a National Young Adult Care, Education and Employability Fund; a new Emerging Adult Transition Status providing legal protections from adult penal conditions; a Statutory Young Adult Commissioner with powers of intervention; dedicated governance structures embedded in community accountability; ring-fenced resources; mandatory maturity-based placement criteria; and a transformed workforce model. Without statutory underpinning, incremental reforms will continue to stall at the point of implementation, as they have done, with striking consistency, for nearly a decade since this Committee last reported.

References

1. Barrow Cadbury Trust / Centre for Crime and Justice Studies. (2025). Tracking racial disproportionality in the young adult justice system. Barrow Cadbury Trust.
2. T2A (2026) Alliance members. <https://t2a.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/alliance-members/>
3. Justice Committee. (2016). The treatment of young adults in the criminal justice system: Seventh report of session 2016–17 (HC 169). House of Commons.
4. HM Prison and Probation Service. (2021). Outcomes for young adults in custody. HMPPS.
5. HM Prison and Probation Service. (2021). Outcomes for young adults in custody. HMPPS; Kent, H., et al. (2023). Looked-after children in prison as adults. *International Journal of Prison Health*; Pilgrim, N. (2025). Literature review: Young adult justice transformed. Barrow Cadbury Trust / YAJT.
6. Ibid.
7. Justice Committee. (2021). Children and young people in custody (Part 2) (HC 922). House of Commons.
8. Lewis, A. (2026a). Entrepreneurship as an educational pathway in children and young adult custodial and justice settings. In [Eds.], [Hong Kong Volume]. [Publisher]. (Forthcoming, September 2026.)
9. Alliance for Youth Justice. (2024). Adultifying youth custody. Alliance for Youth Justice.
10. Justice Committee. (2016). The treatment of young adults in the criminal justice system: Seventh report of session 2016–17 (HC 169). House of Commons.
11. Transition to Adulthood Alliance. (2024). T2A comprehensive evidence synthesis: Transforming justice for young adults. Barrow Cadbury Trust.
12. Justice Committee. (2016). The treatment of young adults in the criminal justice system: Seventh report of session 2016–17 (HC 169). House of Commons.
13. Ibid.
14. HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2021). Outcomes for young adults in custody: A thematic review. HMIP.
15. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2025) Response to the Justice Committee inquiry on 'Rehabilitation and Resettlement: ending the cycle of reoffending'
16. HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2021). Outcomes for young adults in custody: A thematic review. HMIP.
17. HM Prison and Probation Service. (2021). Outcomes for young adults in custody. HMPPS.
18. Youth Secure Estate Report. (2021). HM Inspectorate of Prisons thematic review of the youth secure estate. HMIP.
19. Justice Committee. (2016). The treatment of young adults in the criminal justice system: Seventh report of session 2016–17 (HC 169). House of Commons.
20. Ministry of Justice. (2017). Government response to the Justice Committee's seventh report of session 2016–17 (Cm 9388). Ministry of Justice.
21. Pilgrim, N. (2025). Literature review: Young adult justice transformed. Barrow Cadbury Trust / YAJT.
22. Billingham, L. (2025). How might we transform young adult justice in England and Wales? Barrow Cadbury Trust / YAJT; HM Inspectorate of Prisons & Ofsted. (2024). A decade of declining quality of education in young offender institutions. HMIP / Ofsted; Kent, H., et al. (2023). Looked-after children in prison as adults. *International Journal of Prison Health*; McAra, L., & McVie, S. (2010). Youth crime and justice. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 10(2), 179–209.
23. Lewis, A. (2026a). Entrepreneurship as an educational pathway in children and young adult custodial and justice settings. In [Eds.], [Hong Kong Volume]. [Publisher]. (Forthcoming, September 2026)
24. HMI Prisons, HMI Probation and HMI Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (2021) Neurodiversity in the criminal justice system: A review of evidence.
25. Kirby, A (2021) Neurodiversity - a whole child approach for youth justice.
26. HMI Prisons, HMI Probation and HMI Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (2021) Neurodiversity in the criminal justice system: A review of evidence.
27. HM Prison and Probation Service. (2021). Outcomes for young adults in custody.
28. Ibid.
29. Justice Committee. (2018). Young adults in the criminal justice system: Eighth report of session 2017–19 (HC 419). House of Commons.
30. HM Prison and Probation Service. (2021). Outcomes for young adults in custody. HMPPS.

