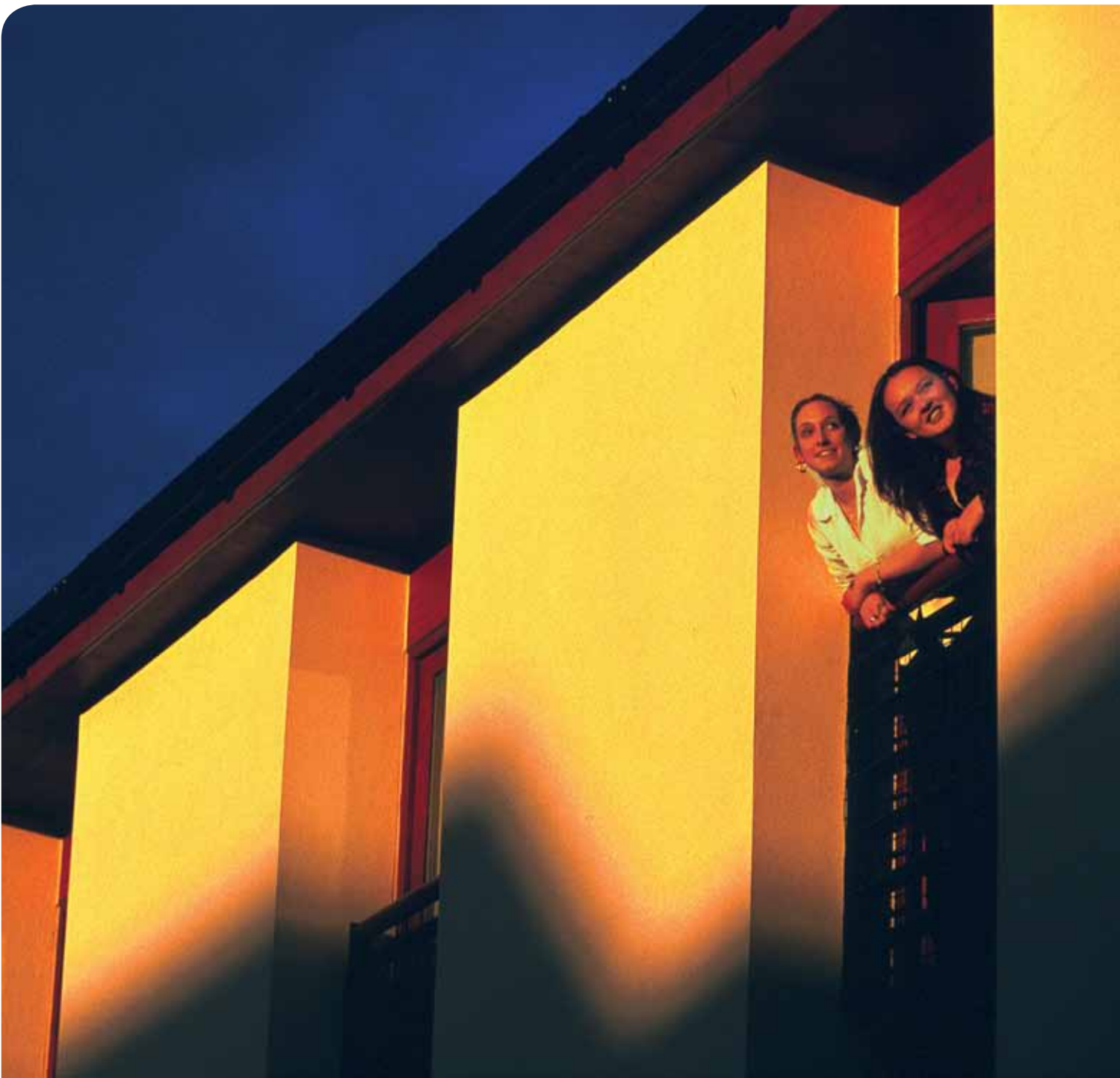


Resettlement of young offenders

How local initiatives can make a difference



Acknowledgements

The Local Government Association would like to thank the young people, youth offending teams and voluntary and statutory sector partner organisations for providing comments, information and case study material to assist in the production of this report.

We also wish to thank the staff and researchers at the National Youth Agency (NYA) and National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) who undertook the research contained in this report.

