



Developing the Secure Estate for Children and Young People in England and Wales – Young People's Consultation Report

A report produced for the Youth Justice Board by Voice and Barnardo's

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The Youth Justice Board (YJB) led a wide-ranging public consultation on the plan for the secure estate for children and young people between July and September 2011. As part of this process, the YJB commissioned Voice and Barnardo's to consult young people in the secure estate. This report highlights their findings.

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While the content of this report has been agreed with the YJB, it was drafted and prepared by Voice and Barnardo's. The views expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect the views of the YJB.

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1. Introduction

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) launched a public consultation on plans for the under-18 secure estate in July 2011. The purpose of the consultation was to present proposals for the secure estate for children and young people and to set a clear agenda for the development of the estate during the spending review period 2014–15. Part of the consultation involved young people currently placed in the under-18 secure estate in England and Wales.

The YJB recognises the importance of involving this group of young people and the aim of the consultation was to establish their views in order to contribute to the final plans. Barnardo's and Voice, the organisations the YJB contracts to provide an advocacy service to young people in secure establishments, were commissioned to undertake this work. The consultation was undertaken across all three sectors of the secure estate and collected the views of 678 young people – about 34% of the under-18 custodial population at the time.

This report follows the format agreed between Voice, Barnardo's and the YJB. The overall collated findings are presented here and, where relevant (and statistically viable), figures are broken down to provide more detail about demographics or establishment.

It is worth noting that the consultation took place between July and September 2011. This encompassed a period of national public disorder which led to significant movement and instability within the secure estate and increased pressure on the advocacy service. These external factors in the latter stages of the consultation period added to the complexity of undertaking the consultation.

2. Executive summary

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) commissioned Barnardo's and Voice to gather the views of children and young people in the under-18 secure estate in England and Wales about the Ministry of Justice (MoJ)/YJB's plans for the under-18 secure estate.¹

The consultation with young people was focused on their experiences in custody and based on the following key themes contained within the plan:

- the key principles outlined in the consultation document
- integrated assessment processes
- effective regimes
- responding to need
- resettlement
- safeguarding.

The fieldwork took place between July and September 2011. 678 young people (34% of the population of the under-18 secure estate)² completed self-completion questionnaires and 87 (8%) of these young people participated in one of 18 focus group discussions.

Care was given to ensure the sample of young people mirrored the demographics of the under-18 secure estate population. However, the sample included a significantly higher proportion of looked-after children (52%) than the numbers of looked-after children estimated to be in the secure estate (27%).³

Key findings

Reducing reoffending

Young people overwhelmingly agreed on the factors that reduced their risk of reoffending (having more money, avoiding negative peer influences, avoiding drugs and alcohol and gaining employment) but less than a quarter (23%) – and even fewer Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) participants – felt that young people get enough help with these issues.

¹ MoJ/YJB (2011) *Strategy for the Secure Estate for Children and Young People in England and Wales. Plans for 2011/12 – 2014/15. Consultation Document*. London: MoJ/YJB.

² The population of the under-18 secure estate (under-18 young offender institutions, secure training centres and secure children's homes) in July 2011 was 1977.

³ HMIP (2011) *The Care of Looked After Children in Custody: A Short Thematic Review*. London: HMIP.

Effective regimes

A majority of young people in secure children's homes (65%) felt that the establishment was the best place for them to be, but only a third of those in secure training centres (STCs) and under-18 young offender institutions (YOIs) agreed – the main reason given in focus group discussions was that the establishments did not adequately prepare young people for life in the community.

Integrated assessments

Only a minority of young people reported having had an initial assessment. When an initial assessment was recalled, a majority (62%) felt that the practitioner had taken the time to understand their needs.

A significantly higher proportion of BME participants than White participants (35% and 22% respectively), however, felt that not enough time was taken to understand their needs at the initial assessment.

56% of young people recalled the development of an action plan at their first planning meeting. Again, BME participants had the most negative experiences, with just 47% recalling the development of a plan at this stage, compared with 61% of White participants. When the development of a plan was recalled, the majority (69%) said it was helpful to their immediate situation, but fewer (58%) saw it as helpful for the future.

Relationships with staff

These were viewed as positive by a large majority (71%) of young people in STCs, but by far fewer (38%) in under-18 YOIs, where young people's views were ambivalent (neither positive nor negative). Only around half felt they were given the opportunity "just to talk" in under-18 YOIs (compared to 68% in STCs).

Safeguarding

Although most young people had rarely or never felt scared (64%) or been bullied (76%), more than a third said they had been scared at least some of the time; 22% had been bullied at least some of the time; and almost a quarter had been unhappy for long periods.

Education

Education was not rated highly. Around a quarter of young people (24%) thought the choice of courses was poor. Both the questionnaires and focus group discussions concluded that more support in life skills would be advantageous. In general, young people said they wanted education to link more closely with the community, offer vocational courses leading to apprenticeships and provide internships and business skills.

Food

Food was rated poorly by the young people. Concerns related to small portions and a lack of variety and healthy options. Girls expressed concern about weight

gain. The exception to this overall negative response was the Rivendell Unit at New Hall.

Views on resettlement

The most pressing concerns for young people were having enough money to survive (54%), accommodation (52%) and education (45%). A significant majority (73%) said that staying in touch with parents or carers during their period in custody was “very important”. It was family, the YOT and the young person themselves who were considered the most important players in planning for release. Focus group discussions highlighted that plans did not do enough to prepare for the realities of day-to-day life and maintain routine for the individuals.

Key messages

This consultation highlighted young people’s ability to offer honest, well thought out responses that provide important insights into how the YJB and MoJ can achieve their aims of a cost-effective, efficient secure estate which improves rehabilitation and reduces reoffending. Ten key messages emerged:

1. Young people are not asking for more than we would expect for any child or young person in the community.
2. That the YJB/MoJ consider the long-term cost implications of decommissioning establishments. The most cost-effective and efficient establishments are not necessarily the ones in which children and young people feel the safest – offering the best chance of rehabilitation.
3. That more emphasis be placed on ensuring that all sentence planning clearly documents how the proposed intervention will benefit the young person *in the community* specifically, rather than simply how behaviour is expected to change.
4. That greater expectation is placed on secure establishments to ensure that young people *and their families/carers* are aware of, and engage with, assessment and sentence planning processes.
5. That further work is undertaken to better understand why BME young people feel significantly more disenfranchised in the secure estate and why assessment and planning is failing to meet their needs.
6. That the YJB/MoJ consider how the workforce development strategy will ensure that suitably skilled and experienced personnel are accessible to young people, especially when there are concerns for their safety.
7. The instigation of a recruitment process which ensures that the most senior personnel through to staff working with young people on the ground are all suitably qualified, experienced and committed to working with very vulnerable children and young people.
8. That far more emphasis is placed on ensuring that vocational courses are relevant to the job market and that internships and work experience link closely to the community.

9. In the longer term, that the YJB/MoJ consider providing all young people with an opportunity to access small Release On Temporary Licence (ROTL) units unless there is good reason not to. And, in the shorter term, that ROTL is consistently included in standard sentencing planning.
10. The consultation highlights the need for promoting positive relationships between young people and their families.

3. Methodology

The programme managers from Barnardo's and Voice agreed the project plan and methodology in consultation with the YJB. The YJB wrote to the Governors/Directors/Managers of each establishment informing them of the consultation and requesting their co-operation. This was followed up with individual meetings arranged by Barnardo's and Voice in each establishment. Support and co-operation was forthcoming in all cases.

The agreed methods used to consult with young people were self-completion questionnaires (which were filled out alone or with support) and discussion in focus groups convened specifically for the purpose of seeking young people's views and opinions.

