



Youth resettlement – final report into work in the community

A thematic inspection by
HM Inspectorate of Probation and
HM Inspectorate of Prisons

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Please note that throughout the report the names in the practice examples have been changed to protect the individual's identity.

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Foreword

Every year, hundreds of children are released from custody into the community, many of them with very profound needs for support and follow-up care. In 2015, we published a report into youth resettlement that showed poor outcomes for children leaving custody. We made recommendations to improve resettlement work and help a group of children who are arguably among the most disadvantaged. The Youth Justice Board has had this as a priority. It was therefore immensely disappointing to find that many of the same issues and barriers to successful resettlement remain.

This current inspection looked at the experience of 50 children who were released between October 2018 and April 2019 from all five young offender institutions (YOIs). We published an interim report in August 2019 which looked at the work carried out with children while they were in custody and reported mainly on the work by custodial staff. This final report looks again at the custodial phase but concentrates on the work carried out by the external agencies to prepare the children for release. We also look at how the children progressed in the first three months after release in the community. To get a full picture of the work by YOIs and Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), the interim report forms an integral part of understanding the overall experience of children and young people and resettlement.

The detention and training order is a single sentence with the first half served in custody and the second half in the community. In much the same way as we plan for children moving from one school to another or from home to university, resettlement work should take into account what has already happened and where the child is trying to get to in life. Sadly, this was not what we found in many cases. With some exceptions, the first half, the custodial element, concentrated on containment, behaviour management and constructive use of time in custody. The second half, the community element, often did not build upon, or worse ignored, what had taken place in custody. With a few notable exceptions, the work was not effective and the children's outcomes were not good. Three months after release, 10 of the 50 young people we followed had already been convicted of a further offence and half were under police investigation. Six had gone missing.

While good resettlement work does not guarantee that children will do well, it does offer the best opportunity for them to change and become productive members of their communities. We saw some examples of excellent resettlement work that offered children the best opportunities to change their lives and successfully reintegrate into their communities. In these cases, internal and external agencies had worked together across agency boundaries to ensure that accommodation, education, training and employment, and support services were in place on release. Too often, however, the work that we saw was process-oriented and passive, and was often left until too late for it to be effective.

Within custody, agencies did not always work well together or coordinate their interventions and did not ensure that provision was in place to

continue to deliver support on release. The work was focused on filling the child's time in custody, rather than preparing him¹ to start a different way of life in the community. At the same time, too often, external agencies did not begin planning from the outset and left organising interventions until after release, so that the child was waiting for services to begin. In too many cases, the child did not have employment, training or education to go out to and mental health and substance misuse support was rarely in place on the day of release.

Lack of timely provision of suitable and safe accommodation remained a significant problem for a small number of children. This problem is not new; we highlighted it in 2015 and made a specific recommendation, and yet little has changed.



Justin Russell
HM Chief Inspector of Probation



Peter Clarke CVO OBE QPM
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

October 2019

¹ The male pronoun is used throughout and only boy's cases were inspected. Girls are not held in YOIs.

Contextual facts

National information	
35.7%	Reoffending rate for children sentenced to a youth referral order (April 2016 to March 2017) ²
64.6%	Reoffending rate for children sentenced to custody (April 2016 to March 2017)
73%	Percentage of the youth custody population (under-18s only) imprisoned in young offender institutions
37%	Percentage of the youth custody population (under-18s only) imprisoned 50 miles or more from home ³
552	Number of releases from custody of 15–17-year-olds (April 2018 to March 2019) ⁴

Of the 50 young people released from five YOIs that we tracked until three months after release ⁵	
10	Convicted of a further offence
Half	Subject to 'released under investigation'
10	Formally breached their licence conditions
8	Individual cases with a clearly identified disability, most frequently a learning difficulty
10	Young people turned 18 during the custodial phase of the sentence
29	Children were currently, or had previously been, looked after by the local authority
14	Children had been identified as involved in county lines
22	Children were identified as being involved in gangs
21	Parents or carers attended resettlement planning meetings

There is no reliable data available about the accommodation or education, training and employment (ETE) outcomes for children leaving custody. Information is collected by the Youth Justice Board but there are significant issues with the reliability of both sets of data. Work is being carried out to address the issues in order to have better quality in future. We were also unable to obtain national data about breach or recall rates for children leaving custody.

² Ministry of Justice. (2019). *Youth Justice Statistics 2017 to 2018* supplementary tables.

³ Ministry of Justice. (2019). *Youth Custody Report: May 2019*. (Accessed 29 July 2019)

⁴ Ministry of Justice. (2019). *Youth Justice Statistics: 2017 to 2018*. (Accessed 29 July 2019)

⁵ Ministry of Justice. (2019). *Offender Management statistics quarterly: January to March 2019*. (Accessed 29 July 2019)

Executive summary

Inspectors from HMI Prisons and HMI Probation followed a sample of 50 young people released from all five YOIs (10 from each) during the period October 2018 to March 2019. We tracked work undertaken with these children in custody and up to three months after release. We interviewed YOT and YOI workers involved in these cases and had 36 meetings with the children themselves in custody and 16 interviews with them in the community after release.

In 2015, outcomes for most children leaving custody were poor. Little had changed in 2019. For a few children, cooperative work between agencies focused on the individual needs and risks of the child. This work began at an early stage, was pursued throughout custody into the community and provided immediately on release, and had resulted in the child being in a good position to turn their lives around. For most, however, this was not the case.

In too many cases, children were not being effectively prepared to re-enter their communities and start to live productive and safe law-abiding lives. The services that they needed on release were often not in place to help them resettle, and the risks that they posed were not always sufficiently managed in their early days in the community.

The timely provision of safe and suitable accommodation remained problematic for a small number of children, some of whom did not know where they were going to live until the day of release or very shortly before. As a result, there were no other services in place for them when they left custody. Good work in mental health support during custody was often negated by a lack of attention to continuing support on release. Education, training or employment work rarely led to purposeful activity in the community, or contributed to helping the child consider, meaningfully, his future possibilities.

The risks that the child posed to other people once back in the community – to families and children, and to the wider public – were too often not sufficiently considered during custody, leaving some people at risk of harm. Additionally, the risk to the children themselves was not always fully considered and they were left vulnerable to being drawn back into unsafe behaviour.

The children who became 18 years old while serving a custodial sentence, and were transferred to adult offending services, faced further difficulties with the loss of their rights to children's services and the different expectations placed on them, often with little preparation or understanding, by the new agencies.

Key findings from our case reviews and fieldwork interviews

- Criminal justice outcomes were poor. Three months after release, ten of our sample of fifty had already been convicted of a further offence and over half were under police investigation. Ten had been breached and six had gone missing
- After release, thirty of the young people returned to live with their families; eleven returned to local authority accommodation and seven went to live in supported accommodation, often unregulated. Some children were not told where they would be living, until just days before release and we only found one case where a looked after child returned to the accommodation they were in before sentence
- There was very little join up of education and training in custody and after release. Very few YOT education and training workers visited the child in custody and education or training began immediately after release for only 11 of the 50 cases we inspected
- Over 60 per cent of cases had an identified health need in custody but in only 26 per cent of cases was there evidence that the YOT provided support or intervention for these needs after release

- While substance misuse was identified as an issue while the young person was in custody in three quarters of the fifty cases, substance misuse work was only delivered after release in 44 per cent of the cases where it should have been
- Of the 50 cases we inspected, we judged that 37 had needed input from children's social care services but that only six of these had received adequate help with their resettlement needs
- Three-quarters of the case managers we interviewed told us that they had had no training in managing resettlement cases
- Of the 50 cases we inspected, 10 children became 18 years old while in custody and some of those were being transferred to adult probation services but in discussion with probation staff in the community it became apparent that none had been trained in this area of work.

Recommendations

We repeat the recommendations from the interim inspection report:

The Ministry of Justice, Department for Education and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government should:

1. provide central payment of accommodation retainers where necessary, to ensure that children have suitable accommodation in place, a minimum of one month prior to the earliest date of release.

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service should:

2. ensure that staff supervising those transitioning to adult offending services are trained to deliver services that are appropriate for the individual's age and maturity.