Introduction

Making resettlement count

“Resettlement is a process by which actions are taken to work with the offender in custody and on release, so that communities are better protected from harm and re-offending is significantly reduced. It encompasses the totality of work with prisoners, their families and significant others in partnership with statutory and voluntary organisations.”

Through the prison gate: a joint thematic review by HM Inspectorates of Prisons and Probation, 2001.

Young people aged between 10 and 17 who have committed a crime are commonly referred to as ‘young offenders’. Youth offending teams (YOTs) work with all young people up to the age of 18 who are involved in the criminal justice system. YOTs were established in every local authority area in England and Wales following the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act. They are statutory bodies that include representatives from children’s services, the police, probation services, health, and drug and alcohol misuse services. YOTs assess the needs of children and young people under their supervision and help to address their offending behaviour.

The Local Government Association believes that effective resettlement has a key role to play in tackling the unacceptably high level of re-offending among young people who have previously committed a crime. While significant reductions both in the number of children and young people entering the criminal justice system and those being held in custody have been achieved, 75 per cent of young people released from custody and 68 per cent of those serving community sentences go on to re-offend within a year¹. Despite all the good work already underway, everyone involved in the youth justice system recognises that there is a need to reverse the high rate of recidivism among young people who have previously offended.

¹ ‘Breaking the cycle: effective punishment, rehabilitation and sentencing of offenders,’ Ministry of Justice (2010)

While the civil disorder in English cities in the summer of 2011 was not primarily a 'youth' issue (only around 20 per cent of those arrested were under 18 years old), it did draw attention to the issue of how young people can most effectively be supported on leaving custody.

New incentives

The Government is keen for incentives to be provided to local areas to reduce youth offending. It contends that if councils share in the financial risks (costs) of young people entering custody and the financial rewards (savings) of fewer custodial sentences, this would not only increase local accountability and ensure that custody was used more effectively but would also produce fewer re-offenders². As a result of this, a few local councils have volunteered to test what can be achieved by using greater flexibility, more responsibility and additional investment to contract resettlement services on a payments-by-results basis.

Since their inception in 2000, local youth offending teams have been commissioning and helping to design rehabilitative services for young people who have offended, working with other council departments, public sector agencies and voluntary and community sector partners. This document brings together some examples of local initiatives that are already making a difference to young people's lives and from which others can learn and build upon in the future.

² As above

Resettlement priorities

Young people leaving custody often say they do not believe that they are well prepared for life back in the community. In the Home Office report 'Tell them so they listen: messages from young people in custody' (2000), the difficulties they reported included not being able to get a job or qualifications, having little money to live on, being tempted back into crime, problems with friends and family, anger management, health and fitness and abstaining from alcohol and drugs.

The Youth Justice Board, which oversees the youth justice system in England and Wales and works to prevent re-offending, says actions to address these issues are essential for effective resettlement. Its youth resettlement framework for action, published in 2006, sought to develop enhanced resettlement capability across the country in terms of accommodation; education, training and employment; health; substance misuse; families; finance, benefits and debt; and better case management and transitions for children and young people moving from the community to custody and back again.

Structure of this document

This Local Government Association report highlights some local initiatives that have been put in place to address the needs of young people who have committed offences, which provide support in the areas of:

- accommodation
- education, training and employment
- life skills and holistic support.

Each section outlines the background to that particular issue. It then looks at what the individuals and organisations consulted as part of this research thought that councils, youth offending teams and their partners could do to improve the situation, and provides case study examples of effective solutions to some of the common problems.