Self-completion questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed by Barnardo's and Voice. It comprised 33 questions which were organised around the key themes outlined in the executive summary. The questionnaire drew on a previous consultation questionnaire undertaken in 2005 by the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) and Voice, amended to ensure that the YJB project brief was addressed. Lessons from the 2005 consultation were considered, for example, avoiding repetition of questions and reducing open-ended questions. Questions were included to help triangulate findings.

The questionnaire was designed to be age-appropriate and accessible to the range of abilities identified. Each individual questionnaire took approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Information and guidance were provided to all advocates involved in the consultation and the process was managed by advocacy service team leaders and programme managers. Issues of confidentiality and safeguarding were built into the project plan and guidance.

Sampling

It was agreed that a minimum of 10% of the total population of the establishments sampled would complete the questionnaires. In the event, a total of 678 questionnaires were completed – 34% of the under-18 population of the secure estate.⁴

An 'opportunity sampling' technique was used to recruit the young people, mainly determined by the young people that advocates came into contact with

⁴ YJB Monthly Youth Custody Report July 2011
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/statistics-and-data/youth-justice/custody-figures/youth-custody-report-july-2011.xls>

during one-to-one sessions, or more informally during their time in the establishments. Some young people also expressed an interest in completing a questionnaire as a result of seeing others completing them. For this reason, there was a higher proportion of take-up in some of the smaller units/establishments.

No analysis was undertaken of those young people who chose not to complete a questionnaire when invited to do so. Anecdotal explanations from the young people suggested that the non-responders may have been a more disengaged group who felt that the system had let them down. One young person stated: “nothing will change, so what’s the point”.

Respondents

Broadly in line with the populations of the different establishments, 83% (565) of the young people surveyed were in under-18 YOIs, 14% (93) in STCs and 3% (17) in secure children’s homes. The number of respondents in secure children homes was low, so the findings from these should be treated with some caution.

Table 1: Total number of respondents

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children’s home	Total
Respondents	565	93	17	675*
Percentage of sample	83%	14%	3%	100%
Total population**	1557	259	161	1977
Percentage of total population	79%	13%	8%	100%

*3 young people did not give a response to establishment type

**In July 2011

The demographics of the young people who completed the questionnaires were analysed and compared to the population of under-19s in the secure estate in July 2011.⁵ The main findings were as follows:

- A total of 678 young people completed questionnaires: 95% were male and 4% female, which is representative of the secure estate population. Six young people did not state their sex.
- 63% of young people said they were White British or other White Background, 16% were Black or Black British, 11% were of Mixed Ethnicity,

⁵ YJB Monthly Youth Custody Report July 2011

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/statistics-and-data/youth-justice/custody-figures/youth-custody-report-july-2011.xls>

and 6% were Asian or Asian British. This breakdown is representative of the secure estate population.

- 10% of the young people were 18 years old, 85% were 15–17 and 2% were 11–14. 20 young people did not state their age.
- 52% of young people surveyed were looked-after children, which is a significantly higher proportion than the numbers of looked-after children estimated to be in the secure estate (27%).⁶ Due to the ‘opportunity sampling’ used, it is difficult to comment on reasons for this.
- 52% of young people reported that it was their first time in custody, which is a slightly higher figure compared to the wider population (which is around 40%). This could be due to the disturbances, as there was a peak in August.
- 48% had previously been in custody. Of these, 48% said that they had been given a new sentence, 23% had been breached and 29% did not provide details.

Focus groups

Focus groups were convened in 15 establishments. These were generally made up of young people who had expressed an interest in being part of a focus group when they completed the questionnaires. In some cases it proved difficult to engage with all the young people who had expressed an interest in participating. This was due to a number of factors, including choosing not to attend on the day, or being moved or discharged. Where an opportunity arose to engage a group of young people, they were invited to attend.

All young people were informed of confidentiality and safeguarding in line with advocacy service operating protocols.

The numbers participating in focus groups varied between 2 and 12 young people, and a total of 87 young people were involved in these groups (just under 13% of the sample). Young females were involved in four of these groups. The questions for the focus group were agreed with the YJB and specifically related to the causes of offending and ways of preventing future offending. An additional question about the quality and quantity of the food provided in secure establishments was later added at the request of the YJB.

Statistical analysis

The findings from the questionnaire and focus groups were not tested for statistical significance. Any differences referred to in the text should be treated as indicative as they may not be statistically significant.

⁶ HMIP (2011) *The Care of Looked After Children in Custody: A Short Thematic Review*. London: HMIP.

4. Findings

Box 1: Summary of findings

Overview

An overwhelming majority of young people (83%) agreed with the principles underpinning the secure estate plan.⁷ However, as evidenced by responses to other questions, these principles are not always being met in practice.

Reducing reoffending

When participants discussed the factors that would help prevent their offending behaviour, the themes centred on having more money, avoiding negative peer influences, avoiding drugs and alcohol and gaining employment. However, only 23% (and 19% of BME participants) felt that young people get enough help with the problems that lead them to get into trouble.

A majority of young people in secure children's homes (65%) felt that the establishment they were in was the best place for them, but only about a third in STCs and under-18 YOIs agreed. A large proportion of the total sample (39%) felt that being in custody doesn't help to change offending behaviour, with young people explaining during focus groups that it doesn't adequately prepare them for life in the community.

Community penalties

Community penalties were thought to be more effective than custody by over half of the respondents (57%), but there were some concerns about being able to comply with what were perceived to be 'unrealistic' licence conditions. Young people felt that if they had more involvement in agreeing the conditions, they would be less likely to breach.

Sentence planning

Recollection of initial assessments was relatively low, particularly in under-18 YOIs. Well over a third (37%) in under-18 YOIs didn't recall having one – which suggests either the lack of impact it had or that it did not take place at all. Where they were remembered, a majority (62%) of young people felt that the practitioner took the time to understand their needs. However, it should be noted that over a third (35%) of BME young people felt that not enough time was taken to understand their needs.

Even fewer young people recalled the development of an action plan at their first planning meeting. Just over half (56%) remembered an action plan being

⁷ Key principles are: distinct and specialist secure estate, recognising diversity, appropriate placements, safety, assessing need, and a full and purposeful day.

made, but among BME participants this dropped to less than half (47%). The majority of young people (62%) who recalled an action plan being developed felt that they had been able to contribute to it and 69% felt it was helpful to their immediate situation. Fewer young people (58%), however, saw their plan as helpful for the *future* and yet the focus group discussions highlighted how important thorough, joined-up advance planning was to young people.

Relationships with staff

Relationships with staff were rated positively by 71% of young people in STCs but only 38% of those in under-18 YOIs. However, the majority held in under-18 YOIs were neither positive nor negative and only 8% felt relationships were poor. 68% of young people in under-18 YOIs stated that they spent little or no time engaging with their key worker. This could also explain why a quarter (24%) of young people in under-18 YOIs felt that staff responses to their requests were unhelpful, in comparison to 13% in STCs and 6% in secure children's homes.

Importantly, 68% of young people in STCs felt that staff were good at giving them an opportunity "just to talk". However, this dropped to 56% in under-18 YOIs. Only 50% of the overall BME population felt they had an opportunity to talk.

Effective regimes

A majority of young people in focus groups expressed a preference for structured regimes with strict discipline. They also emphasised the importance of encouragement, respect and a variety of activities (and a staff ratio high enough to achieve this).

Safeguarding

The majority of young people reported feeling and being safe in the secure estate (64% had rarely or never felt scared and 76% had rarely or never been bullied). However, a large minority expressed concerns. More than a third (34%) of both White and BME participants had been scared at least some of the time, with 7% scared all of the time. Additionally, 22% had been bullied at least some of the time. Almost a quarter (23%) reported being unhappy for most or all of the time.