References (continued)

31. Kent, H., et al. (2024). Profiles of vulnerability for suicide and self-harm in UK prisoners: Neurodisability, mood disturbance, substance use and bullying. PLOS ONE.
32. Kent, H., et al. (2024). Profiles of vulnerability for suicide and self-harm in UK prisoners: Neurodisability, mood disturbance, substance use and bullying. PLOS ONE.
33. University of Exeter / TryJustice Network. (2026). Joint statement to the Justice Committee inquiry on children and young adults in the secure estate.
34. Pilgrim, N. (2025). Literature review: Young adult justice transformed. Barrow Cadbury Trust / YAJT.
35. Justice Committee. (2016). The treatment of young adults in the criminal justice system: Seventh report of session 2016–17 (HC 169). House of Commons.
36. HM Prison and Probation Service. (2021). Outcomes for young adults in custody. HMPPS.
37. Prison Reform Trust (2026) Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile: February 2026.
38. Bryan, K., et al. (2021). Speech, language and communication needs in youth justice populations. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*.
39. Hughes, N., et al. (2015). The prevalence of traumatic brain injury among young offenders in custody: A systematic review. *Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation*, 30(2), 94–105.
40. Lammy, D. (2017). The Lammy review: The treatment of, and outcomes for, BAME individuals in the criminal justice system. Ministry of Justice.
41. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2022) Thematic review: The experiences of adult black male prisoners and black prison staff
42. Pilgrim, N. (2025). Literature review: Young adult justice transformed. Barrow Cadbury Trust / YAJT.
43. Justice Committee. (2021). Children and young people in custody (Part 2) (HC 922). House of Commons.
44. Centre for Crime and Justice Studies. (2025). Smaller, but tougher: How the criminal justice system is processing young adults. Barrow Cadbury Trust.
45. Youth Secure Estate Report. (2021). HM Inspectorate of Prisons thematic review of the youth secure estate. HMIP.
46. HMPPS (2019) Prison Officer breakdowns: age and gender tables.
47. BBC (2024) Prison officers deal drugs and ask inmates for sex, BBC told.
48. Lewis, A. (2026b). Talk to the National Police Chiefs' Council: Young adult justice transformed. Barrow Cadbury Trust / T2A Alliance.
49. HM Prison and Probation Service. (2023). Annual report and accounts 2022–23. HMPPS; HM Prison and Probation Service. (2024). Annual report and accounts 2023–24.
50. HMI Prisons (2021). Outcomes for young adults in custody.
51. Lammy, D. (2017). The Lammy review: The treatment of, and outcomes for, BAME individuals in the criminal justice system. Ministry of Justice.
52. Transition to Adulthood Alliance. (2024). T2A comprehensive evidence synthesis: Transforming justice for young adults. Barrow Cadbury Trust.
53. HM Prison and Probation Service. (2021). Outcomes for young adults in custody. HMPPS.
54. HM Inspectorate of Probation. (2024). The quality of services delivered to young adults in probation: Thematic action plan. HM Inspectorate of Probation.
55. Barrow Cadbury Trust / Centre for Crime and Justice Studies. (2025). Tracking racial disproportionality in the young adult justice system. Barrow Cadbury Trust.
56. Pilgrim, N. (2025). Literature review: Young adult justice transformed. Barrow Cadbury Trust / YAJT.
57. Lammy, D. (2017). The Lammy review: The treatment of, and outcomes for, BAME individuals in the criminal justice system. Ministry of Justice.
58. Phillips, C., & Bowling, B. (2020). Racism, race and ethnicity in criminological research and practice. In E. Carrabine et al. (Eds.), *Criminology: A sociological introduction* (4th ed.). Routledge.
59. Senker, C., et al. (2023). Racial disparities and the criminal justice system. Centre for Crime and Justice Studies.
60. Waller, N (2024) The legal dragnet Joint enterprise law and its implications.
61. Williams, P. and Clarke, B. (2016) Dangerous associations: Joint enterprise, gangs and racism.