The Youth Justice Board should:

3. ensure that reliable data on outcomes for children leaving custody is available to inform improvements in service provision.

The Youth Custody Service should:

4. promote an understanding of effective resettlement work across all agencies and departments within YOIs
5. require all agencies and departments in YOIs to demonstrate effective and coordinated resettlement work
6. increase the range and availability of intervention programmes to meet the resettlement needs of the young people
7. define the role and tasks of casework teams and train casework staff accordingly
8. develop provision to enable children and young people to apply on-line for course and employment whilst still in custody.

The National Probation Service and the Youth Justice Board should:

9. negotiate and implement access to adult offending provision alongside the continuation of supervision by YOTs.

We make the additional further recommendations:

The Ministry of Justice, Department for Education and Ministry of Housing, Communities, the Welsh government Homeless Prevention and Local Government should:

1. develop a national network of community based accommodation suitable for children who pose the highest risk of harm to the public, and provide this accommodation on a regional basis
2. develop a national accommodation strategy for children released from custody.

The Home Office should:

3. review the 'released under investigation' processes.

The Youth Custody Service should:

4. increase the range and availability of intervention programmes to meet the resettlement needs of the young people.

The Youth Justice Board and the National Probation Service should:

5. review and strengthen the national transitions protocol to ensure that children are only transferred to adult services when it is demonstrably in their interests to do so.

YOTs should:

6. deliver their statutory responsibilities and ensure that they are actively and fully involved in resettlement cases throughout the sentence
7. advocate persistently and strongly on behalf of their cases in custody to ensure their needs are met
8. inform and involve young people in custody as soon as possible about the conditions they will be including on the young person's licence.

Introduction

1.1. What is resettlement?

In the context of youth offending, resettlement is the process by which children re-enter the community and settle back into their lives after a period in custody.

Custody disrupts children's lives. It involves separation from family and friends, interrupted education and, potentially, loss of accommodation, and fear and emotional distress. Resettlement can also be frightening, and it poses practical problems. For some, it is as traumatic as their entry into custody, so it needs to be planned and delivered carefully.

The resettlement of children from custody is a statutory responsibility of local authorities, in partnership with the police, the National Probation Service (NPS), health services and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Youth Custody Service (HMPPS YCS). In practice, the planning and coordination is carried out mainly by YOTs⁶ and the YOI casework teams.

In 2014, the Youth Justice Board (YJB) launched the *Seven Pathways to Resettlement* document,⁷ which identifies seven key areas of a young person's life and provides guidance on planning for resettlement in them. These pathways are accommodation, education, training and employment, health, substance misuse, families and finance, benefit and debt. The most recent YJB guidance on custody, *How to Make Resettlement Constructive*, introduced the five Cs on constructive resettlement. These are: Constructive, Co-Created, Customised, Consistent and Coordinated.

The document specifies that there should be *'one plan tailored to address the identified risks and needs of each young person, focussed from the outset on promoting a sustainable and safe return to the community'*.

YJB case management guidance (2019) on custody and resettlement⁸ outlines the roles and tasks for the YOI and the YOT as follows:

'If you are a case manager you have responsibility for overall case management of community and custodial orders, and joint accountability with the secure estate for sentence planning and delivery.'

Case managers are responsible for assessing the child's safety and wellbeing using AssetPlus. This must be a dynamic process, with re-assessments taking place at regular intervals during the sentence as well as following any changes in the child's circumstances. Service providers working in custody, such as health, learning and skills providers and substance misuse teams, will need to undertake assessments to be able to tailor their services to individual need. Secure settings caseworkers should jointly ensure that any new evidence collected from these assessments is incorporated into the AssetPlus assessment and that the case manager is notified of these changes'.

⁶ Services providing supervision and support to children who have offended are called a variety of names. In this report they are referred to as Youth Offending Teams (YOTs).

⁷ Youth Justice Board. (2019). *Seven pathways to resettlement*.

⁸ Youth Justice Board. (2019). *Custody and resettlement*: section 7 case management guidance.

The role of the YOI in resettlement

The YOI case managers⁹ work directly with the child to support him to achieve the targets in his sentence¹⁰ plan and prepare for release. They are the key contacts for the child's parents/carers, YOTs, external health and substance misuse workers and other professionals involved in the child's case.

Other agencies within the custodial estate work with the child according to the needs and risks he poses. These include health services (mental and physical), education, training or employment providers and substance misuse services. YJB case management guidance states:

'You will be responsible for overseeing the sentence plan in relation to the secure setting. This includes:

- *working with the child to help them understand and achieve the objectives and targets defined in their sentence plan*
- *ensuring that colleagues within the secure setting work together and information is shared effectively*

You will work together with the YOT case manager to make sure that the child's needs and risks are identified and that resources are effectively coordinated and managed to address them throughout the sentence. You will also be the key contact for the YOT, parents and carers, and all other relevant professionals involved in the child's case'.

The YOI case manager convenes the planning meetings that drive the resettlement process.

The role of the YOT¹¹ in resettlement

The YOT holds the responsibility for overall case management of custodial orders, and joint accountability with the secure estate for sentence planning and delivery. The YOT takes the primary responsibility for arranging services for, and on, release. This includes coordinating external health, education and children's social care provision.

In practice, this means jointly planning, and delivering, appropriate services and interventions to the child both in and out of custody.

When the child enters custody, the YOT provides a comprehensive assessment of the child to the YOI. This is known as the AssetPlus assessment. It should contain all necessary and appropriate information about the child, his circumstances, and his health and education. It should inform *all* planning, at least initially, and be used to consider and plan for resettlement needs and risks.

⁹ Across the five YOIs, the practitioners carrying out casework had various titles. In this report, they will be referred to as case managers, as that describes the role that they carry out.

¹⁰ Under a detention and training order, the sentence is served partly in custody and partly in the community. The plan should link the two, ensuring that the custodial phase is focused on preparing the child for a law-abiding life in the community.

¹¹ In this report, where we refer to the YOT, this includes whichever criminal justice agency is supervising the child. It may therefore refer to the National Probation Service or a Community Rehabilitation Company if that agency is the main supervising agency.

The role of children's social care services in resettlement

Any child who was in the care of, or accommodated or supported by, local authority children's social care services before entering custody continues to have a right to that support while in custody and on release.¹²

In practice, this means that children's social care services should continue to be involved while the child is in custody, and on release, and provide services such as accommodation.

In addition, if the child becomes homeless during the period of custody, the local authority has the same duties that it would have to a homeless child in the community.

Transition to adult services

If a child has his 18th birthday on, or before, the mid-point of a custodial sentence of less than 24 months, he may be transferred to adult offending services.

The transfer to adult services is not mandatory and should *'take into account the views of young people and what work needs to be undertaken to meet the aims of the sentence, to address likelihood of reoffending and risk of harm to others, and to manage vulnerability.'* Additionally, *'The decision to either retain the case within the YOT or transfer to the relevant probation provider will be recorded on the relevant agency database.'*¹³

Furthermore, the transition protocol specifies that the YOT should *'educate the young person and their family on the adult justice system and seek the views of the young person'*.

In practice, those who are eligible are often transferred to adult probation services while they are in custody. Supervision by adult services can be significantly different from that by youth offending services. Additionally, the individual may lose access to other children's services, such as children's social care, children's mental health and substance misuse services.

Where transition happens, professionals need to forge new relationships with young adults who have not always had good experiences of professional help. It is essential that new agencies meet with the child in custody, and start to engage him, before release.

Release on temporary licence (ROTL)

There are services and activities that need to be in place immediately on release in order to ensure that the child has the best opportunity to succeed in re-integrating into the community. Maintaining key relationships is also important for successful resettlement.

To help meet these objectives, a temporary release into the community on a licence may be useful, for example a visit to an accommodation placement or a meeting with an education provider. This can be done through ROTL.

In YOIs, children must serve half of their custodial period, or be 24 months from release, whichever is the later date, before becoming eligible for ROTL.

Resettlement work involves YOIs, YOTs and other agencies working together to prepare children in custody for their release. Successful resettlement work cannot be carried out by either custodial agencies or community agencies in isolation; they must work together from the beginning of the sentence.