Learning and skills

Education provision across the secure establishments was not rated highly. Choice was felt to be poor by around a quarter in under-18 YOIs (24%) and STCs (27%) and nearly a fifth in secure children's homes (18%). Only 27% of females thought education was good or very good, compared to 50% of males. Young people wanted education to link more closely with the community, for example by forming better links with colleges and business, use of ROTL to participate in work experience and have access to mentors from similar backgrounds to themselves.

It was also felt that education should link more closely with getting a job, including skills in CV writing, and reading and writing (a common response). Preferences were expressed for vocational courses leading to

apprenticeships, such as bricklaying, joinery and childcare (mentioned by girls), internships, and skills and support to set up their own businesses. Having a criminal record was a concern for young people, with several stating that they needed advice on the types of vocation that would still be open to them.

Young people also stated that the secure estate could do more to help them with life skills that would prevent them from offending in the future. 72% agreed when asked if they would like to learn more about paying bills. Other highly rated life skills included anger management, dealing with family and relationship problems, managing drug and alcohol issues and accessing suitable accommodation. Young people emphasised the need for additional, focused support to help them with the transition back into the community.

Catering

Food was also an issue for young people. They reported limited healthy options resulting in weight gain, small portions and a lack of choice. Rivendell Unit at New Hall was highly regarded in this area, in particular, because young people had the opportunity to prepare their own meals.

Resettlement

The most pressing concerns for young people leaving the secure estate were having financial stability, access to suitable accommodation and to relevant and sustainable education. The least common source of concern was whether contact with the YOT worker would be maintained. It is likely that this is because time spent with YOT workers was reported to have been limited (and therefore less useful) for some young people, rather than a lack of desire for YOT support. Indeed, when asked directly in the survey, a large proportion (44%) said that more contact with YOT workers would be beneficial.

In terms of promoting successful resettlement on release, young people felt that maintaining links with the community they would be living in was important (although, notably, only 44% said “very important”) and almost three-quarters said that staying in touch with parents or carers is “very important”. The YOT, the family and the young person themselves were overwhelmingly thought to be the most important people in helping plan for release, and this plan should be clear and structured, covering all aspects of day-to-day life – enabling the young person to achieve some routine.

The findings from all establishments are presented in detail below. Where relevant (and statistically viable), information is provided about demographics or establishments where the young people are held.

General themes and YJB principles

The YJB principles underpinning the development of the secure estate were outlined to young people in accessible language. They were then asked whether they agreed with these aims. The vast majority of young people (83%) said that they did agree with the aims, with only 10% disagreeing. 7% didn't respond.

More detailed questions were asked about the YJB's principles of a 'distinct and specialist secure estate' and 'appropriate placements'.

Young people were asked 'If you have to be in custody do you think that this is the best place for you?'. Responses to this question were split: 30% of respondents agreed, while 52% disagreed. 18% were unsure and 1% did not respond.

More females disagreed (59%) than males (50%). A breakdown of the answers to this question between the under-18 YOIs, STCs and secure children's homes in Table 2 shows some notable differences.⁸

Table 2: If you have to be in custody, do you think that this is the best place for you? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children's home	Total
Yes	28%	32%	65%	30%
No	52%	50%	23%	51%
Not sure	19%	16%	12%	18%
No response	1%	2%	0%	1%

In response to the question 'If you could choose which would best meet your needs where would you stay?', 40% said that they would stay where they are now, 23% said an under-18 YOI, 18% an STC, 12% a secure children's home and 7% did not respond. Table 3 overleaf displays the findings by type of establishment.

⁸ These results have not been tested for statistical significance.

Table 3: If you could choose which establishment type would best meet your needs where would you stay? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children's home
In an under-18 YOI	63%	23%	12%
In an STC	19%	57%	0%
In a secure children's home	11%	17%	88%
No response	7%	3%	0%

Young people were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'Some people think that custody makes things worse for young people because they learn to commit more crime'. Just over half (52%) agreed, 26% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 22% disagreed. 34% of female respondents strongly agreed with this question compared to 26% of males. Table 4 below shows a significant disparity in the views of young people placed within secure children's homes, with 47% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement.

Table 4: Some people think that custody makes things worse for young people because they learn to commit more crime

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children's home	Total
Strongly agree	27%	30%	6%	26%
Agree	26%	22%	41%	26%
Neither agree nor disagree	27%	22%	6%	26%
Disagree	12%	18%	35%	14%
Strongly disagree	8%	8%	12%	8%
No response	0%	0%	0%	0%

When asked 'Would a community penalty like an ISSP or an ASBO be better than custody at stopping young people committing crime?', 58% agreed that a community penalty would be better, 24% thought it would be neither better nor worse and 18% thought it would be worse. When considering the gender

response to this question, 62% of females felt a community sentence would be better or much better.

Information obtained from the focus groups suggested that some young people found it difficult to meet the requirements of community sentences and felt they would rather serve their whole sentence in custody. Others commented that they felt the ISSP requirements were unrealistic and that they had breached because of this.

Young people were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that 'Being in custody helps young people change their offending behaviour'. Only 27% agreed with this statement. A further 27% neither agreed nor disagreed, 39% disagreed and 6% did not respond to this question.

A view from one young person in a focus group was that 'It was difficult to get used to normal life once you had been in custody'. Other young people expressed views that reflected a strong punishment ethos. They felt that custody was "too soft", "too easy" (in an STC); some said that if they had been put into an under-18 YOI (seen as a tougher regime) when they first came into custody, it might have prevented them coming back.

Reducing reoffending

Question 33 was an open-ended question related to reducing reoffending. Young people were asked 'If you had a magic wand what would you change in your life that would stop you getting in trouble with the law?'. The answers were grouped into categories in order to identify the main themes of young people's responses. These were: lack of money, peer influence and the area in which young people lived, and drugs and alcohol. These themes are set out below in descending order according to the number of responses.

- Lack of money was highlighted the most by young people. Responses included: "money worries", "more money", "getting a job so money wouldn't be a problem", "job, money so I wouldn't have to offend for clothes", "money problems", "having a job where I have money", "being rich", "millions", "if I had money I would not need to rob".
- Peer influence and the area in which young people lived. Specific comments included: "not to hang around with the people that I got into trouble with", "move away from my area", "I would change the people I go with", "do not mix with the wrong people," "stay away from my old friends and listen to my family more," "to stay with friends who don't commit crimes", "stay away from bad people stay away from bad areas", "wrong crowds and negative people I live around", "just move away from the trouble".
- Drugs, alcohol, and substance misuse were overwhelmingly cited as causes of offending behaviour by young people in the focus groups, who said that they offended in order to finance their use of drugs or alcohol or that they committed offences while under the influence. Comments included: "don't take drugs", "I wouldn't take drugs and burgle other people's houses", "stop taking drugs", "my weed habit", "stop taking pot,

stop drinking”, “move abroad away from drugs, change friends,” “I would not drink as much”, “I wouldn’t have taken drugs or drink”.

- Other young people identified the importance of having a job. This was linked to having enough money to avoid committing crime, going to school and getting a better education, having their own place or somewhere to live, more activities in the community, not getting a criminal record in the first place.

Integrated assessment

Young people were asked questions relating to their experiences of, and thoughts about the assessment process. Questions 7, 8 and 9 have been identified as responding to this area of enquiry.