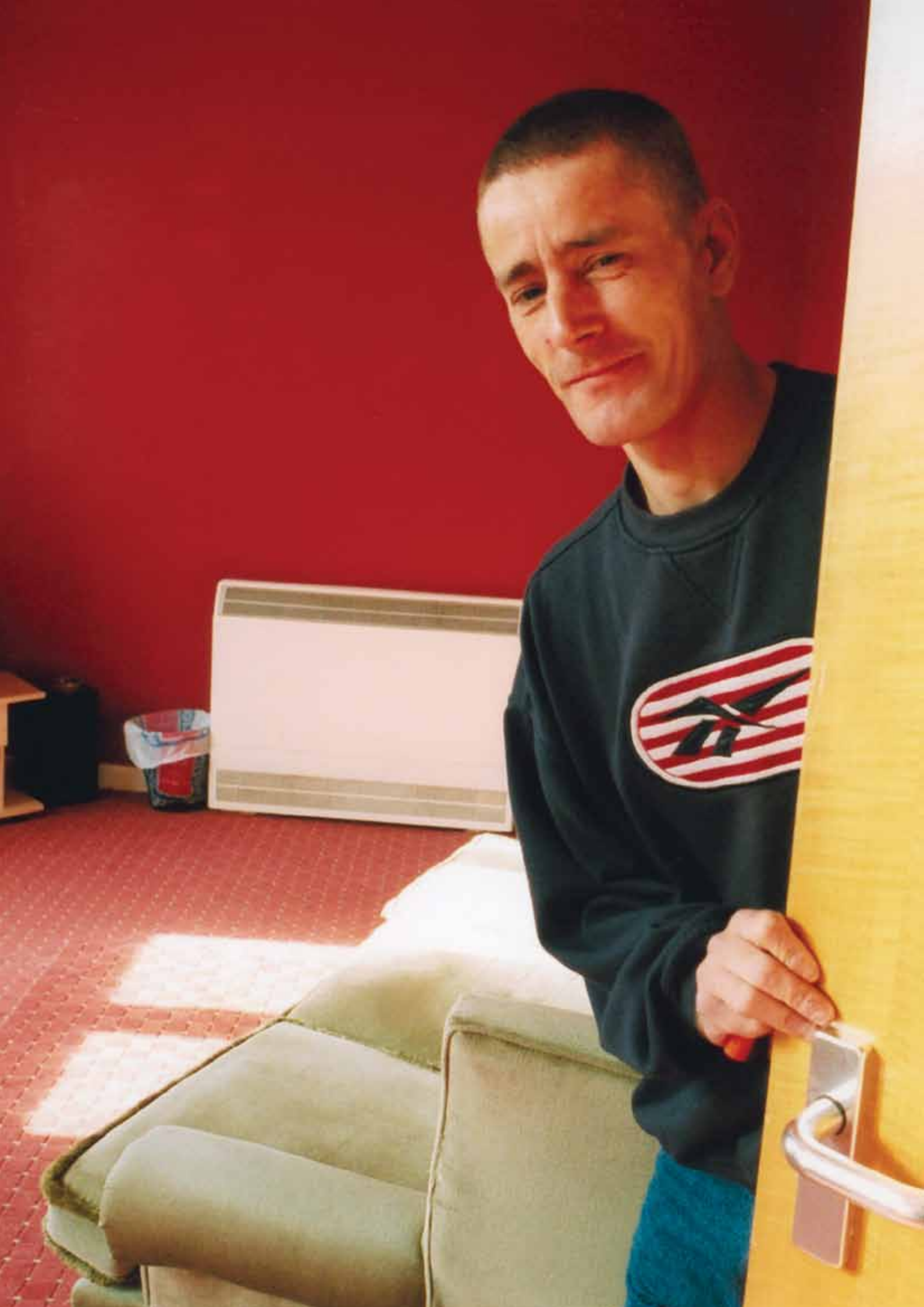
Along with an initial printed document, this initiative has been designed as an online resource that will be updated and built upon over time. We would welcome feedback and further case study examples from other local areas. Please contact Cassandra Harrison, Senior Adviser, Local Government Association at cassandra.harrison@local.gov.uk or on 020 7665 3878.

Some projects that work with young people over the age of 17 have been included where the project directly addresses some of these key issues.

Research methodology

The research was carried out by the National Youth Agency (NYA) and National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). Desk-based research was undertaken to identify councils delivering effective resettlement practice, either directly or commissioned through voluntary and community sector organisations. Further case study examples were identified by the Youth Justice Board, Standing Committee for Youth Justice and National Resettlement Group, and interviews and visits were conducted.





Part 1 Accommodation

What are the issues?