HMI Prisons inspects YOIs and the work carried out in custody. HMI Probation inspects the work of YOTs, the primary agency working with children leaving custody. Joint inspection allows us to

¹² Department for Education. (2010). *Statutory guidance – Children Act 1989: former looked-after children in custody*.

¹³ Youth Justice Board, National Probation Service and HM Prisons and Probation Service. (2018). *Joint National Protocol for Transitions in England: Joint protocol for managing the cases of young people moving from Youth Offending Teams to Probation Services*.

examine how the agencies carry out joint resettlement work and the outcomes that it delivers for children.

1.2 Background

A joint thematic inspection led by HMI Probation in 2015 found that:

- outcomes for children leaving custody were poor. This included the lack of suitable accommodation being considered early enough and the failure to organise appropriate, realistic education, training and employment provision or constructive activities at the point of release
- resettlement work often started too late and work in the community was not proactive enough during the custodial stage.

Since that inspection, the youth custodial estate has been reorganised, and the Youth Custody Service, which oversees the estate, has been created. Youth justice services in the community have also continued to evolve differently and change how they deliver services across England and Wales. Anecdotal reports from YOIs and YOTs suggest that lack of accommodation and suitable ETE provision remains a stubborn problem. The recommendation from the 2015 inspection to improve accommodation provision was not implemented.

1.3 Aims and objectives

This inspection looked at operational resettlement work during the custodial phase of the sentence and in the three months after release. We inspected the cases of 50 children, 10 from each of the YOIs in England and Wales, who were close to being released to allow us to see the support and services that were in place in the community to help them successfully resettle. Where possible we met those children in custody and interviewed their case workers.

We then tracked the children into the community and looked at their progress in the three months following release. This included a follow up meeting with the child or young person, and their parents or carer. We also interviewed the case manager and other professionals working with the child. Our initial report concentrated on the work by custodial staff. This report looks at the work of external agencies and how they worked with other agencies in the community and linked to the child's experience in custody.

1.4 Report outline

This final report reviews the interim findings and reports on the work by both custodial staff and external agencies during custody. The first section of the report concerns outcomes on release and provides data and case studies.

The next section concentrates on resettlement work by YOTs but also includes findings about joint work.

Throughout this report, we reference findings from the 2015 inspection and the interim youth resettlement report published in August 2019.

2. Outcomes for Children Released from Custody

In the 2015 inspection of youth resettlement, we found that outcomes for children who were released from custody were poor. Their reoffending rates were high and their life chances were compromised. Little has changed.

2.1 Case studies and data

In our interim report for this inspection, we had already seen 10 cases of children who had been back in the community for three months. We were able to report on some good practice by YOIs and YOTs that had resulted in some of those children being able to resettle successfully.

Unfortunately, overall during the inspection of all the 50 cases, we saw few good practice examples. One case that did stand out was as follows:

Case study: successful resettlement work

Birmingham YOT/YOI Werrington

Muhammed had been in custody since he was 15; he was released six months before his 18th birthday. Prior to his sentence, there had been difficulties at home, not all of which were due to Muhammed. He had stopped going to education and had gravitated to an offending peer group in his community.

During the custodial period, the YOT spent a lot of time working with his parents to support his return home. On release, he was subject to an intensive supervision programme, which has 25 hours of contact per week, including Education, Training or Employment, that helped him settle back into his home and supported him to disassociate from his previous peer group.

During his licence, Muhammed had taken his construction skills card test to enable him to work on building sites. Three months after release he was still settled back with his family. He had become positively involved in his community and had begun to practise his religion again. He had disassociated himself from his offending peers, had complied fully with his YOT supervision and had not reoffended.

We saw a small number of cases where the child had settled back into the community and begun to make a new start as a result of their own efforts, rather than because of help from professionals. An example of this is given on the next page.

In this case, the child did not wait for the help of others and seems to have managed to resettle himself successfully; however, not all children are capable of this. Professional help was limited to following procedures and attending planning meetings. Where a child is involved with professional agencies, it is not, in our view, acceptable to merely process them through a system.

Case study: successful resettlement through the child's efforts alone

Andris was 17 years old when he was sentenced to six months in custody for possession of a knife and drugs.

Substance misuse and education were identified as issues in custody; English was his second language. He did not receive any interventions to address these issues. He did not achieve any functional skills qualifications, such as literacy or numeracy. Andris spent his time as a wing cleaner in the YOI.

Planning during the custodial phase took place but was perfunctory. We met Andris before his final meeting and he told us, "I've only had one meeting. There's nothing they can do in here. I need to do my functional skills, but I can't do that in three weeks" (the time he had left on his sentence). His mother, with whom he lived, had not been able to visit and had therefore not been able to help or take part in any resettlement plans.

On release, he returned to live at home and found his own employment. When we met him in the community, he had been working in a range of jobs, such as painting and decorating and gardening and had returned to college to complete his Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card. He was intending to work over the summer and was highly motivated to earn money; he wanted to have his own business and was saving to pursue this goal.

He told us: "I never want to go back to prison. I hated being locked up for long periods of time." He was adamant that he was going to make sure he never went back.

2.2 Reoffending and risk to others

Between April 2016 and March 2017, 724 children left custody in England and Wales. Official data shows nearly two-thirds (64.6 per cent) went on to reoffend in the 12 months after release.

Too many children in our sample had also become involved in offending again following release.

Of the 50 cases we inspected:



¹⁴ 'Released under investigation' started to become practice in 2017 and has largely replaced 'released on police bail'. In our sample of boys released from custody, a number still had matters outstanding that were subject to police investigation from before they were sentenced. Data from case summaries.

¹⁵ These were boys who were missing at the time of the follow-up in the community and for whom warrants had been issued. Data from case summaries.

Reoffending not only further damages the life chances of those carrying out the crime, it also harms their families and communities and creates victims, some of whom will suffer greatly.

We saw numerous examples of where there had been poor resettlement planning, with insufficient planning for accommodation and protection of the public.

Poor practice example: lack of preparation to manage high risk

Keiron was aged 17 and a Looked After Child when he was sentenced to custody and a sexual harm prevention order for sexual offences. He lost his accommodation at that point.

He did not attend education in custody and there were no interventions to address his sexual offending, although he was considered to continue to pose a risk to girls and young women.

Keiron had been advised that he could not return to his previous accommodation due to his offence. He had indicated that he did not want to return to live in the same area, as he felt this would lead to him re-offending. Keiron had no identified accommodation to return to at his pre-release meeting two weeks before release; children's social care services did not attend that meeting. The day before he was released, an address was found for him – at his previous placement.

Keiron turned 18 in custody and was transferred to adult services, although it was unclear why this was thought to be in his best interests, as he was entitled to continued support from children's social care services. He was transferred to the National Probation Service and met his new probation officer for the first time, two weeks before release, in the formal setting of the pre-release meeting. He was also transferred to a different social work team because of his age.

On release, his social worker picked him up but neither of them knew which probation office he needed to report to. He also did not know which police station he was due to report to under his sexual harm prevention order. During his sentence, Keiron had three different NPS officers, two YOT officers and two social workers. He was allocated and reallocated to two probation offices in different towns.

A month after release, Keiron was arrested for new sexual offences and was recalled to custody.

Poor practice example: lack of resettlement support

Otis was 18 years old and had previously been looked after. When we met him in custody, he told us his YOT worker had not attended his planning meetings, and he was due for release the following week and did not know where he would be living.

He had experienced previous mental health problems, but there had been no referral for ongoing community mental health support from either custody services or the YOT. On his release, there was no support for his mental health concerns, and as he was now 18 he would need to be referred to adult services.

A hostel placement was found for him and he made his own way there from custody. This was a general adult homeless hostel, with no specific support for younger people. He was allocated a YOT worker on his release, as his previous worker had been on long-term sick leave and the case had not been formally re-allocated. The case had been dealt with on a duty basis, with no worker having overall responsibility for Otis's case management and resettlement. As Otis was now 18, this worker transferred him to probation services.

While Otis was at the hostel, he received warnings for bringing in his girlfriend and young child. This information was shared with the child's social worker. It was also discovered that he was the father of two children, both of whom were subject to child protection procedures in two different local authorities. He was assessed as a potential risk to these children due to his offending history. He was also questioned about an assault on another resident.