Question 7 asked ‘Do you remember having an assessment of your needs when you came into custody?’. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 5: Do you remember having an assessment of your needs when you came into custody? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children’s home	Total
Yes	63%	77%	76%	65%
No	37%	23%	24%	34%
No response	0%	0%	0%	1%

These figures show that although a high number of respondents did recall an assessment, a substantial minority did not. When broken down by ethnicity, 68% of White young people compared to just 59% of BME young people recalled having had an assessment. There are also noticeable differences when looking at the responses separated by establishment type.⁹ In STCs, over three-quarters of respondents recalled having an assessment. In under-18 YOIs this figure drops to 63%.

As a supplementary question, those young people who recalled having had an assessment were asked if they felt ‘the person completing it took the time to understand how they could help?’. 62% agreed; however, 27% did not. Again the BME breakdown is significant, with 35% of BME respondents, compared to 22% of White young people, feeling that the person completing the assessment did *not* take the time to understand how they could help. Responses of young people in STCs were again more favourable than those in under-18 YOIs, with 77% compared to 59% responding positively.

⁹ These results have not been tested for statistical significance.

Question 8 asked young people whether they remembered if a plan had been made for them at their first planning meeting. Fewer young people recalled having a plan than recalled having an assessment – just 56% of young people recalled a plan being made. More BME young people could not recall having a plan in place (48%) than those who could (47%). However, 61% of White respondents remembered a plan being made at their first planning meeting. Again, results from different establishment types vary, with a slightly higher proportion of young people recalling making a plan in under-18 YOIs.

Supplementary questions were again put to the young people asking whether the plan was helpful to their situation and would help them in their future, whether they were asked about what should be included in the plan, and whether they were listened to and their views included. The responses are presented in the tables below, broken down by ethnicity and establishment type. They show that the majority felt that the plan was helpful, but that more than a quarter did not think the plan would help in the future, or that their views were listened to. It is also significant that responses from females were less positive towards the planning process than males. Only 44% felt the plan was helpful, 44% felt it would help them in the future and 50% said they were asked about what was included. A similar response (62%) was recorded about being listened to.

Table 6: Do you feel the plan is helpful to your situation? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children's home	Total
Yes	68%	75%	75%	69%
No	23%	23%	25%	23%
No response	9%	2%	0%	8%

Table 7: Do you feel the plan is helpful to your situation? (Ethnicity)

	White	BME	Total
Yes	71%	62%	69%
No	21%	28%	23%
No response	8%	10%	8%

Table 8: Do you feel the plan will help you in the future? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children's home	Total
Yes	56%	67%	75%	58%
No	30%	21%	25%	29%
No response	14%	12%	0%	13%

Table 9: Do you feel the plan will help you in the future? (Ethnicity)

	White	BME	Total
Yes	58%	58%	58%
No	28%	31%	29%
No response	14%	11%	13%

Table 10: Do you feel you were asked about what should be included in the plan? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children's home	Total
Yes	61%	71%	67%	62%
No	23%	15%	33%	23%
No response	16%	14%	0%	15%

Table 11: Do you feel you were asked about what should be included in the plan? (Ethnicity)

	White	BME	Total
Yes	64%	58%	62%
No	19%	29%	23%
No response	17%	13%	15%

Table 12: Do you feel you were listened to and your views were included in the plan? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children's home	Total
Yes	60%	69%	75%	62%
No	24%	19%	25%	24%
No response	16%	12%	0%	14%

Table 13: Do you feel you were listened to and your views were included in the plan? (Ethnicity)

	White	BME	Total
Yes	62%	60%	62%
No	22%	27%	24%
No response	16%	13%	14%

Question 9 asked the young people who recalled a plan being made to rate how helpful they thought the plan was. Overall, 64% of the respondents felt that their plan was helpful or very helpful. However, this varied when broken down by ethnicity and establishment type. Only 61% of BME young people responded positively, compared to 65% of White respondents.¹⁰

When these responses are broken down by establishment type, the figures are more varied, with only 61% of respondents in under-18 YOIs feeling their plan was either helpful or very helpful, compared to 77% in STCs.

¹⁰ These results have not been tested for statistical significance.

Table 14: Can you please rate how helpful you think the plan is? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children's home	Total
Very helpful/helpful	61%	77%	75%	64%
Neither	27%	6%	17%	25%
Unhelpful/very unhelpful	10%	4%	0%	9%
No response	2%	13%	8%	2%

Table 15: Can you please rate how helpful you think the plan is? (Ethnicity)

	White	BME	Total
Very helpful/helpful	65%	61%	64%
Neither	25%	26%	25%
Unhelpful/very unhelpful	9%	9%	9%
No response	1%	4%	2%

Effective regimes

A number of questions related to regimes within establishments. Young people were asked for their views in relation to their relationships with custodial staff, and for their views of education in custody. Importantly, the questions were structured to assess young people's general perception of these variables, as well as rating their own experiences.

Question 10a asked young people how they rated the relationships between young people and staff in general. 70% of respondents in STCs rated general relationships between young people and STC staff as being good or very good, with a lower figure of 59% of young people in secure children's homes providing this rating. This figure fell to 48% for young people living in under-18 YOIs. A high proportion of young people elected not to answer the question (10% in under-18 YOIs and 11% in STCs). Only 8% of those sampled within under-18 YOIs stated that there were either poor or very poor relationships with staff in general; for STCs this figure was 6% and for secure children's homes the figure was 12%.

Table 16: How would you rate the relationship between young people and staff in general? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children's home	Total
Very good/good	48%	70%	59%	51%
Neither	34%	13%	29%	31%
Poor/very poor	8%	6%	12%	8%
No response	10%	11%	0%	10%

Question 10b asked how young people rated their own relationship with staff. Those placed in under-18 YOIs indicated a combined rating of good and very good of 54%, compared with 77% in STCs and 76% in secure children's homes.

Table 17: How would you rate your relationship with staff? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children's home	Total
Very good/good	54%	77%	76%	58%
Neither	27%	13%	18%	25%
Poor/very poor	11%	6%	0%	10%
No response	8%	4%	6%	7%

When grouping together figures for all establishment types, 59% of young women rated their relationship with staff as very good or good. BME respondents had the lowest rating of very good or good relationships with staff.

Table 18: How would you rate your relationship with staff? (Gender and ethnicity)

	White	BME	Male	Female	Total
Very good/good	56%	53%	57%	59%	58%
Neither	29%	26%	25%	24%	25%
Poor/very poor	8%	13%	11%	14%	10%
No response	7%	8%	7%	3%	7%

Question 11 asked what kind of response young people got when making requests of staff. 43% of young people in under-18 YOIs said that the responses were usually very helpful or helpful, compared with 66% in STCs and 82% in secure children’s homes.

Question 12 asked how much time young people got to spend with their key worker or personal officer. 81% of young people in secure children’s homes reported either spending a lot or some time engaging with their key worker. For STCs the figure was 61% and 30% for under-18 YOIs. 68% of young people in under-18 YOIs stated that they did not spend much time or spent no time with their key worker. In STCs this decreased to 38%. However, in secure children’s homes only 12% of young people felt they did not spend much time with their key worker.

Question 13 asked young people to comment on the choice of education courses available to them. Findings suggest that young people placed in under-18 YOIs had greater choice than other sites, with 53% stating the choice was good or very good. This compared favourably with young people placed in STCs (48%) and secure children’s homes (41%). The choice was felt to be poor or very poor by 24% of the respondents in under-18 YOIs, 29% in STCs and 18% in secure children’s homes.

These concerns were mirrored in the focus groups, where these issues were discussed in more detail. Comments made by young people reflect their wish for education provision to be constructive and diverse. Specific comments included:

Constructive programmes that we want to attend.

Different stuff to do.

Courses, life skills work.

Cadets, courses give structure and discipline that’s what more kids need.