Being homeless or having unsettled accommodation can have an impact on what happens to an individual once they become involved in the criminal justice system. Uncertain or impermanent living arrangements can contribute to the reasons for a custodial remand or sentence being given. An individual can lose their accommodation as a result of being remanded or sentenced to custody, and having nowhere to live can affect their likelihood of being released. Stable accommodation can also reduce the likelihood of re-conviction.^{3 4}

Figures compiled for the 'Youth crime action plan' published by the then Department for Education, Schools and Families in 2008 estimated that 15 per cent of young people left prison without suitable accommodation, making effective resettlement extremely difficult. Access to accommodation for young offenders aged 16-17 was seen to be a particular difficulty.

While youth offending teams (YOTs) have a range of responsibilities in relation to the accommodation of young offenders leaving custody, they are not providers of accommodation. Instead, the YOT's role primarily involves exerting influence over

local policy by drawing attention to the particular circumstances and needs of young offenders; developing robust agreements with partner agencies; and, in relation to individuals, providing support to pre-empt The changing role of councils in relation to housing means that rather than just acting as a landlord, they have a more strategic role in understanding and meeting the housing needs of their diverse communities, including those with specific needs. Those councils that still own housing have successfully campaigned for a fairer and more transparent system of housing finance, increasing their ability to invest in it.

Consultation with young people and the professionals working with them carried out as part of this research identified that young people leaving custody need access to suitable housing and are keen to be engaged in the process. All services working with young offenders need to bear in mind their previous experiences of statutory intervention, as the young people have often felt let down by statutory services in the past.

Local solutions

The following case studies provide some examples of local action to help young offenders access and sustain appropriate accommodation.

3 'Custody and young people's living arrangements,' NACRO (2006)

4 'Youth crime action plan 2008' Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008)



Case study

St Basils, West Midlands

St Basils works with young people in the West Midlands to enable them to find and keep a home and to develop their confidence, skills and opportunities. It runs supported accommodation projects in Birmingham, Solihull and north Worcestershire which provide accommodation for hundreds of young people every night of the year.

St Basils offers:

- emergency/direct access projects providing 24-hour access to accommodation for up to three months
- key-worker support and a package of services which enable young people to learn independent living skills
- semi-independent projects with flexible levels of support which are seen as the last step before moving to independent accommodation
- specialist services for young single parents and pregnant women
- group work and activities at the resettlement centre and via the floating support service
- support to help people access permanent accommodation.

What works?

St Basils is a youth-led organisation. There is a youth board and young people are involved in identifying the organisation's priorities, setting standards and monitoring services.

An accommodation pathway coordinator is seconded from and funded by Birmingham youth offending service (YOS) to find accommodation for young offenders.

St Basils also provides emergency bed space on behalf of the YOS for young people who would otherwise have to remain in custody due to a lack of suitable accommodation.

There is a similar arrangement with children's services at Birmingham City Council for young people leaving care. More recently St Basils has developed a multi-agency single point of access for all young people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless in the city, working with children's services and the council's housing department.

The ethos behind St Basils is that if you don't deal with homelessness in a preventative way you have to deal with it at point of crisis, which is very expensive. The organisation takes all the elements needed for successful transition to independent living including life skills, education, training and employment support. Having an integrated accommodation, education and employment strategy is key to successful resettlement.

Key facts

- project began 39 years ago
- funded by private donations, fundraising, Supporting People and Birmingham Youth Offending Service, rents and service charges, various contracts
- 200 full-time staff
- local authority links: works in partnership with local providers including children's services, Connexions, housing and the youth offending service
- the largest voluntary sector provider of homelessness accommodation and support for young people in Birmingham, and also provides housing-related services in north Worcestershire, Solihull and Sandwell.



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Case study

Northumbria offender accommodation project

This project is based within Northumbria Probation's approved premises team and works closely with the priority and prolific offender teams to provide housing advice, assistance and advocacy to all offenders.

The project staff liaise with accommodation providers to ensure that offenders receive the most appropriate support. They also provide advice on accessing support from grants and trusts to help with setting up a home.

When an offender has accommodation identified as a need, project staff discuss the issues with the offender manager and agree actions including offering advice on accommodation options for the offender. The project also delivers an accredited 'practical housing units' training course for offenders which increases their ability to access suitable accommodation.

Suitable accommodation is a key factor in reform, resettlement and risk management. Offenders can find it difficult to access and sustain housing, which increases social exclusion and the likelihood of further criminal behaviour.