Following his transfer to probation, he went missing and his current whereabouts were unknown. There was a warrant out for his arrest. There was no planning in place for his resettlement or for managing his risk to the public.

It is not possible to change the behaviour of a child unless they are ready and willing to change. It *is* possible for agencies to encourage change and to provide help to give children the best opportunity to change their behaviour themselves. When this is not successful initially, agencies need to continue to offer the opportunity.

A further barrier to successful resettlement is the time it is now taking for offences to be dealt with. Eighteen per cent of the cases inspected had matters outstanding, for which the child was still subject to police investigation, from before the time they received their custodial sentence.¹⁶ Many of these matters were of a serious nature. A key principle of the YJB constructive resettlement policy is to enable children to change their self-identities from a pro-criminal identity to that of more pro-social. It is likely to be incredibly difficult for a young person to change their self-identity if they are still subject to long-standing police investigations.

2.3 Pathways from offending and constructive resettlement

Accommodation

In 2015 we reported that poor accommodation arrangements on release too often broke down, resulting in temporary homelessness, unplanned moves, damage to family relationships and disruption in education or employment. We made a recommendation to improve the accommodation situation for the small number of children who were unable to live with their families.

In 2018-2019, nothing had changed. Most children still returned to their families from custody – 60 per cent in our sample – but for some of those who were unable to do so, the situation remained dire.

¹⁶ Data from case summaries.

Poor practice example: accommodation

Sean was 17 years old when he received a custodial sentence for a violent offence. On arrest, in a stolen van, he and others were found with a machete, ammonia and helmets. He had previous convictions, was suspected of gang involvement and was considered to pose a high risk of harm to others.

Sean had been accommodated by children's social care services prior to custody, as he was unable to live at home. It was clear that he continued to pose a high risk to the public and therefore his accommodation would need to be carefully chosen to enable this risk to be managed.

In spite of this Sean was without somewhere to live on the day he was released, although children's social care services had known he needed accommodation from the date of sentence, three months previously. The YOI refused to release him without an address.

An approved family member arrived at the YOI at 9am to pick him up. At 4pm, the YOI was advised that local authority accommodation had been found and he was released. Sean did not stay at the accommodation that night.

Eleven of the 50 boys in our sample returned to local authority accommodation, with another seven moving to independent accommodation. This included unregulated supportive accommodation and independent accommodation with support.¹⁷ In a number of the cases, neither the boys nor the YOT knew of the release address until very late in the sentence, often after the final pre-release meeting, and in a number of cases later than that. In the case cited above, the address was not available until the day of release. In most cases, this meant the children did not know where in the country they would be living on release, not just the specific address. Not only is this unsettling for the boys, many of whom have learning or cognitive difficulties that would make this far more challenging, but the YOTs that held the cases were unable to plan and make caretaking arrangements with the host YOT¹⁸ until the very last minute.

For Looked After Children, it is the statutory responsibility of the local authority to source suitable accommodation for that child. In our sample nearly one third of the boys were currently looked after.

Five of the cases in this inspection had their licence conditions supervised by a different YOT to their home area. We saw only one case in the sample where a looked after child returned to the accommodation they were in before sentence. A reluctance by local authorities to pay for accommodation in advance of it being used is leading to children not knowing where they will be living only weeks before release. A situation that could be avoided through a proper coordinated national scheme to pay retainers on suitable accommodation at least one month before release so that other services could then be put in place around this address.

¹⁷ Supportive accommodation refers to accommodation where there is staff present at the premises who provide support, sometimes this includes 24-hour cover. Independent accommodation refers to young people living on their own, but staff visiting them on a regular basis to provide support

¹⁸ Youth Justice Board (2018). National Protocol for case responsibility.

Poor practice: accommodation

Shane, a 17-year-old, was sentenced to 6 months for breach of his Youth Rehabilitation Order. He did know his release address two weeks before being released, but this was 60 miles from his home area. He always stated that he would comply with his licence conditions and live there for three months, but he would return to his home area when his licence ended.

He stayed at his accommodation, but did not want to apply for any college or work placements as he was not planning to stay in that area. So for the three months of his licence he did not engage in any employment or education activities. There was police intelligence that he had started to sell drugs in the new location where he was based. When the licence conditions ended he returned to his home town.

Ideally, smooth transition arrangements should be in place between the pre-custody home YOT and the new host YOT, but this is not possible when placements are found very late. This means the young person often does not meet their new host case manager until the day of release. However, we did find one example where this was done well:

Good practice example: ongoing accommodation support

Norfolk YOT/YOI Wetherby

Connor was 17 years old. He has complex mental health difficulties. He frequently self-harmed and he received a custodial sentence after assaulting professional staff who were trying to assist him following a significant self-harm incident.

Due to his difficulties, he was placed in supportive accommodation away from his home area. This was nearer to where his mother now resided, but away from his original home area. The placement was kept open for him following the custodial sentence, and the staff at the accommodation visited him in custody and attended his planning meetings. The staff picked him up on the day of release and took him to the YOT office, where he was supervised by the case manager who had supervised him before the custodial sentence.

2.4 Education, training and employment

Within YOIs there are education services and, separately, education and resettlement teams. YOTs have ETE workers and local authorities have duties to children to educate them. We have already described, in the interim report, that the services by the teams in YOIs were not integrated with each other or the outside world. More importantly, they did not treat children as individuals; they 'fitted them in' to what was available. We saw no examples of YOTs challenging this. Very few YOT ETE workers visited the child in custody or worked with them to start or maintain education or training. We reported a case in our interim report where that work had been done and had made a significant impact.

Children should be having their individual education needs met whilst in custody and have a suitable education, training or employment placement ready for them on their release.

Good practice example: education, training and employment work

Monmouthshire and Torfaen YOT/HMPYOI Parc

Jacob, 16 years old when sentenced, had received an 18-month detention and training order for robbery. Before committing the offence, Jacob had been groomed by adult males and, as a result, had become addicted to drugs. While on bail, he had been unable to live at home and had been placed in a supported accommodation project; he had no support from family.

Education, training or employment work during custody was effective. It started early on in Jacob's sentence. The YOT ETE worker liaised regularly and continuously with the training provider that Jacob had attended while on bail. Jacob wanted to work in construction and was also interested in cooking and personal fitness, and was fond of animals. The ETE worker put contingency plans in place in case the initial plan, of a place with the training provider, was not successful. The YOI facilitated release on temporary licence at an animal welfare sanctuary.

Jacob's education had been disrupted and he took full advantage of the courses that were offered to him in the YOI. He completed literacy and numeracy courses. His early release meant that he had been unable to take an exam for numeracy and the YOI was facilitating his return for a day to take the exam.

During his first week of release, Jacob started his construction placement.

Of the 50 cases we inspected, ETE provision began immediately on release in only 11 of cases. In most of these, the YOT provided the education on release through its Intensive Support Surveillance provision, and this acted as a bridge until other education or training became available. Whilst this is a practical response to meeting the education needs of the young person, it is not in the long term best interests and it is not sustainable. There were examples of boys completing their CSCS cards on release, which would enable them to work on building sites when they became 18. Had they been able to complete this while in custody, it could have reduced the amount of time that they spent with no employment.

The education outcomes for Looked After Children, especially those placed away from their home area was particularly bad, with none of those boys having an education placement ready for release.

We saw examples where the security restraints of the prison environment prevented boys having employment opportunities on release. One boy wanted to apply for an apprenticeship on his release, but was prevented from doing so because the application had to be made online. This is likely to be an increasing problem as more organisations move to a full online recruitment process, and prisoners do not have access to online resources for security reasons.

There was a lack of contingency planning in relation to education, training and employment, so that, if plans fell through at the last moment, the young person had no alternative plans in place. There were also problems if the young person was released from custody mid-way through a college year. If there was a lack of local alternative provision, the young person was left with no education or training provision in place for some time.

Poor practice example: provision of ETE services

Ronnie was aged 17 when he was sentenced to custody for assault. He turned 18 during his sentence. The assault was his first conviction, although he was known to be an active gang member.