Better education, particularly vocational but also academic e.g. proper GCSE’s. 1:1 education as you learn more than in a group. I already have a GCSE in maths and I am being asked to round up to the nearest 10.

Some young people suggested that education should be linked to their offending behaviour, stating for instance that they wanted to “do more offending behaviour work and victim empathy stuff.”

Most young people in the focus groups stated they wanted education to support their return to the community. They wanted support to acquire skills while in custody that would better equip them on release, such as budgeting and how to write a CV. The main requests were for better ways of working towards GCSEs, coupled with a college placement when returning to the community, or vocational courses such as plumbing and bricklaying which would lead to apprenticeships/employment.

A general theme echoed by most was that custody was not equipping them with life or educational skills that might assist them to find work and avoid further offending when in the community. Their sense of hope in not reoffending was low and strongly linked to their prospects of being able to sustain themselves without resorting to further offending.

Focus group feedback illustrates young peoples’ previous experiences of education prior to custody:

Kicked out of school made it worse.

Felt let down by school.

Kicked out of school with alternative education but it didn’t help.

Need to start giving assistance much earlier, skills that lead to a full-time job.

We would like more courses which would be good on the out like plumbing.

Education which is relevant to life after prison and increases the chance of getting a job.

The delivery of effective regimes depends on having good working relationships with staff. Question 19 stated: ‘At times just talking to someone can be very helpful’ and went on to ask how helpful establishments were in giving young people the chance to talk. 58% of respondents felt that establishments were either helpful or very helpful at giving young people the chance to talk, with 12% feeling they were unhelpful or very unhelpful. Those in secure children’s homes and STCs were most positive (68% in STCs agreed establishments were helpful, compared with 56% in under-18 YOIs). While 63% of White respondents felt that establishments were either helpful or very helpful, this figure drops to just half (50%) of BME respondents.

With regard to general conditions and regimes within the secure estate, there was a suggestion from a young person that a “tougher regime” would act as a deterrent to prevent young people returning to custody. A young woman stated “structure and discipline that’s what more kids need” with others saying “not being treated like children would help.” Young people felt that more activities at weekends, less “bang up” and more encouragement and respect from the professionals involved in their lives would also contribute to reducing reoffending. For a young man in one under-18 YOI, the request was for more

staff – he felt that the reduced staffing levels meant that “there aren’t enough staff to do anything.”

Responding to need

This section incorporates findings from the survey as well as data gathered in the focus groups. The questions posed in the focus groups relating to needs were: ‘in your opinion what services should the establishment provide to ensure you do not return to custody?’ and whether the food provided is ‘enough and of sufficient quality.’

Question 6 asked whether young people felt that they got enough help with the problems that led them to get into trouble in the first place. Only 23% of respondents replied “yes” to this question and only 19% of BME respondents and 14% of females. Twice as many respondents felt that they did not receive the support they required. This increased to three times as many BME young people and five times as many females.

A full breakdown of the differences in response by ethnicity, gender and establishment type can be seen in the tables below.

Table 19: Do you feel that young people get enough help with problems which led them to get into trouble in the first place? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children’s home	Total
Yes	23%	25%	30%	24%
No	58%	57%	30%	57%
Don’t know	18%	17%	35%	18%
No response	1%	1%	5%	1%

Table 20: Do you feel that young people get enough help with problems which led them to get into trouble in the first place? (Gender and ethnicity)

	White	BME	Male	Female	Total
Yes	26%	19%	24%	14%	24%
No	56%	60%	57%	76%	57%
Don’t know	17%	20%	19%	10%	18%
No response	1%	1%	0	0	1%

Question 14 asked how helpful it would be to be taught things like how to handle money and pay bills. 72% of respondents felt that this would be helpful or very helpful, with 19% stating it would be neither helpful nor unhelpful and 10% feeling it would be unhelpful or very unhelpful. 1% chose not to respond.

The responses for this question did not vary greatly by ethnicity. However, over 80% of respondents in STCs (compared to 70% in under-18 YOIs) thought it would be helpful or very helpful.

When asked in Question 15 whether they would prefer more education courses to be related to work and getting a job, 73% of respondents agreed that they would. This did not vary greatly with ethnicity; however, the number increased to 85% in STCs.

While some were already able to access courses, others felt that there needed to be “more spaces on current courses”. Young people were also quite clear about their reasons for wanting a greater choice of courses to support them into work, with one young man stating “I have a daughter and I need a job to help her live comfortably.”

There was a great deal of ambition evident, with young people requesting support to set up their own businesses and being prepared to do work experience, apprenticeships and internships to support them to find jobs.

Some responses showed the diversity of skills and levels of attainment of young people already within these establishments, with suggestions ranging from “reading and writing” to “teaching” and “law”, with other young people already having qualifications that they would like to build upon.

As well as wanting help to obtain particular types of jobs, young people requested support in the processes involved in looking for work, such as CV writing and interview skills, with some wanting further information about what types of job would be available to them, taking into account their criminal record.

Although not strictly related to getting a job, young people also requested support with more general life skills. These included cooking, independent living skills, budgeting, first aid, enhanced thinking courses and a “dad’s course”.

Young people were asked ‘While in custody do you think young people should be given support to sort any health, drug or alcohol worries they have?’. Approximately 90% of respondents felt that young people should be given this support. This did vary slightly when broken down by ethnicity, with 92% of White respondents and 88% of BME respondents agreeing.

The variation was greater between establishment types, with 91% in under-18 YOIs agreeing, compared to 84% in STCs.

In response to Question 20a ‘Are there any things which establishments could do more to help with, which could make a real difference to young people’s lives?’ young people were given a number of different options to choose from, as well as space for them to add their own suggestions.

In line with recent research,¹¹ the top four responses for both White and BME young people were:

- anger management
- accommodation
- family and relationship problems
- alcohol and drug worries.

43% of respondents felt that more help could be provided with reading and writing.

Where young people added their own suggestions there were a variety of answers ranging from “offending behaviour”, “getting a job” and “money worries” to “life in general”, “sexual health” and “bereavement, go to funerals”. A full list can be found in Annex 2.

When asked ‘In your opinion what services should the establishment provide to ensure you do not return to custody?’ the discussions held in focus groups backed up the findings from the survey. Many of the focus groups discussed the need for education and training to support young people to get jobs on release. Ideas included:

- forming better links with local colleges and businesses who could speak with young people about options available to them
- making links with people they could look up to, possibly who had “been there” to show them that they could do it. An example given was businessman Levi Roots
- getting work, training or structured activities already in place before release
- use of ROTL or ‘Mobility’ to carry out work experience or attend job or college interviews.

ROTL was also suggested as a means to support re-integration into the community. Some young people felt that things “move on a lot” while they are in custody and, as is clear from the responses in the questionnaires, would welcome a higher level of support during this transition.

Accommodation was a recurring theme, with young people stressing the need for this to be “somewhere suitable...not like a hostel”. Other young people described accommodation not being available when they were released previously and how this contributed to their return to custody.

Young people also focused on the need for thorough, advanced planning by those involved in their care. It was felt that this should begin far earlier than it does currently in order to better identify needs. Some groups felt that it would

¹¹ For example, see Cripps, H. (2010) *HM Inspector of Prisons and Youth Justice Board, Children and Young People in Custody 2009–2010, an analysis of the experiences of 15–18-year-olds in prison*. London: HMIP.

be beneficial if a more consistent, continuous approach were taken by external YOT and internal caseworkers. They felt that this would support their transition onto the community element of sentences. One young person in an STC summed this up: “they forget about you when you come in and forget all about you until you go back out again and wonder why you don’t want to know”.

During the consultation process it was requested that a supplementary question regarding the quality and quantity of food in secure establishments be asked. This was discussed in 14 out of 18 focus groups, with the responses being predominantly negative.