The particular difficulties often faced by young ex-offenders include lack of supported housing provision, exclusions from housing associations due to past offending behaviour, councils not deeming offenders as priority homeless, and the lower housing benefit allowance for under-25s.



What works?

The project aims to ensure that when probation has assessed an offender as having an accommodation need that relates to their offending, prompt action is taken to address the issues.

There are strong links with housing providers, offender managers, key workers and public protection units which enable the project to secure appropriate and suitable housing. This in turn reduces re-offending and protects the public. The project is now developing its work with offenders while they are in custody and hopes to offer a 'through the gate' approach. It also hopes to begin working with the priority and prolific offender teams in Northumberland, Newcastle and Gateshead.



Case study the Chrysalis programme

Chrysalis is the name for the offender work carried out by Platform 51 (formerly YWCA). Chrysalis provides casework services focussed on increasing access into education, employment and training for young women offenders by engaging them in a wide range of interventions both in the community and in custody.

Chrysalis provides holistic 'one stop shop' services in Platform 51 centres along with eight-week programmes for women offenders. Probation staff identify groups of women likely to benefit from the course. The women then decide what they want included in the programme. For example, they may want a parenting programme and that could be focused on young children or on teenagers. It is an adaptable, flexible delivery framework.

A database of information is kept which includes retention rates and the progress made by each participant such as not re-offending, reduced use or abstinence from alcohol and substances, increase in income, securing accommodation, entry into employment and training, and children in care being returned to their mothers.

Service users are involved in every aspect of the project, including planning and developing the programme and staff and volunteer recruitment. When service users complete the programme they can receive training to become volunteers and go on to facilitate sessions. It is a chance to 'give something back' for the help they have received and helps them to widen their networks and develop skills.

Key facts

- funded by Northumbria Probation Trust, Ministry of Justice and Supporting People
- two full-time project workers
- local links: project workers liaise with council housing departments, housing associations, supported accommodation providers, private rental landlords, tenancy support schemes and other accommodation providers to access suitable and stable accommodation.

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What works?

Homelessness is a huge issue for these young women, who may have been disowned by their families, considered 'intentionally homeless' and unable to afford a bond for private rented accommodation.

The bidding system for local authority housing creates a further barrier due to low literacy and lack of computer skills/access. Many young women offenders are unaware of services that can help them.

The Chrysalis programme helps to overcome these barriers by:

- advocating on behalf of service users to get them signed up to organisations that provide a 'paper bond' up front to landlords and take it back in affordable instalments
- providing support and access to help women through the bidding system for local authority housing
- providing a 'courtesy of' address for those without one, which helps them to claim benefits and access outreach services
- delivering courses on maintaining a tenancy with practical advice including budgeting, cooking and how to access community services

- getting drug workers to deliver sessions from a neutral venue to avoid the stigma of attending drug/alcohol centres, which can be male-orientated and intimidating for young women with low self esteem.

Key facts

- Platform 51 aims to work with women by adopting a strengths-based, women centred participative and empowering approach
- funded from multiple streams including European Social Fund, National Offender Management Service and subcontracting arrangements with organisations such as Manchester College and A4E
- currently has workers in Doncaster (1), Wolverhampton (3), Northamptonshire (1), Plymouth (2), Bristol (1) and London (3).

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Part 2 Education, training and employment

What are the issues?

An important route to rehabilitation for most young offenders is through the attainment of normal milestones often denied to them because of their marginalised status – learning to read and write, attending school, gaining qualifications, getting a job, and entering further education or training⁵.

Young offenders have the same education and training entitlements as their non-offending peers. Specifically, the Education Act (1996) entitles young offenders below the school leaving age to a full-time education which takes into account their age, ability and any special educational needs.

Responsibility to secure appropriate provision rests with the local council. Councils already have a general role and remit to provide education and learning for all young people. However, new legal duties aim to prevent any break in the chain of responsibility for providing the same services to young prisoners. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 requires 'host' authorities (in which a custodial facility is located) to secure education provision while the young person is detained. They also have a duty under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) to take steps to reduce youth crime, which should include promoting access to education, training and employment.

Consultation with young people and youth justice professionals conducted as part of the research for this document found that offenders can struggle to find suitable education, training or employment opportunities. It also identified that helping to tackle negative perceptions of young offenders can improve their employment and training opportunities.