At the initial planning meeting, it was appropriately agreed that he would be going back home to live with his parents, who were supporting him financially. The main issue identified for Ronnie was education and training; he had, at one time, been in college with good GCSE results but had dropped out.

The YOT attended all planning meetings and agreed with him a full and supportive programme for his release. This was to include a Connexions worker to support his entry into ETE.

Unfortunately, the planning did not result in actions during custody. His Connexions worker did not come into the YOI to meet him. On release, there was a delay in services being available. A college application was not completed until five weeks after release.

He was also without an income, and help to apply for benefits was not considered until it became problematic. This had an impact on his motivation.

Two months after release, Ronnie was arrested for a new offence of supplying drugs.

2.5 Health and wellbeing

There are internal and external services and support available available for children in custody. These services cannot undo the damage that a lifetime of difficulties has had on the children, but they should attempt to ensure that no further damage occurs to them as a result of lack of help and support.

In our sample, we found that 31 of cases had an identified health need in custody, and these needs were assessed during the custodial period, with a Comprehensive Health Assessment Tool (CHAT) assessment and a speech and language assessment being completed. However, in only 13 of the cases was there evidence that the YOT provided support or intervention in relation to these needs after release.

It is sometimes necessary to remove a child from the vicinity of his family and community. However, in the following example, there was no evidence that it was necessary to place the child so far from his family. Further, there was no evidence that, having decided to do so, staff made efforts to mitigate the impact of this by ensuring that he knew where he was going, that he had met the new workers who would support his mental health, and that arrangements were in place for meetings with his family.

Poor practice example: support for health and wellbeing post-release

Liam was 16 years old when he was sentenced to 14 months in custody.

During his life, he had been in and out of local authority care, and before custody had been in supported accommodation. He wanted to return to his home area, as he had been committed to his education there and wanted to be near his family and his community.

Liam was one of the children we saw whose accommodation was not found until just weeks before he was released. At the point where it seemed likely that he would be kept in custody past his early release date, entirely due to a lack of accommodation, the YOI involved an advocate (from the charity Barnardo's).

The accommodation found for him was in a different region of the country, miles away from his family, where he knew no one. There were no visits by the accommodation provider to meet Liam before his release.

Liam had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress syndrome following a car accident and had entered custody with a broken leg. He had struggled with his mental health for some time and had tied a ligature around his neck in his cell previously. When we met him in custody, however, he told us that he had started to feel much calmer. The YOI internal mental health services had been involved with Liam, and he felt that they had really helped him. He was seen weekly by them and this work was actively supported by his YOI case manager and the external YOT.

Unfortunately, no arrangements were in place to continue this work on release.

At the time of our inspection Liam had been missing for some time, was in breach of his licence and, accordingly, the court had issued a warrant for his arrest.

2.6 Substance misuse

Substance misuse was identified as an issue while the young person was in custody in 39 of the 50 cases we inspected. In most of these cases the young person was referred to the in-house custody services. Interventions were often hampered by regime difficulties that meant that boys could not be moved from their unit to attend appointments for substance misuse interventions

There were examples of effective provision by substance misuse workers from community teams. This included visiting the young people in custody and supporting them during the custodial period and then providing this support immediately on release.

Good practice example: ongoing substance misuse support

Monmouthshire and Torfaen/YOI Parc

Thomas was a 17-year-old serving an 18-month detention and training order. He had started using drugs after he had been groomed by some older males, and at the time of sentence he was addicted to crack cocaine. He wanted to give up drugs 'cold turkey' and was able to do this while in custody. The custodial substance misuse team kept an eye on him and supported him. He was also regularly visited by the community substance misuse team, who provided support and liaised with the custodial team

On release, information was shared and the community substance misuse team offered continuing support. At the time of the inspection, Thomas had been drug free for some time. He had not re-offended and was in a work placement.

There was evidence of information-sharing between the custodial estate providers and the community. But this, like so much resettlement planning, was made more challenging by not knowing the release address for the young person or where in the country it would be. This left referrals to local substance misuse providers being completed very late or not at all. In the inspected sample, it was found that substance misuse work was only delivered in 22 of the 50 cases where it should have been.

Poor practice example: substance misuse

Zac was an 18-year-old sentenced to eight months in custody for robbery offences. He had a long history of involvement with children's social care and had previously been looked after. He was informed of his release address two days before his release from custody.

As the new address was in a neighbouring authority, the home YOT kept the case, but there were delays in referring to the substance misuse team in the new area, and the home area's substance misuse team did not work across boundaries.

The new area's substance misuse team picked up the case two weeks after his release. Unfortunately, by that time, he was already using drugs and alcohol again. At the point of inspection, he had left his accommodation and was missing, with a warrant out for his arrest.

2.7 Families

Families are a key foundation for resettlement work, and in our inspection 30 of the 50 young people returned to live with their families. If the young person did not live with their family, their family could still be a key factor in providing resettlement support. However, in some cases, families can increase risk factors around offending and the young people released can present a risk to the families they return to.

Family members are invited to attend sentence planning meetings, but we found that only 21 family members attended the meetings. It is not clear why the majority did not attend, although distance to the YOI and child care of siblings may prevent attendance at these meetings. In 41 of the 50 cases, we did see evidence of YOTs trying to facilitate family attendance at the meetings and providing support for families while their young person was in custody.

Families were also important in collecting the young people from custody. This was done by family members in 27 of the 50 cases. In the majority of the remaining cases, this was done by YOT staff.

Good practice example: families

North Tyneside YOT/Wetherby Keppel YOI

Dylan was a 17-year-old sentenced to four months in custody for breach of his Youth Rehabilitation Order. He lived with grandparents, who had supported him and attended all resettlement planning meetings. They found his behaviour difficult to manage and he was undergoing an assessment for foetal alcohol syndrome. Both children's social care and the YOT had provided Dylan's grandparents with both emotional and practical support in managing his behaviour. They had drawn up a family plan with his grandparents and the YOT so that they could identify warning signs that Dylan's coping strategies were deteriorating, which placed him at greater risk of offending. There was a shared plan for his grandparents to implement if this occurred, which included behaviour strategies for them, and also informing YOT and children's social care.

However, not all work with families was so constructive.

Poor practice example: support for parents

Florin, aged 17, was from London. His family had been moved from London to the north of England for safety reasons due to his involvement with gang activity. He had been placed in the care of the local authority prior to custody, as he kept going missing from the family home. Following release, he had been recalled to custody due to his failure to comply with his licence.

There was no assessment from the YOT on file, so there were significant risks and vulnerabilities that were not explored or known, although information from the court on sentencing suggested that Florin had suffered some mental health problems and had made previous suicide attempts. When we spoke to him in custody, he seemed apathetic and resigned. He told us he 'had got used to being in prison'.

Florin's mother did not speak English and his father had health problems. Neither were able to visit him in custody.

Florin's father told us that he had been unable to get information from the YOI about how his son was doing due to communication difficulties. As a result, he had not visited his son, although he wanted to. None of the agencies working with Florin contacted or visited the family while Florin was in custody. Florin's father told us that he did not know there was help available and no-one offered any.

Overall, very little use was made of either ROTL or extended family visits to build and sustain relationships with families. Many relationships had become strained before the custodial sentence because of the young person's behaviour, and could take considerable effort to rebuild to a positive, nurturing relationship.

Of course, not all family relationships are positive for the young people. We saw examples where family members were involved in criminal behaviour and these relationships had the potential to increase the young person's risk of re-offending.

2.8 Finance, benefits and debt

With nearly one third of the inspected sample becoming 18 during the inspection period, finance, benefits and debt were increasingly important, as the young person would often be claiming benefits on release. Unfortunately, we saw little provision for this, with a number of cases taking an unnecessarily lengthy time for benefits to be sorted. For the limited number of cases that remained with the YOT after they were 18, the YOT often had little knowledge of how the benefits system worked for this group of people.

Finances were identified as an issue in custody for 28 of the 50 cases inspected, and in only 16 of these cases, was intervention and support provided to address these problems.