Young people described both the quality and quantity of food as “inconsistent” with some elements being “okay” but others “always poor”. Some young people described still feeling hungry depending on what was sent to the wing, with others saying they were “never actually full up”.

Young women in one of the focus groups felt that there were limited healthy options, which did not support healthy weight control; they expressed concern about weight gained during custodial sentences.

It was agreed that along with more food, there needed to be more variety and more fresh food and fruit. Young people also felt that if better variety were on offer through the canteen rather than “just sweets” they would be able to purchase it themselves. In other groups it was agreed that the cost of items available for young people to purchase was often greater than it would be in the community. A request for more culturally varied food and more hot food was also made.

In line with questionnaire responses, which revealed an interest in developing independent living skills, young people in the focus groups expressed a wish to prepare meals for themselves. On the Rivendell Unit at New Hall, the only establishment where the discussions regarding food were entirely positive, the young women stated: “Much prefer to be able to do our own cooking. Gives you responsibility”. Young women also described the new catering manager as “great” saying the “food is now the right colour”.

Safeguarding

Safety is one of the key principles underpinning the secure estate plan and a number of questions relating to young people’s safety were included in the questionnaire.

When young people were asked Question 20b ‘Have you ever felt worried or scared about living in the establishment where you are placed?’, 64% stated hardly ever or never, while 21% said some of the time, 6% most of the time and 7% all of the time. This equates to 378 young people being worried or scared at some point, with 88 worried or scared most or all of the time. BME young people were slightly less likely to report being scared (68% saying they were hardly ever or never scared) and the results were broadly similar in STCs and under-18 YOIs. No detail as to the reasons behind these responses was provided.

Question 21 asked young people whether they had ever felt bullied or intimidated by anyone. 76% stated hardly ever or never, with 15% some of the time, 4% most of the time and 3% all of the time. There was very little variation by ethnicity. However, there appeared to be differences between secure sectors. In STCs a higher proportion of respondents (83%) replied hardly ever or never.

Question 22 asked young people whether they had ever felt depressed or unhappy for long periods of time. A high proportion of young people in secure children’s homes (65%) felt depressed or unhappy for some, most, or all of the time, compared with 55% of responses in STCs and 53% in under-18 YOIs.

Across the three different establishment types, overall responses to how young people felt were quite consistent. The main differences occur when considering the gender and ethnicity of respondents. If the figures for all, most and some of the time are added together, those differences become more apparent. This suggests that considerably less BME young people (30%) than young females (69%) reported feeling depressed.

Table 21: Have you ever felt depressed or unhappy for long periods of time? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children’s home	Total
All the time	7%	8%	6%	7%
Most of the time	17%	13%	12%	16%
Some of the time	29%	34%	47%	30%
Hardly ever	16%	17%	12%	16%
Never	28%	25%	23%	28%
No response	3%	3%	0%	3%

Table 22: Have you ever felt depressed or unhappy for long periods of time? (Gender and ethnicity)

	White	BME	Male	Female	Total
All the time	6%	7%	7%	14%	7%
Most of the time	16%	17%	16%	17%	16%
Some of the time	32%	27%	30%	48%	30%
Hardly ever	16%	18%	16%	10%	16%
Never	28%	26%	29%	10%	28%
No response	2%	5%	2%	1%	3%

Question 16 asked ‘While in custody do you feel young people should be supported with any worries about their emotional or physical health?’. The vast majority (92%) of young people agreed. There were small variations based on ethnicity and establishment type as seen in the table below.

Table 23: While in custody, do you feel young people should be supported with any worries about their emotional or physical health? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children’s home	Total
Yes	91%	94%	88%	92%
No	7%	5%	12%	7%
No response	2%	1%	0%	1%

Table 24: While in custody, do you feel young people should be supported with any worries about their emotional or physical health? (Ethnicity)

	White	BME	Total
Yes	94%	88%	92%
No	5%	9%	7%
No response	1%	3%	1%

Question 17 asked ‘Should young people in custody be assessed more quickly for things like learning difficulties, mental health worries and things like ADHD?’.

Again a high proportion of respondents (90%) said “Yes” with very few variations based on ethnicity and establishment type.

Table 25: Should young people in custody be assessed more quickly for things like learning difficulties, mental health worries and things like ADHD? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children’s home	Total
Yes	90%	90%	94%	90%
No	7%	9%	6%	8%
No response	3%	1%	0%	2%

Table 26: Should young people in custody be assessed more quickly for things like learning difficulties, mental health worries and things like ADHD? (Ethnicity and gender)

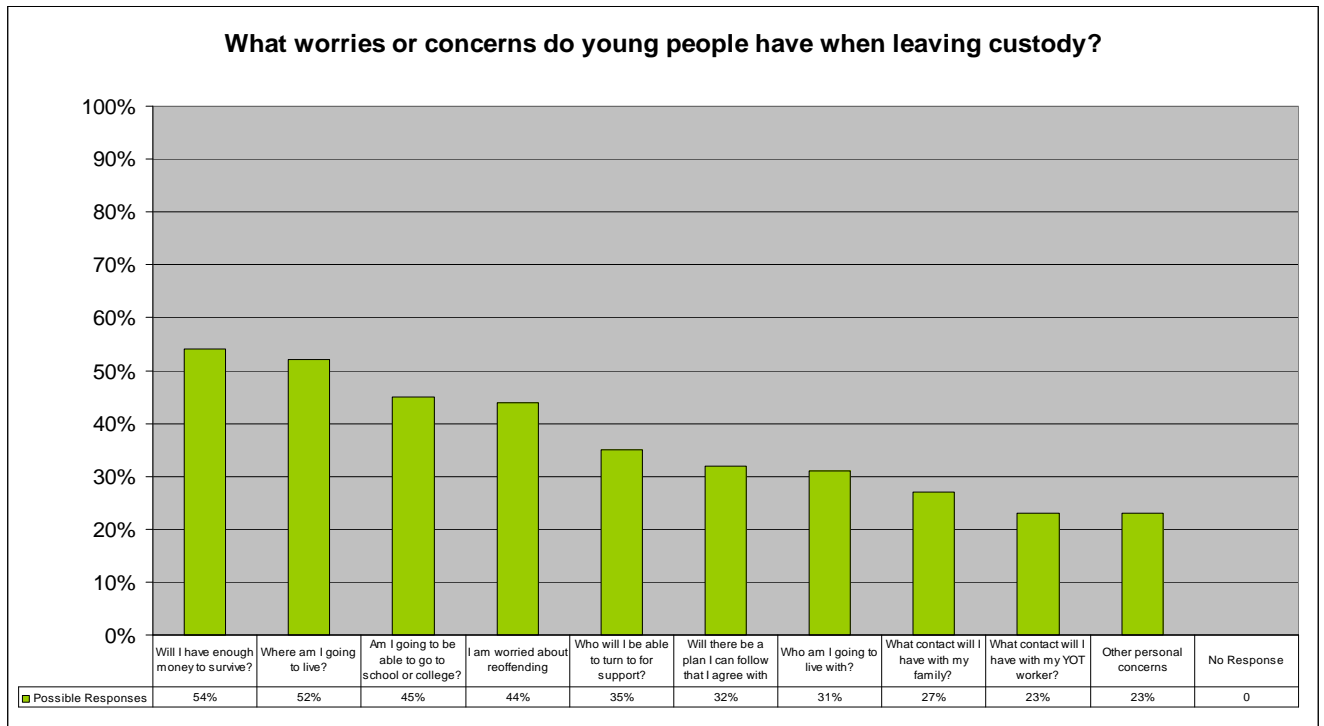
	White	BME	Male	Female	Total
Yes	91%	89%	91%	93%	90%
No	7%	8%	7%	7%	8%
No response	2%	3%	2%	0%	2%

Resettlement

The questions grouped in this section relate to responses from young people on the subject of resettlement. It contains information gathered directly from the questionnaires and responses by young people in some focus groups. Some of the questions in this section were open-ended. Where possible, responses have been grouped together to provide a clearer picture of the views of the young people.