References (continued)

62. Mills, H. Ford, M. and Grimshaw, R (2022) The usual suspects second edition.
63. Maslaha. (2019). Time to end the silence: Muslim communities and the criminal justice system. Barrow Cadbury Trust / Maslaha.
64. The Young Review (2014)
65. Youth Custody Service. (2024). YCS culture review.
66. Friends, Families and Travellers. (2025). Trapped in the turnstile: Understanding the impacts of the criminal justice system on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young adults and their families. Barrow Cadbury Trust.
67. Pilgrim, N. (2025). Literature review: Young adult justice transformed. Barrow Cadbury Trust / YAJT.
68. Ministry of Justice. (2023). Offender Management Statistics: Quarterly bulletin July to September 2023.
69. Howard League for Penal Reform. (2023). What's wrong with remanding young adults to prison: Voices and lessons learned.
70. Children's Commissioner for England. (2025). A production line of pointlessness: Children on custodial remand.
71. Prison Reform Trust (2026) Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile: February 2026.
72. Howard League for Penal Reform. (2023). What's wrong with remanding young adults to prison: Voices and lessons learned.
73. Friends, Families and Travellers. (2025). Trapped in the turnstile: Understanding the impacts of the criminal justice system on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young adults and their families. Barrow Cadbury Trust.
74. Howard League for Penal Reform. (2023). What's wrong with remanding young adults to prison: Voices and lessons learned.
75. Prison Reform Trust (2025) Resetting the approach to women's imprisonment, England and Wales, April 2025.
76. Ministry of Justice (2025) Government no longer places girls in Young Offender Institutions.
77. HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2022) A thematic review of outcomes for girls in custody.
78. Transition to Adulthood Alliance. (2025). T2A submission to the Independent Sentencing Review Panel. Barrow Cadbury Trust.
79. Agenda Alliance (2023) A call to action: Developing gender-sensitive support for criminalised young women/ Young Women's Justice Project.
80. Home Office (2021) Domestic Abuse: Draft Statutory Guidance Framework.
81. Agenda Alliance and Alliance for Youth Justice (2021) Young Women's Justice Project Briefing.
82. Hancock, S. (2025). Delivering the best for girls in custody. Ministry of Justice; HM Inspectorate of Prisons. (2021). Outcomes for young adults in custody: A thematic review. HMIP; Pilgrim, N. (2025). Literature review: Young adult justice transformed. Barrow Cadbury Trust / YAJT.
83. Gilmour, S. (2025). Implementation failure analysis 2016–2024 (updated). Barrow Cadbury Trust.
84. House of Commons Library (2026) Prison population statistics.
85. Gormley, J., Hamilton, M., & Belton, I. (2022). The effectiveness of sentencing options on reoffending. Sentencing Council; Ministry of Justice. (2019). The economic and social costs of reoffending. Ministry of Justice Analytical Series; T2A Alliance. (2024). T2A comprehensive evidence synthesis. Barrow Cadbury Trust; YAJT. (2026a). Turning the dial: Cost analysis of young adult justice reform. Barrow Cadbury Trust.
86. Standing Committee for Youth Justice. (2016). Fair treatment for young adults in the justice system.
87. Standing Committee for Youth Justice. (2016). Fair treatment for young adults in the justice system.
88. Criminal Justice Alliance. (2022). Scrutiny and accountability in the criminal justice system. CJA; Crown Prosecution Service. (2025). Community Accountability Forum. CPS; Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.
89. Justice Committee. (2016). The treatment of young adults in the criminal justice system: Seventh report of session 2016–17 (HC 169). House of Commons.
90. Ministry of Justice. (2025). Prison building boom to make streets safer