

Resettlement: Achieving a needs-led approach

<p>The resettlement needs of young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resettlement is <i>'the effective reintegration of imprisoned offenders back into the community'</i>¹ • The highest rates of re-offending in the country are in young men leaving prison with a history of residential burglary² • The national reconviction rate for juveniles is 70%.³ • Young people report having a positive relationship with their Resettlement Officer, and see them more positively than other prison staff.⁴ • A number of voluntary and statutory agencies are involved in resettlement e.g. SOVA, YMCA, Nacro, Probation. • Resettlement programmes are most effective when they involve a multidisciplinary approach⁵. • Resettlement programmes should not be considered solely in the light of re-offending rates, as these alone do not give an idea of the quality and rights base of the service 	<p>The rights of young people leaving the secure estate</p> <p>UN convention on the Rights of the Child.</p> <p>Article 40 pays attention to <i>'the desirability of promoting the child's re-integration, and the child's assuming a constructive role in society'</i>⁶</p> <p>International Rules for Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty.</p> <p><i>'All juveniles should benefit from arrangements designed to assist them in returning to society, family life, education or employment after release. Procedures including early release, and special courses should be devised to this end.'</i>⁷</p> <p><i>'Competent authorities should provide or ensure services to assist juveniles in re-establishing themselves in society and to lessen prejudice against such juveniles. These services should extent possible, that the juvenile is provided with suitable residence, employment, clothing and sufficient means to maintain himself or herself upon release in order to facilitate successful reintegration. The representatives of agencies providing such services should be consulted and should have access to juveniles while detained, with a view to</i></p>
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¹ HM Inspectorate of prisons (2001) *Through the Prison Gate: a thematic review*

² www.homeoffice.gov.uk

³ Home Office Cohort Study (2003)

⁴ Hazel, Hagelland Brazier (2002)

⁵ Hagell. (2004).

⁶ UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, (1989), Article 40

⁷ UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, (1990), N79

provided.	<p>assisting them in their return to the community.⁸</p> <p>Children Act 1989</p> <p>All young people in custody are eligible to be assessed by Social Services as a child in need under s17 of the 1989 Act. Young people under 16, qualify for assistance automatically if they feel they have nowhere safe to live.⁹</p>
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What does the service do?

HMYOI Portland was a Young Offenders Institution for young men aged 15-18, and was made up of eight residential units with an operational capacity of 534. In 2002 Portland reopened as an institution holding only young adult offenders aged 18 to 21.

The Portland On-Side project run by Nacro worked in HMYOI Portland as part of a multi-disciplinary resettlement team. The On-Side project took a holistic view of resettlement, and each young person in the scheme was allocated a keyworker who co-ordinated their resettlement plan with them. Subsequently On-Side 2 takes the same approach for the older, more neglected group.

Current manager Lynn Punter praises this ‘through the gate’ assistance – that is, the same person providing continuing support to the young person in prison and after release. This approach is important because young people find it hard enough leaving prison without the additional challenges of building a new life. The focus of On-Side is enabling the needs and rights of the young men to be met.

As she explains: ‘We know from experience that you can make every appointment under the sun before they leave, but the chance of them turning up under their own steam is very slim. So we nudge them along, we pick them up at the gate and take them to their own appointment with probation, to the housing interview, and make sure that they are where they should be.’

Young people are only likely to respond to this sort of treatment if they trust the project worker waiting at the gate. That is why Onside placed great emphasis on establishing friendly and respectful relations with young people before their release. This clearly had a positive effect. As Ade, one of the young people involved, remarked of his relationship with one member of staff: ‘It’s a nice relationship, a good friendship. He offered me something in the beginning, which was fair enough – nobody else did – so I offered him a little bit back. It’s nice to stay in contact with him.’ Lynn agrees that personal rapport is vital: ‘It makes a big difference if you get to know the lad and he gets

⁸ UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, (1990) N80

⁹ Children Act 1989, Chapter 41.

to know you. Barriers come down. Otherwise, you're just another stranger asking questions, and he doesn't want to know.

After release, the project worker would keep in touch with the young person if he so wished, coaching him, if necessary, in domestic matters like budgeting and cooking, while preparing him for bigger things such as applying for college, or going for job interviews. 'I probably wouldn't have had a job if it weren't for him,' said one young person of his project worker. 'He talked to me for hours about how to go about it, how to fill in application forms, things like that. He's done quite a lot.'¹⁰

Participation in On-Side is voluntary and young men need to be fully committed to engaging with the project to achieve personal change; '*young offenders are challenged if workers do not feel that they are fully engaged or committed to the scheme*'.