Question 23 asked young people what worries or concerns they had when leaving custody. The figure overleaf shows the responses as percentages.

Figure 1: What worries or concerns do young people have when leaving custody?



54% of young people felt having enough money was their greatest concern, followed by access to sustainable accommodation (52%) and access to relevant and sustainable education (45%). Young people from all sites stated that having contact with their YOT worker was a low priority. Furthermore, feedback from focus groups suggests that young people felt they did not have sufficient support from their YOT worker.

Below are more comments from young people regarding their YOT support:

Lack of support from YOT and social workers.

Not enough support from YOT.

They forget about you when you come in and forget all about you until you go back out again and wonder why you don't want to know.

More contact from YOT in custody, only saw them at the DTO.

Not very good at providing help to stop reoffending.

Question 24a asked how important it is to have a plan in place from the start of their sentence. The responses were very similar regardless of where the young people were placed, with only 10% from under-18 YOIs, 18% from STCs and 9% from secure children's homes feeling the plan was not important. All other young people stated it was either quite or very important that planning was effective.

Question 24b asked young people to rate how important it is to have links with the community they were going to be living in. Again the responses were similar from all sites, with the majority of young people stating it was important to maintain links with their communities.

Table 27: How important do you think it is for young people to have links with the community they will be living in? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children's home	Total
Not important	10%	12%	6%	10%
Quite important	41%	35%	71%	41%
Very important	46%	44%	23%	44%
No response	3%	9%	0%	5%

Table 28: How important do you think it is for young people to have links with the community they will be living in? (Ethnicity and gender)

	White	BME	Male	Female	Total
Not important	10%	10%	10%	17%	10%
Quite important	39%	44%	42%	28%	41%
Very important	47%	39%	43%	52%	44%
No response	4%	7%	5%	3%	5%

Question 24c asked young people to rate how important it is to have contact with their parents or carers. 91% from under-18 YOIs, 94% from STCs and 89% from secure children's homes felt it was quite or very important to maintain contact with their families/carers while in custody.

Table 29: How important do you think it is for young people to have contact with their parents/carers? (Establishment type)

	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children's home	Total
Not important	5%	3%	6%	5%
Quite important	17%	20%	12%	18%
Very important	74%	69%	82%	73%
No response	4%	8%	0%	4%

Responses to Question 25, which asked 'Should young people be helped to find somewhere to live when released?', were similar from all sites, with over 90% stating they felt young people should be supported to find somewhere to live on release. This mirrors the earlier responses where concerns were cited about accommodation on release.

When asked Question 26 'Should young people get help to get on education or training?' almost all respondents felt they should, with 97% from under-18 YOIs, 100% from STCs and 95% from secure children's homes agreeing.

Question 27 asked who should be involved in helping to plan for a young person's release. Irrespective of establishment type, young people provided the same top three responses: family, YOT and themselves. This was followed by education/schools. Many young people commented in the focus groups that they felt contact with their YOT worker was not productive. Young people felt they needed more contact with their YOT to discuss their future. One young person commented that he had only seen his YOT worker once while in custody.

Question 28 asked whether young people should have more contact with YOT workers after their release. 44% of young people felt they should have more contact with their YOT, 27% felt they did not want to have more contact with their YOT worker and 25% were not bothered about the frequency of contact with YOTs on release.

When asked what young people could do to prepare for release, there were some clear trends. Most young people highlighted the importance of having access to education, accommodation, vocational training, as well as contact with their YOT worker. Those placed in under-18 YOIs also made reference to wanting to see ROTL used more often. The most prevalent response related to their desire to have in place an agreed resettlement plan. These were some of the comments young people made in the focus groups:

Have contact with my family and maybe relationship counselling.

Sort out somewhere to live.

Think about where they are going to live and how they are going to get a job or go to school.

Have a plan; stick to the plan.

Think about whether they want to come back to jail or not and stick to it.

Make a plan that they will stick to.

Ask for advice or think about it when alone in cells.

Find somewhere to live and get a steady income.

They could prepare to get a job and make a future plan.

Let family and friends know so they are not alone when released.

Know what they're going to do when they get out.

Make plans towards their future.

Question 30 asked what could be done to support young people leaving custody. Money, financial support, accommodation and knowing where they were going to be living were the most common answers. The question also prompted a lot of responses where young people were “not sure”. Some young people thought having an assessment when back in the community to see how they are progressing would be a good idea. These were some of the responses young people gave:

Getting them a weekend job and get paid little money.

Extra help from youth offending team and resettlement establishment.

See if they would like to go to school/college or even get a job.

Help with finding somewhere to live and a job.

Help on where they're going to live when they get out and make sure they don't come back.

A job or college courses.

Give them money or some sort of benefit if they have no accommodation or place of education.

Money to survive and education.

Let them find jobs outside prison when near the end of their sentence.

Talking and support from everyone.

Help to deal with negative influences in my environment.

Ensure that they have somewhere to live and that it's of a certain standard.

They should make sure that the young person has a sufficient income.

5. Conclusion and key messages

The young people involved in this consultation were pleased to have been consulted on the YJB/MoJ plans for the secure estate and hope that their views will be listened to and considered seriously.

In this section we draw together their views to highlight where young people feel improvements could be made that will contribute to the development of the under-18 secure estate. As far as possible, we have used the headings provided in the consultation document.¹²

Principles and priorities

Young people surveyed broadly welcomed the principles outlined in the consultation – especially to provide a distinct and specialist secure estate that recognises diversity, provides appropriate placements, assesses need, provides a full and purposeful day, and is safe. However, it was clear that the principles are not reflected in young people’s experiences of current regimes and more detail would be welcome as to how they will be achieved in *practice*.

A useful starting point would be an acknowledgement that young people in the secure estate are not asking for more than would be expected of any child or young person in the community. They wish to have structure in their lives, to get a job or undertake training/education, to be free of drugs and alcohol, to have somewhere safe to live and to have enough money. Young people recognise that they need committed support to achieve this.

Alternatives to custody were important to them. Some young people appreciated that custody can have a role to play (mainly because it provides some structure and discipline in their lives), but it was felt that community interventions are more effective in preventing reoffending – particularly if licence terms could be negotiated and agreed and support is available to enable successful completion.

Findings from this survey suggest that young people feel that they are not being adequately prepared for life in the community. Sentence planning appears to be taking place in isolation, with little relevance to the future. Similarly, education courses do not always link adequately with real job opportunities on release, training in life skills is limited and not enough is done to maintain links with family and community. This diminishes the chances of preventing offending on release.

These findings are in line with a recent report from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP, 2010), which stated that fewer than half of young people felt that they had done something in custody to make them less likely to offend in

¹² MoJ/YJB (2011) *Strategy for the Secure Estate for Children and Young People in England and Wales. Plans for 2011/12 – 2014/15. Consultation Document*. London: MoJ/YJB.

future.¹³ The consultation document rightly emphasises the role of assessments and sentence planning in *changing the behaviour* of young people, but the YJB/MoJ may wish to place more emphasis on ensuring that all sentence planning clearly documents how the proposed intervention will benefit the young person on release back into their home communities.