Poor practice example: finances

Michael was an 18-year-old male sentenced to two periods of four months in custody for offences of actual bodily harm. He was released to his brother's address. He did have a citizenship card on his release, which had been arranged by the YOI, but he did not have any other form of identification. The bank did not accept this ID, and it took another six weeks to sort out his ID for him so that he could open a bank account. Without this bank account, he was unable to sign on for Universal Credit, and so for the first six weeks after his release he was wholly reliant on his older brother for food and finances.

2.9 Conclusions and implications

In our 2015 inspection, we reported that resettlement outcomes for children were poor.

In our interim report we concluded that, where there had been effective resettlement work, children were doing well in the community. We recognised that good resettlement work does not guarantee that children will do well, but it does offer the best opportunity for them to change their offending behaviour and become productive members of their communities. Where we saw poor or non-existent resettlement work, it was clear that those children were at more risk of failing to make the changes that would improve their lives and those of others around them.

Unfortunately, we have seen very little good resettlement work. We saw processes in place, meetings attended and referrals made, but very little that was likely to make a difference to outcomes and, in some cases, a woeful neglect of the child's interests.

Outcomes for children leaving custody remained, with a few exceptions, poor.

3. Youth resettlement work by community agencies

3.1 The role of community agencies in resettlement

Introduction

During the custodial period, external agencies have a crucial role to play in planning and preparing a child for resettlement. This should be an active role. The YOT, in particular, should continue to actively work with the child during custody, not just to plan for release but to try to ensure that interventions and education within the YOI meet the specific needs and risks of the individual child. The YOT case manager should support and challenge the YOI case manager (and vice versa).

Work should also be taking place to ensure that the child remains linked to the outside world and that whatever services are necessary on leaving custody are in place at the point of release. Resettlement work does not start on release or just before. It starts at the date of sentence to custody and the child should know that efforts are on-going in the community to prepare for successful release. Construction of the timetable for the week of release should start at the initial planning meeting

The term 'seamless sentence' means that there is no 'stop-start'. The work is informed by the child's past and contributes towards his future. It is specific to each individual child – his needs and the risks he poses to himself and others.

3.2 Processes

When a child is sentenced to custody he is subject to a number of meetings where his sentence is planned and his resettlement needs are identified.¹⁹

The internal YOI casework team will coordinate the internal work undertaken during custody and be the link with the external world. Our interim report described the work of YOI casework teams and other agencies. The YOT case manager attends the planning and review meetings that take place at intervals during custody, depending on the length of the sentence.¹⁹ Other agencies involved with the resettlement of the child should also attend these meetings, as they are the main driver for helping the child to resettle successfully. These should include children's social care, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), community ETE services and provision, substance misuse services, mentoring and any other local services that can help the child. The YOT case manager is not a substitute for these other agencies.

Additionally, if the child will turn 18 during custody, adult services should also attend, *from the start of sentence*, to plan and prepare for release, but also to continue to work with the child during the custodial period. These are not just adult probation services; they may also include adult social care services, housing and leaving care services and others.

Resettlement work should not be confined to meetings. It should be active and progress *between* meetings. It is essential that those working with the child communicate and engage with him *outside* of formal meetings, as well as advocating for him inside the meetings. For some children,

¹⁹ See Annex A

²⁰ Youth Justice Board (2019). *Custody and resettlement: section 7 case management guidance*.

professional visits are all they receive. The YOT should promote and facilitate regular parental contact.

Finally, the YOT case manager, or the probation supervisor if the case has transitioned to adult services, is ultimately responsible for coordinating the provision on release.

What we found

3.3 Assessment

Assessments provided to the YOI by YOTs were largely of good enough quality. The YOIs did not always use this information, however. Where this was the case, there was rarely evidence that the YOT case managers, who had often carried out the assessment, ensured that the information was used in planning meetings. Individual needs were rarely taken into account when planning YOI interventions and the assessed risk of harm was rarely discussed.

YJAF, the database that is intended to facilitate information-sharing and exchange between YOIs and YOTs, was not fully in use across YOTs. We spoke to one YOT case manager who had never heard of it. In some cases, it had resulted in the organisations working to different assessments, and not all of those involved with the child knew all the detail of his circumstances.

3.4 Planning

Planning processes were in place in all of the YOIs. The planning meetings took place largely on time. Plans were produced and children undertook education and programmes in the establishment. There was good attendance at custodial meetings from YOT case managers; however, attendance by other YOT staff – ETE or CAMHS workers for example – was more sporadic. Attendance of parents was also irregular and not all YOTs had made efforts to help parents attend or be involved in the planning.

Some planning meetings were delayed or cut short because of problems with the regime that meant boys were late being taken to meetings. YOT staff had often travelled for long distances to attend these meetings and were frustrated when these meetings were cut short. We saw one planning meeting that took place on the unit through the door flap as it was not possible to move the boy to the appropriate meeting room.

In a small number of cases, we saw excellent planning by YOTs and hard work during the custodial phase to prepare for the child's release. However, a large proportion of the meetings were process-oriented. Too often, there was a lack of proper meaningful engagement and imaginative thought about what the child might benefit from and how this period might contribute to his future. There was little evidence of YOT case managers advocating for children, pushing for the right interventions, or following up on courses. This was surprising given that 80 per cent of YOT case managers interviewed told us that they felt confident to do so.

Both YOI and YOT staff were too often passive, accepting that the child had to 'fit in' to the YOI regime and that meaningful work could not really start until after release.

The plans that were produced were too often formulaic and resource-driven and aimed at filling the child's time in custody. They were put on the system following planning meetings and were not referred to again until the next planning meeting. They did not focus on resettlement. They were used to plan for the custodial phase and paid only lip service to preparation for and work after release.

The planning for resettlement too often started at the pre-release meeting, ten days before release, when it was too late to do any meaningful work. This meant that very often the planning actually took place *after* release in the first week in the community and involved the child meeting new people who then started another assessment.

In one of the YOIs, there was a proposal that it would be useful to have a specific release planning tool that would, at the initial planning meeting, immediately focus on the week after release. This would tell the young person who they were meeting with, where they were meeting and what time the meeting would take place, in a form that was easy to understand.

3.5 Interventions in custody

The term ‘interventions’ covers a wide variety of activities, both inside and outside the YOI, and can include getting to know a child and establishing a working relationship or working with the family or other agencies.

Arguably, the most important intervention by external agencies, for the children who need it, is the timely provision of suitable and safe accommodation. This is not within the gift of the YOT. Children’s social care services are responsible for providing accommodation to children who cannot live at home. Where young people turn 18 in custody, the picture is more complicated, but responsibility may still lie with children’s social care under leaving care legislation. Of the 50 cases we inspected, we judged that 37 had needed input from children’s social care services and that only six had received adequate help with their resettlement needs.

Work carried out by YOTs during the custodial phase seemed to depend on the particular YOT, rather than the needs or risks of the child. We defined interventions widely so, for instance, an accommodation intervention may have been facilitating ROTL to meet an accommodation provider in the community or helping with housing application forms. The interventions did not have to be formal sessions.

From the cases we reviewed, the percentages of children with whom YOTs worked effectively in custody, on relevant areas of need/risk were as follows:

	Financial situation	14 of the 50 cases
	Education, training and employment	18 of the 50 cases
	Substance misuse	10 of the 50 cases
	Physical and mental health	10 of the 50 cases
	Desistance	17 of the 50 cases
	Risk of harm	15 of the 50 cases

As we described in our interim report, the work carried out within the YOIs often did not meet the individual needs of the child, so it was disappointing that community agencies were not meeting them either. For some YOTs, the geographical distance is a barrier to working face-to-face with

children. We saw few efforts to work creatively in these circumstances. Ideally, both custodial and community agencies should work together to decide who is best placed to deliver work and then provide it. That should not be determined by rigid agency boundaries and agencies should challenge each other to provide better services to the child.

Good practice example: working together and challenge across agencies

Southend YOT/Cookham Wood YOI

Frank, 17 years old, received a four-month custodial sentence. He had been a looked after child since the age of 11, so accommodation needed to be found for him by children's social care.

The YOT and the YOI case managers worked together to provide Frank with the services he needed. The YOI case manager felt that there was not enough progress in finding accommodation and referred Frank's case to an independent advocate to enable him to challenge the decisions that were being made by children's social care services. When the YOI failed to provide education and health services, citing the short sentence as a reason, the YOT case manager challenged that decision and Frank received good educational provision. The YOT case manager wrote monthly letters to Frank encouraging him to use the opportunities and engage with education.