⁵ 'An audit of education provision within the juvenile secure estate: a report to the Youth Justice Board,' Ecotec (2001)



Local solutions

The following case study provides an example of how one local area is addressing education, training and employment issues as part of its resettlement work with young people who have offended.

Case study Leicester Youth Offending Service

Since 2007, Leicester Youth Offending Service (YOS) has significantly enhanced its provision of education, training and employment opportunities for young people. The team has refocused and expanded its range of contacts and collaborative links with partners. This has led to a 27 per cent

increase in the rate of engagement in full-time education, training and employment for young offenders aged 14-17 years.

The service developed an action plan which identified the need for intensive work to break the link between custody, community and worklessness. It also identified the need to access grant aid funding streams to increase the number of specialist staff and has been successful in securing funding to employ three education specialists to specifically target 14-18 year olds not in education, employment or training.

What works?

The Leicester YOS 'Offenders into employment' project began in April 2010 with the appointment of a custodial training coordinator. Every young person sentenced to custody is visited by the coordinator within

two weeks of admission. At any one time the coordinator is managing 20-40 young people across 12 secure establishments.

The coordinator has developed good professional relationships between the YOS and the secure estate education teams, ensuring that each young person has a plan of action to move into training and employment on release. The coordinator has also developed good relations with training and employment providers across Leicester.

Creating training and employment opportunities is difficult because of the stereotypical assumptions many employers make about ex-offenders. Leicester YOS works with prospective training providers and employers to persuade them to give these young people a chance. Young people are always interviewed and employed on a trial basis, often working part-time until confidence grows on both sides. The employers involved include a city-wide social enterprise, construction employers, a motor engineering company, the YMCA and a media and arts company.

The initiative has shown what can be achieved using intensive client-based working practices. Performance results measured by the Youth Justice Board's national indicator target 45 (full-time education, training and employment engagement of young people aged 10-17 involved with the youth justice system) indicates that Leicester YOS is now one of the highest performing YOS teams in the country in relation to this target. Positioned 99th out of 142 YOS services in 2007, the team had reached 6th position by 2010 (the indicator measure had risen from 57 to 85 per cent).

Key facts

- funded by the Youth Justice Board, Working Neighbourhood Fund, Learning and Skills Council and Leicester City Council through the children and young people's service
- four full-time staff
- established partnership working arrangements with Connexions
- established links with the local secondary education improvement partnership, head teachers, colleges, support services, training providers, local businesses and secure estate education teams.

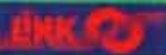
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Part 3 Life skills and holistic support

What are the issues?

If a young person has not been able to identify and address the factors that may have contributed to their offending in the first instance, the likelihood of them slipping back into the same behavioural pattern is very strong. Holistic resettlement support can significantly improve a person's chances of making a fresh start⁶.

In order to coordinate activities and interventions to support a young person's wide-ranging needs at entry to custody and throughout their sentence, joint working between youth offending teams (YOTs), local councils, secure establishments and other organisations is required. There are three main activities that aim to ensure holistic resettlement support: YOT responsibilities, partnerships across regions, and partnerships with the voluntary and community sector.

'Life skills' is a term that encompasses the skills needed to meet the day-to-day challenges of independent living. These include managing money, keeping a clean and comfortable home, healthy eating (including shopping and food preparation), personal hygiene, communication, social interaction and citizenship. Enhancing basic social and personal development skills is an essential requirement for young people leaving custody.

A youth offending team (YOT) case manager must outline resettlement arrangements to the secure establishment case supervisor and/or young person in relation to finance, benefits and debt. This includes confirming arrangements for accessing finance/benefits/debt support, the location of the relevant Jobcentre Plus and contact details for obtaining benefits.

During the research carried out for this document, service users and professionals had some ideas on what councils could do to ensure that holistic support services are as effective as possible. The suggestions included planning for young people's resettlement at a strategic level and using resettlement protocols; working effectively together to ensure better integration between youth and adult services; building an effective understanding of supply and demand for services in the local area through audit and data collection; and county and district/borough councils working together to ensure that information is shared between them and across all relevant departments.