The young person works with their keyworker as follows:

Stage	Work carried out
At five to six months prior to release	A needs analysis of the young men takes place. This covers a wide spectrum of issues such as rights based assistance in housing entitlement, family reparation, employment, drug and alcohol services.
At four months until release date	<p>At this stage the project works more directly with the young men, targeting those who are most vulnerable or identified as recidivists. The focus of the work at this stage is targeting those needs that are most critical from the perspective of the young person. The need most commonly identified at this point is appropriate housing.</p> <p>A resettlement package is developed with the young men's involvement. A typical package might include assisting the young men to enrol in college courses, finding employment, temporary licenses. The resettlement package has to be agreed to by the individual young person.</p>
Aftercare	Wherever the young men move to on release they get a comprehensive aftercare

¹⁰ Nacro's resettlement programme for young people leaving Portland Young Offender Institution, Onside – Onside 2 – Milestones (2006)

	<p>service. In the first couple of weeks keyworkers are <i>'a shoulder to lean on for young offenders, then there is a gradual decline from twice a week to once a week, then once a month.'</i></p> <p>The team continue to stay in touch with the young person through probation services and if the young person re-offends, workers will also accompany them to court.</p>
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Part of the success of On-Side is based on the project's effective joint working with probation services. By working co-operatively across agencies, On Side workers can ensure the needs and rights of the young person are met.

One example of this in practice is that in probation review meetings, the workers are well placed to make a significant contribution to ensure the probation services each young person receives are appropriate to their needs.

Outcomes

Portland On-side Project was evaluated by Aikita-Reena Solanki for Nacro.¹¹ The evaluation found that:

- In order to reduce re-offending a holistic approach is needed
- The project was proactive, and tailored to meet individuals' needs
- The keyworker's role was found to be positive, with a re-offending rate of 73% for those who did not maintain contact with their keyworker and a 39% reoffending rate in young men who remained in contact with their keyworker and/or received post release support
- The re-offending rate of young men in the study was found to be 28% less than the national reconviction rate.

A second evaluation has been carried out by Middlesex University. The evaluation is participant led with participants in the On-Side programme over a six month period interviewed prior to release and then again six months post release.

From these interviews it is apparent that the project is doing something positive for the young men. *'It gives them someone they can talk to for a few months prior to release and post release'* says the researcher, Susannah X. The evaluation has also found that when the young men are in prison they see On Side staff as friends who are willing to fight their corner in sharp contrast to uniformed prison staff.

¹¹ Solanki, A.(2003) The On-Side Project, Summary of findings from the evaluation. *Research Briefing, 4, Nacro, London.*

Susannah points out that looking at a reduction in re-offending rates does not necessarily communicate the range of ways in which young men benefit from the service. On Side is working with the most vulnerable young men in Portland who have chaotic lifestyles and multiple areas of need; many of the young men feel that this is the first time they have had someone on their side and recall surprisingly little contact with other agencies.

An announced inspection by the prison service in July 2004, praised the resettlement work carried out at Portland, commenting on the well developed service. The low percentage of young people leaving Portland without housing was highlighted '*Only 4% of young prisoners were released to no fixed abode*¹² as was awareness of resettlement services among young people.

How does the service adopt a rights based and participative approach?

- Young men are treated as individuals, and each programme of aftercare is tailored to the individual's needs;
- The keyworker approach means that multiple needs can be attended to with a view to effective resettlement in the community;
- The project's working structure is supported by research evidence; the importance of a research base to practice is highlighted in the International Rules for Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty¹³. On Side is used as a model for setting up resettlement programme and therefore disseminates and shares good practice within the youth justice system;
- Project workers carry out rights based work with the young men including giving housing and benefits advice and advocating where necessary e.g. probation review meetings;
- All work is carried out with the agreement of the individual with each young man having input to their own resettlement programme;
- Evaluations of the project have been participant led;
- Practice follows the principles laid out in human rights legislation relevant to young offenders.

Other Work

¹² July 2004, Announced Inspection, Portland HMYOI

¹³ UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, (1990), N79

- Manchester published a booklet for young offenders leaving the secure estate for use with their probation worker.