There are specific pre-release programmes provided while in custody; however, none of the children whose cases we inspected had attended one. With some exceptions, we found little delivered that was specifically focused on resettlement or aimed at preparing for release. There was little evidence of any YOT case managers advocating or pressing for interventions within the YOI that met individual resettlement needs.

We reviewed the work the YOT had done with the young people after their release on specific issues relevant to them. We found interventions had been delivered to the young person in the following areas:

	Accommodation	22 of the 50 cases
	Financial situation	16 of the 50 cases
	Education, training and employment	20 of the 50 cases
	Physical and mental health	6 of the 50 cases
	Substance misuse	15 of the 50 cases

3.6 On release

Where children did not have suitable and safe accommodation arranged within a reasonable period prior to release, it affected the availability of the other support services. Even where these were

available, children needed time to establish working relationships. One told us that he sometimes felt “like a parcel”. We saw no discussion or even recognition of the emotional impact of being sent to new accommodation and knowing no-one. The children were expected to accept the situation. The possibility of loneliness had not featured in any of the plans we inspected or in the service delivery on release.

YOT staff and other community agency staff worked with children in much the same way that they supervised children who were on community orders. We did not see any specific work that considered the possible trauma caused by custody.

Few children were able to start counselling immediately, where it was relevant, or access substance misuse support. Of the children who were going out to new accommodation, we saw none who had met the accommodation staff before release and none whose ROTL had been used to prepare for release. Too many YOTs started the planning for services during the week after release.

The number of children beginning or accessing ETE provision in the week of release was low. Of the cases we inspected, only 11 of the children had started ETE within the week of release. Some of the ETE was part of YOT provision rather than mainstream education or employment training programmes, and was therefore unlikely to lead to college or work. Not all was of good quality or maintained for more than a few weeks.

There was little continuation or follow-up of the work that had been carried out in custody. Certificates and qualifications were sometimes held on file, but little notice appeared to be taken of them. The work carried out in custody was in a vacuum and did not contribute to a continuous journey of education or training.

Too often, useful work in custody, particularly with mental health support, was not continued. The gap in service in the initial week of release demotivated children who had focused on release and thought that things would be different – they were not.

There were examples where YOTs were trying to link the custodial and community sentences. In Derby, there was a custody scrutiny panel, which oversaw all custodial sentences to ensure appropriate interventions were in place both in custody and in the community. There was a custody officer on this panel who was able to access prison information and was therefore able to update the panel in real time and share information with the custodial estate.

Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL)

In our interim report, we described the lack of purposeful ROTL. With the exception of three cases, YOTs did not play any part in the provision of ROTL in the cases we inspected. Both YOI and YOT staff were passive participants in a process. In one case we saw, the YOT had recorded that the boy had not applied for ROTL, and this ‘saved the paperwork’ The child was told when he was eligible and little else happened. There was no recognition that ROTL should play an important part in preparing a child for release. It was merely viewed as one of a number of things that needed to be mentioned to the child. It was raised in the planning meeting and then largely forgotten about unless the child mentioned it. Whether it happened at all depended on the culture within the YOI; it was not always clear what the decision to allow ROTL was based on.

3.7 Licence conditions

Licence conditions were generally appropriate and suitable to manage risk factors. We saw some creative use of curfews and some very tailored licence conditions to meet the individual needs of the child. However, the sharing of these was left to the pre-discharge meetings, which was too late to start the discussion. We witnessed some conflict when children were told that they were to be subject to more stringent conditions than they had been led to believe. This occasionally resulted in poor behaviour in the prison.

As with all resettlement, discussion about licence conditions should start at the beginning of the sentence and continue throughout to take account of changing circumstances.

3.8 Transition

Of the 50 cases we inspected, 10 children became 18 years old while in custody and some of those were being transferred to adult probation services. These children became subject to extended supervision as a result of the *Offender Rehabilitation Act (2014)*²¹

In our interim report, we described good practice where the transition had begun at an early stage. A probation supervisor had come into the YOI to meet the child, and services were in place for release. In some cases, practice was poor, however, and in discussion with probation staff in the community it became apparent that none had been trained in this area of work.

Sentence planning processes for children are significantly different from those for adults, and some of the probation staff we met did not know the difference. They had therefore failed to carry out even the basics, such as attending planning meetings. In only five of the relevant cases had probation staff attended meetings in custody.

Additionally, some children retain rights to leaving care services, from children's social care with which probation staff were less familiar. Of most significance too, is that children do not become adults overnight and expectations of them must take that into account. This had not always happened, leaving children at risk of failing to comply and risking being breached and returned to custody. We highlighted the following case in the interim report as an example of the problems caused by YOI health systems not being well integrated and failing to provide continuity in the community. It also highlights questions about the benefits of transferring to adult services.

²¹ The *Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014* introduced extended supervision for all adults subject to a short prison sentence. It applied to young people if they turn 18 while in custody. These people will be subject to supervision for 12 months from release.

Poor practice example: transfer to adult probation services

Aled turned 18 the day before he was released. He had been serving an eight-month sentence for threats to his mother and to the police. Prior to custody, he had been on bail, in supported accommodation, as he had not been able to go home. He had a long history of mental health problems and had made two suicide attempts, for which he was hospitalised. The risk that he posed to other people was also bound up with his mental health.

The YOT had provided enhanced case management during custody, providing fortnightly visits to him.

On release, Aled was assigned to the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), but because of increasing risk had to be reassigned to the NPS. The YOT had agreed to stay in contact with the probation service for the duration of his licence to provide additional support.

When Aled left custody on New Year's Eve, there was no mental health support in place for him. This was only picked up, by his supervising officer, several weeks later when his mental health started to deteriorate and he again made threats of violence. The officer had not been aware of the referral to mental health services.

It was unclear to us why it was necessary to transfer Aled to adult agencies and, while the supervising officers from the CRC, NPS and YOT worked collaboratively, we saw no benefit to Aled.

It was not always evident that the decision to transfer the child to adult services was necessary or in the best interests of the child as the national guidance²² dictates. Nor did we see any recording of the decision-making process, which again is stipulated in the guidance. There were 15 young people in our sample who turned 18 and, of those, most were transferred to probation services.

²² Youth Justice Board, National Probation Service and HM Prisons and Probation Service. (2018). *Joint National Protocol for Transitions in England Joint protocol for managing the cases of young people moving from Youth Offending Teams to Probation Services*.

Poor practice example: transition to adult services

Oliver had been sentenced, aged 17, to a two-year detention and training order for sexual offences. He had no previous convictions or involvement with any professional services. Oliver was assessed as being vulnerable. He had been managed on a special wing in the YOI for vulnerable children. He was a small, quiet boy who presented as very anxious.

From the beginning of his sentence, Oliver and his family had been told that he would return home and resettlement plans were made accordingly.

Oliver became 18 years old six months before release and was transferred to adult probation services. There was no allocated probation officer, so plans continued as before. His YOI case manager had asked the YOT on several occasions if it was necessary to transfer him to adult services, as she felt he would be more safely and effectively managed by the YOT and children's social care services. She was never advised of the reason for his transfer.

When a probation officer was finally allocated, the decision was taken that Oliver could not return home. He and his family were advised of this, at his first meeting with his probation officer. This was a month before he was due to leave the YOI, and 10 months after the planning started.

When we spoke to Oliver, it was clear that he did not know what approved premises were. He was anxious about going there and had asked for more information but had not heard anything.

YOI staff were frustrated by the poor transition work of the outside agencies and concerned for Oliver's safety in approved premises. We shared their concerns.

Caretaking arrangements

In addition to cases that were transitioned to adult services, there were a number of cases that were caretaken by other YOTs. In line with the national protocol, cases that are placed in other areas remain supervised by their original YOT (home) but are seen by the YOT where they are placed (host).

Very often, due to the late notification of the placements, planning arrangements by the new YOT were late, and the host YOT may not always have the same provisions and services as the home YOT. In addition, the child will need to form a working relationship with a new worker, whom he may never have met before. They will often be in an area where they do not know anyone. However, within the five cases within our sample that were caretaken by another YOT, there were examples of good communication and information-sharing.