⁶ 'Running a resettlement project for young offenders: key findings from Nacro's 'on-side' project,' Nacro (2003)

Local solutions

The following case studies demonstrate how some local areas have been providing holistic services and life skills support to young offenders as part of their package of resettlement support.

Case study 'Better Together' in Peterborough

The 'Better Together' project recruits, assesses and trains volunteers for 14 different projects in the Peterborough area. The projects are run by the youth offending service (YOS), YMCA and other partner organisations, and work with vulnerable young people aged 18 and under.

These young people have complex needs, and most have entrenched offending behaviour or are at risk of entering the criminal justice system. They have chaotic lifestyles with little or no support. The project offers various activities ranging from sport, drama and arts in a group setting to individual mentoring and support.

Young offenders often feel isolated and lost. They have difficulty in obtaining accommodation and need support in basic life skills to give them a foundation from which to build their lives. These skills include managing finances, cooking on a budget, sustaining a tenancy, getting furniture from charities, sewing, ironing, support with homework and training, and advice on how to prepare for interviews. For these young people, having someone to help them achieve these tasks and set daily and weekly goals is vital.



What works?

The young people need someone who will be patient with them, has time to do things at their pace and can help them think about their positive attributes and what they have to offer. This project uses trained volunteers to work with these young people as statutory service caseworkers often do not have enough time due to heavy workloads.

The young people relate well to the volunteers as they are giving up their own time and not having to do the formal work with them. Both the young people and the volunteers get a lot out of the experience.

All the projects sign up to a service level agreement. A monthly report is produced containing information on the number of volunteers, training provided and hours volunteered. Project coordinators provide feedback about the volunteers, and service users are at the heart of evaluating and improving the service. Regular interviews

with the young people and volunteers are carried out to assess how it is helping them and what more is needed.

Key facts

- project manager funded by youth offending service (YOS) seconded to YMCA
- two paid staff (project manager and admin officer)
- 228 active volunteers (October 2011) and a waiting list of interested people
- local authority links: in addition to direct funding through the YOS, the project contributes towards a number of council projects which provide a small amount of funding and in return are provided with volunteers.

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Case study

Nottinghamshire youth offending service

Each of Nottinghamshire youth offending service's (YOS) four locality teams benefit from an automatic referral to the outreach and open access team when a young person has been sentenced to custody. The young person will then be allocated a RAP (resettlement aftercare provision) worker.

Usually the RAP worker will attend the initial detention and training order (DTO) planning meeting and link with the young person's YOS caseworker within a month of the sentence. At this time a 'resettlement pathways plan' is developed which covers accommodation, education, training and employment, health, substance misuse, families, finance, benefits and debt. The young person, their parent or carer and YOS staff all sign and agree to the resettlement plan, which is voluntary.

During the engagement phase the RAP worker will meet the young person in custody once a month. When they are released, YOS staff usually either meet them at the prison gate or within a couple of days. The level of support they will depend on the individual's level of need and is available for up to six months after the licence has ended.

What works?

The RAP staff are key to the success of the resettlement work. They are experienced professionals with a thorough understanding of the issues facing these young people and a commitment to supporting them. The service users can trust, rely and depend on them, as demonstrated by the following feedback:

“I really enjoy myself when I get a meeting with my RAP worker because I can get all my problems off my chest and get it out in the open.”

“All I can say is my RAP worker has done so much for me and helped me a lot for my options in life. It has helped me a lot to stop re-offending.”

RAP support is very hands-on and adaptable. The level of contact tends to be at least once or twice a week. In conjunction with young people on the programme, the team has created a new 24-week rolling programme of workshops that cover issues such as living independently, cooking, sexual health, music and creative art.

Key facts

- project began in 2005
- funded by the Youth Justice Board
- three full-time RAP workers
- local authority link: RAP workers operate within the YOS and link with education, training and employment provision, coordinated by a Connexions officer seconded to the YOS. Within the wider YOS, accommodation officers have good links with local housing providers and Supporting People.

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Conclusion

Youth offending teams around the country are working with local partners to seek effective solutions that help young people reintegrate back into society. The examples in this document are considered by those contributing them to be effective in addressing the needs of children and young people who offend. They provide a rich source of local practice from which other local areas, including those involved in the payment-by-results pilots, can learn from and build upon in the future.



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L11-565