

Written evidence submitted by South and West Yorkshire Resettlement Consortium

Organisation Background

The South and West Yorkshire Resettlement Consortium was established with support from the Youth Justice Board in 2014. Initially resources allowed the Consortium to commission services to support those leave custody and to fund a full-time co-ordinator post and two Link Officers based in Wetherby YOI. YJB funding was withdrawn in 2016, but the Youth Offending Teams in South and West Yorkshire agreed to keep funding a part-time co-ordinator post. In November 2019 the Consortium was awarded YJB Pathfinder status for its work on Constructive Resettlement which included additional resources to support the development of work to progress the 'Identity Shift' model.

With Wetherby YOI and Adel Beck SCH located in West Yorkshire the South and West Yorkshire YOTs can largely get to the YOI within an hour's drive. This geographical location is hugely beneficial to the ability of the partners to work together to support the resettlement of young people. The Consortium has strong support from a wide range of stakeholders, including: Police and Crime Commissioners; Secure Estate; Youth Offending Teams; Police; Probation; DWP; the Youth Justice Board and NHS England. The University of Bedfordshire became an academic partner in early 2017. Beyond Youth Custody, a national resettlement research programme was heavily involved in the Consortiums work until the end of the programme in March 2018. The Consortium has a Strategic Group and there are regular Operational Group meetings.

Strengths of the Consortium approach in South and West Yorkshire

The Consortium has a range of strengths, including:

- Enables joint working and standard setting at a strategic level e.g. has set local standards around post custody accommodation which have been adopted across Yorkshire & Humber
- Provides an operational managers forum to share effective practice and problem solve
- Offers a combined voice when responding to changes in national policy or consultations e.g. potential changes around the youth secure estate
- Enables sharing of resources between areas for a relatively small cohort e.g. group work sessions
- Provides an evidence base and allows data comparison through the resettlement tracker. This work will potentially be further enhanced by the involvement of the academic partner
- Gives a focus on a complex and vulnerable cohort who could cost the public sector a considerable amount if their offending continues – it's an invest to save approach
- Provides a platform for obtaining funding on a regional basis e.g. the SEND Department of Education work, Nuffield Research

The notice of inquiry identified that the Education Committee "is interested in how school exclusion policy impacts on youth custody and how alternative provision settings support young people who experience challenges in education and

learning.” Therefore this response focusses on the impact of school exclusion or lack of appropriate provision at the time of sentence which results in the young person being NEET and in particular responds to questions;

b. What data exist to demonstrate the effectiveness of education and training in prisons and on prisoner attainment, and what international comparisons are available?

Cohort Analysis - The South and West Yorkshire Resettlement Consortium has been collecting data on young people placed in custody since November 2014. The tracker has served two main purposes. Firstly, it has been a record of who is in custody, to support the targeting of resources. Secondly, it has provided a local picture of young people in custody. Five years of data has been analysed considering nearly 500 young people in the cohort. We are now in the process of collating six years' worth of data and have a solid foundation to consider the characteristics of our custody cohort and respond accordingly to the evidence base. Collating such data was a national recommendation of the Youth Custody Improvement Board (recommendation 5a). However this is not standard practice across the Country

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/594448/findings-and-recommendations-of-the-ycib.pdf

The information below is an extract from the most recent data analysis report which covers the period 1st November, 2014 to 31st October, 2019 (A similar report is now being completed covering the period up to 31st October, 2020 and will be available in March 2021).

Figure 1 (below) shows that 41% of young people where education provision had been noted were NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) prior to custody. This increased on release to over half of young people but by sentence end the proportion of NEET young people had reduced to 44.68%.

Figure 1: ETE provision

	Prior to custody	On release	3 months post	Sentence end
None	41.40%	50.81%	47.59%	44.68%
Alternative provision	26.50%	17.59%	12.65%	13.30%
Training Course/Apprenticeship	6.63%	16.29%	18.67%	16.49%
Mainstream school	7.25%	0.98%	0.00%	0.53%
Other	8.70%	2.93%	6.63%	7.98%
College	6.21%	6.84%	7.83%	7.45%
Employment	3.31%	4.56%	6.63%	9.57%
Total number of YP	483	307	166	188

Employment figures remained relatively stable with 16 young people in employment prior to custody and 18 at sentence end, though the proportion has increased due to the smaller numbers whose whereabouts have been recorded.

The tracker data now shows that all young people sentenced to custody from South and West Yorkshire receive education whilst in custody.