Responding to decreased demand

The consultation document stated that reductions in commissioned places are likely to be proportionately higher in the STC and secure children's homes sectors over the period of implementation and that 'STCs and secure children's homes are broadly interchangeable'. Findings from this survey suggest that the needs of children and young people are best met in secure children's homes where they are able to engage meaningfully with staff and had developed trusting relationships.

Assessment and sentence planning

Young people echoed the sentiments of the consultation document that assessments should be comprehensive and provide the basis for effective planning for all young people. However, young people have highlighted that more needs to be done than simply adapting the process.

This will be achieved not only through clarifying what should happen and when, but in training staff to actively listen to and understand the needs of young people. In addition, young people overwhelmingly stressed the value of involving their family in sentence planning, and more could be done to ensure that this takes place routinely where possible.

Recognising diversity

Promoting equality and working in a non-discriminatory way are YJB and MoJ priorities, so the findings that BME young people and females are reporting different experiences to their White and male counterparts is important.

Fewer BME young people recalled having had an assessment or sentence planning and, where they were recalled, BME young people were significantly less likely to feel that time was taken to understand their needs or that the sentence planning was helpful to their situation. Furthermore, fewer BME young people felt they had someone to talk to if they were concerned or worried.

While recognising that the female sample was small, there was a higher percentage of females who felt custody was the wrong place for them and that a community penalty would be more appropriate. They were more critical about the detrimental effects of custody and that the education provision was not

¹³ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/corporate-reports/hmi-prisons/hmip-annual-report-2010-11.pdf>

appropriate to their needs. It was also clear that a higher percentage of female respondents felt depressed or unhappy for long periods of time.

The focus groups were unable to shed more light on these issues. Further qualitative research may therefore be one way to better understand why BME young people feel significantly more disenfranchised in the secure estate and how assessment and planning processes can better meet their needs. Similarly, there needs to be a better understanding of the specific needs of young females in the secure estate.

Safeguarding and workforce development

The consultation document stated that youth custody had become safer (paragraph 19). However, the findings from this consultation suggest that a high number of young people continue to feel scared, bullied and unhappy. These findings are in line with an HMIP (2010) report¹⁴ which found that just under a third of boys and over a fifth of girls reported that they had felt unsafe at some point in an under-18 YOI.

The Government's vision is that all staff working in secure establishments are recruited specifically for (and are committed to) working with children and young people, and are provided with adequate training and support. The consultation findings suggest that young people in the smaller units generally relate well to staff – suggesting that they are willing to help and easy to talk to. Findings from this survey and subsequent focus groups suggest that young people in larger units are not always engaged in a meaningful way and relationships with staff are limited, a lot less helpful and can be lacking in encouragement and respect.

The effective engagement of young people is the prerequisite for successful safeguarding. Similarly, young people are unlikely to engage with services provided if they feel unsafe. Indeed, Voice and Barnardo's have found on occasion that Prison Officers have referred young people to advocates to encourage them to speak more freely where there are concerns about their safety. While it is reassuring that young people have advocates to talk to when they feel scared, it is important for the YJB/MoJ to address the need for prison staff to be skilled and experienced in working with vulnerable children within established safeguarding frameworks.

A full and purposeful day

It was overwhelmingly apparent during this consultation that young people are concerned about their education and job prospects and very much wish to engage in activities that will prepare them specifically for further education or employment on release.

Far more emphasis is needed to ensure that vocational courses are relevant to the job market and that internships and work experience link closely to the

¹⁴ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/corporate-reports/hmi-prisons/hmip-annual-report-2010-11.pdf>

community so that a smooth transition can be achieved. This is backed up by HMIP (2010) surveys which found that “vocational training opportunities continued to vary and in some establishments they were insufficient to meet demand”.¹⁵

Important to this vision is the use of ROTL, and young people would welcome the considerations for developing a limited number of smaller, satellite sites that aid resettlement back into the community. From listening to young people, it is very clear that higher staff ratios and engagement allow better relations and contribute to a clear and effective resettlement pathway that begins many months prior to release.

In the short term, other improvements can be made. Young people suggested the choice of vocational courses could be increased, more support could be provided in basic skills such as reading and writing and CV writing, and establishments could be encouraged to foster links with local businesses and colleges. Young people suggested that ROTL could be used far more consistently and be included as standard in sentencing planning unless there is a good reason not to.

Life skills were also very important to young people. Budgeting, anger management, dealing with family and relationship problems and coping with drug and alcohol issues are all programmes that the voluntary sector provides successfully for young people in the community, and more could be done to encourage delivery within the secure estate.

Families

The consultation highlighted that young people’s families and carers are extremely important to them and they would like them to be more involved in their lives while they are in custody and in planning for their release. The consultation document recognised the importance of effective engagement with families and parents/carers but does not outline how this will be achieved in practice.

Food

The food provided across all three types of establishment was not rated highly. Young people responding to this consultation outlined the need for larger portions, more and healthier options. Several young people reported that they had gained weight while in custody. Young people would also welcome the opportunity to prepare their own food.

¹⁵ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/corporate-reports/hmi-prisons/hmip-annual-report-2010-11.pdf>

Annex 1: Young people's views on training provision

Q15 – Would you prefer more education courses to be related to work and getting a job?

If YES, what types of course would you like to be able to do?

Below is a selection of the responses given to this question. Some attempt has been made to group them into areas, rather than the most requested, although all the areas were requested more than once by young people, with construction, motor skills and trades proving the most popular.

Construction

- Brick laying
- Roofing
- Scaffolding
- Joinery/carpentry
- Metal work
- Flooring

Some young people also requested courses linked to house/property development.

Motor skills

- Mechanic – cars and bikes
- Bodywork
- Forklift driving

Trades

- Plastering
- Plumbing
- Electrician
- Painting and decorating
- Tiling
- Welding
- Fencing
- Shop fitting
- Gardening/landscape gardening

- Tree surgery
- Horticulture

Other professions/skills

- Armed Forces
- Catering
- Hospitality
- Shop work
- Customer services

Business

- Business – management
- Business – administration
- Business – starting your own/business plans
- Accountancy
- Banking

ICT

- Computer design
- Software design
- Computer technician

Beauty

- Barber
- Hairdressing
- Beauty courses

Arts

- Theatre
- Drama
- Dance
- Performing arts
- Art/3d art
- Music – writing and performing
- Creative media

- Music production

Health and social care

- Child care
- Child development
- Social work
- Residential children's workers
- Youth work

Sports

- Sports science
- Coaching courses
- Football/basketball/boxing

Others

- Law
- Teaching
- Photography
- Tourism
- Journalism
- Veterinary care
- Becoming a fireman
- Media

Academic

- GCSEs
- A Levels
- Access courses – for college
- Maths
- English
- Science
- Languages
- Design technology
- Psychology

- Sociology

Life skills

- How to apply for jobs
- CV preparation
- Interview preparation
- Cooking
- First aid
- Budgeting
- Independent living skills
- Enhanced thinking courses
- 'Dad's course'.

Annex 2: Young people's views on types of intervention in the secure estate

Q20a – Are there any things which establishments could do more to help with, which could make a real difference to young people's lives?

In addition to the main responses to this question (see page 28), young people also gave these additional answers. Some of these answers were given by more than one person.

- About life in general
- Activities on the out
- All types of support to stop reoffending
- Anger is important
- Anything they need
- Bereavement, go to funerals
- Better contact with family and friends in custody
- College
- Depression of sentence and missing family
- Education
- Employment
- Getting a job
- Health issues
- Help from YOT
- Job or training
- Life
- Money worries
- Offending behaviour
- People in here
- Personal life
- Reoffending
- Sexual health
- Stop putting young people in jail

- Support from someone who has been inside
- The prison doesn't help you with anything
- Welfare phone calls.

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