Of particular note to the inquiry is that the proportion of young people who were NEET prior to custody has increased in the years since the cohort was measured, with 39% of young people NEET prior to custody in year 1 up to 50% in year 5 as identified in the table below (figure 2).

Figure 2: ETE provision prior to custody by year

ETE prior to custody	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Alternative Provision	26.06%	25.00%	26.25%	35.16%	18.57%
College	8.45%	6.00%	2.50%	4.40%	8.57%
Employment	4.23%	4.00%	2.50%	4.40%	0.00%
Other	7.75%	6.00%	11.25%	5.49%	15.71%
Mainstream school	7.04%	9.00%	8.75%	6.59%	4.29%
NEET	39.44%	41.00%	41.25%	38.46%	50.00%
Training Course/Apprenticeship	7.04%	9.00%	7.50%	5.49%	2.86%
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

c. How well are additional learning needs met by the prison education and youth custody systems, including SEND and language and communication needs?

There remain challenges in terms of the number of young people who enter the prison system with non-identified additional needs, which is no doubt compounded by the lack of provision on entry to custody. Where Youth Offending Teams have resources for Speech and Language support and other professionals there is scope to provide support to the young person prior to custody if they are known to the service. However in the instance of young people sentenced to custody having had no prior involvement with the Criminal Justice system this is difficult in the timescales available to ensure that the Court has all the appropriate information prior to sentencing.

We are also aware that education providers in the custodial estate face challenge with regard to ensuring that any additional resources allocated through a EHCP follow the young person into custody. In most cases this doesn't happen which impacts on the young person's ability to access education and the education providers ability to ensure that the young person's needs are met. Every effort needs to be made to ensure that children can be supported to achieve their full academic potential.

The Consortium has acted as a vehicle for commissioning additional voluntary sector services and bidding for additional resources such as the Department of Education SEND Project from which all nine YOTs in the Consortium have benefitted. This successful funding bid enabled the training of 300 YOT practitioners on SEN services/processes.

A further challenge is the maintenance of provision/school place whilst the young person is in custody. We are aware of instances where the school will remove the young person from the school roll, making it difficult to secure a place on release. Similarly where young people still have their school place representatives from the school do not always maintain contact with the custody education provider or the young person.

Surviving Incarceration - Academic Partner, Bedfordshire University was supported by the Nuffield Foundation to conduct a study of the South and West Yorkshire Resettlement Cohort which compares the pathways of looked-after children into and out of custody with children who do not have care experience. The aim of the research was to provide an evidence base, in an under-researched field, that can help to reduce the over-representation of looked after children in custody. A Literature Review was published and ethical clearance was secured from HMPPS. Interviews were undertaken in both custody and the community and interviews with professionals also took place. The full report was published in April 2020. <https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/271272/surviving-incarceration-final-report.pdf>

The report highlights (page 4) that the *“pathway to custody was, for most children, associated with spending considerable periods **out of education** and away from home. The adoption of a ‘street lifestyle’ frequently involved forms of ‘survival’ behaviour – such as robbery, or fighting to maintain status - that brought them into contact with the criminal justice system and an enhanced risk of custody.”*

Additional Comments

Whilst not specifically considered in the terms of reference of this inquiry it would be remiss not to mention the pandemic which has had a massive impact on education. Spending 23 hours in a cell really doesn't aid education and learning especially for young people who have already missed much of their education. The impact of providers not being able to work onsite resulted in a 'virtual offer', which for young people with no access to IT and wifi was very limited. There is a need for resilience planning to ensure that in similar situations delivery can be sustained. There are positives to be drawn from the Lockdown experience in that there has been an increase in use of technology in YOIs, in particular the introduction of 'purple' visits (online visiting opportunities for family). These could be used wider by professionals to ensure that children can maintain contact with education providers or undertake interviews with new providers. It is resource intensive for teachers to visit children in custody, but the use of technology could allow them to maintain contact and potentially include young people in custody in education provision.

Local Authorities have extensive experience in the provision of education and there is scope for them to have a greater role in the commissioning and oversight of delivery for the custodial establishments in their area. This may provide added benefits of improved relationships with schools and academy chains and the potential for shared resources, learning and knowledge. As a minimum there should be a requirement for providers to liaise and engage with local education professionals.

It is hoped that in providing this evidence there is a demonstration that the commitment of parties working together can seek to support the challenges around prison education as well as collecting the data to evidence key issues.

Further information is available should this be required by the Education Committee.

January 2021