3.9 Staff knowledge and capacity

In our interim report for this inspection, we described a lack of understanding by YOIs about the role of casework and a lack of training for the case managers themselves.

In YOTs, 74 per cent of the case managers we interviewed told us that they had had no training in managing resettlement cases. On more than one occasion, YOT staff told us that this was the first custodial case that they had managed and that they were learning as they went along. This was particularly true of probation staff, who were in a worse position as they did not have more experienced colleagues to refer to. We do not consider this to be acceptable, given the situation of this group of children. One probation area refused to accept transfer of these cases as the staff had been given no training on how to manage the children.

3.10 Joint work

In the 2015 inspection, we reported that the work across departments and agencies within the YOIs was not coordinated. This remains the case in 2019, and we describe this in more detail in the interim report. This impacts on the work that external agencies do, as they do not always know what is happening between meetings, and sometimes not even then.

We saw little evidence of the work in custody being continued or built on during the licence period. YOT case managers were not building on or using the work that had been completed in custody, through a combination of lack of sufficient knowledge of the content and a mistaken understanding that this had already been done and did not need revisiting.

For some children, there are several agencies in the community that also need to work together – the YOT, children’s social care, CAMHS, probation services – and this can replicate the lack of integration in custody, exacerbating the possibility of gaps or duplication of work.

The forum to ensure that services are coordinated, and that each knows the individual needs and risks of the child, is the casework planning meetings and we have already reported that these are not always well attended.

We saw some excellent work, which we have highlighted, where agencies worked well together and interventions and approaches were coordinated and integrated; this benefited the child. However, we judged however, that agencies worked well together to meet resettlement needs in only 24 per cent of cases.

4. Information-sharing/joint work

Information-sharing and liaison are essential for the joint work needed to ensure effective resettlement. The various agencies working with children in custody each have their own databases, as do the YOIs. This can be a barrier to information exchange and joint work.

In 2015, we reported that:

'Information-sharing across departments and agencies left a lot to be desired... In custody, health services were often using different systems (or different parts of the same system) and did not always share information consistently. Education was not always joined up well with the internal ETE advisors. None of these services were routinely working within the sentence planning framework.

Information-sharing between custody and the external world was... less consistent in the YOIs. Parents/carers were not always aware of what was happening, able to influence or be involved in plans for successful resettlement. Too often information on offence focused work carried out in custody was either not received by the YOT or was too late to enable them to use it constructively. This was also true of ETE and health information'.

Information-sharing has improved since the 2015 inspection; the YOT and YOI had liaised in 95 per cent of the cases during custody, although YOT case managers were not always clear about the content of interventions and/or education.

In the interim report it was identified that resettlement work was not aided by the numerous different databases and recording systems used by the professionals working with a child. Recording by the various agencies was inconsistent, fragmented, uncoordinated and not available to all professionals working with the child. Some agencies or professionals were working without a full understanding of the circumstances of the child and, therefore, not fully taking into account his risks or needs.

We described the problems with YJAF, the information system designed to bridge the divide between the YOI and YOTs, and highlighted a case that demonstrated the potential consequences of information from the community not being provided promptly to the YOI. The case is shown again below:

Poor practice example: potential consequence of lack of connectivity

Thomas, aged 17, was sentenced to four months in custody. In the months before his sentence, he had been suffering from seizures, which had resulted in him going to hospital twice. The problem had not been diagnosed at the point that he went into custody.

As a result of problems with YJAF, the YOI did not have an AssetPlus assessment until two days after he arrived. No-one in the YOI was therefore aware that he was having seizures until then. Prompt action was taken by the YOI when they received the information, and, fortunately, Thomas had not been ill in the interim (although he did have a seizure later on, while still in custody).

We also highlighted in that report the consequences of failing to provide information the other way, from custody to community on release. That example is shown again below:

Poor practice example: YOI health resettlement work

Rhys, 17, received an eight-month custodial sentence. He was initially without anywhere to live; however, late into his sentence his father agreed that he could live with him.

During his sentence, he became more and more anxious and started to refuse to leave his cell. He was referred to mental health services and requested medication but was refused.

Rhys was released over the Christmas period, and when he met with the YOT drugs worker, he revealed to her that he had been given a two-week supply of anti-depressants. Neither his father nor any of the professionals working with him were aware of this and there was no appointment in place for him to see a GP.

We also reported that there is a significant amount of useful data recorded by YOTs and YOIs, which is not collated effectively by any agency currently. Without this strategic information, which is readily available, it is difficult to direct resources effectively and improve services. For example, the timely provision of suitable, safe and sustainable accommodation remains, anecdotally, a stubborn problem for a small number of children. Similarly, there is insufficient provision of high-quality ETE. Neither of these issues is new, and yet there are no reliable data to prove, or disprove, the reality or extent of either.

Findings on information-sharing

Resettlement work was hindered by the existence of numerous databases and different recording systems used by the professionals working with a child. The recording by the various agencies was inconsistent, fragmented, uncoordinated and not available to all of the professionals involved. Some agencies or professionals were working without a full understanding of the circumstances of the child, and were therefore not fully taking into account his risks or needs. It was not acceptable that reliance on YJAF made the YOIs vulnerable to missing or late information that could be crucial for children entering custody.

The lack of collated data to inform service provision was disappointing, given the longstanding knowledge of accommodation and ETE issues within resettlement.

5. Conclusions and implications

In our interim report, we concluded that resettlement work was not well integrated within the YOIs and did not focus on resettlement. The planning meetings, which should have been the forum for coordination of resettlement work, were not well attended by professionals other than the case managers, their input was passive and concentrated on the time in custody. Interventions were not individualised. With a few notable exceptions, processes were being followed without any real benefit to the children on the receiving end of them. Sadly, that is also true of external agencies.

Whilst there was little work completed with the boys in custody, when it did take place, this was not re-inforced or developed once he was in the community. There was a chasm between the custodial and the community elements of the sentence.

At a time of change for the young people, as they left custody to return to the community, there were the additional changes as cases were transferred between agencies, from youth to adult services, and caretaking arrangements from different YOTs, who had little time to prepare for the young person's arrival, due to late notice of accommodation.

Accommodation provision was particularly difficult for the looked after children, with late notification of placements hampering resettlement planning.

There was little ETE provision in place for the boys leaving custody. Very often YOT's were doing their best to fill the gaps in mainstream provision for the boys they were supervising. For those where it was applicable, there were delays in securing benefits.

In the majority of cases, there was no shortage of hard work or commitment to the wellbeing of children by both internal and external staff; however, it was largely ineffective. Meetings are held, plans are made, time is filled; but the benefit to the child is negligible.

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Annex 1: Glossary

Accredited programme	A programme of work delivered to offenders in groups or individually through a requirement in a community order or a suspended sentence order, or part of a custodial sentence or a condition in a prison licence. Accredited programmes are accredited by the Correctional Services Accredited Panel as being effective in reducing the likelihood of reoffending
AssetPlus	Assessment and planning framework developed by the Youth Justice Board for work with children who have offended, or are at risk of offending, that reflects current research and understanding of what works with children.
Case manager	The YOI practitioner who holds lead responsibility for managing the case of a child in custody or under YOT supervision in the community
CRC	Community Rehabilitation Company
ETE	Education, training and employment: work to improve an individual's learning, and to increase their employment prospects
HMPPS	Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS): the single agency responsible for both prisons and probation services. See note below on NOMS.
Intervention	The work undertaken directly with the child intended to help them change their behaviour.
Licence	The conditions applied to a person for a fixed period following release from custody.
Looked after child	A child in the care of the local authority, as a result of a court order or a voluntary agreement with the parents.
MAPPA	Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements: where probation, police, prison and other agencies work together locally to manage offenders who pose a higher risk of harm to others. Level 1 is ordinary agency management where the risks posed by the offender can be managed by the agency responsible for the supervision or case management of the offender. This compares with levels 2 and 3, which require active multi-agency management.
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
nDelius	National Delius: the approved case management system used by the NPS and CRCs in England and Wales.
p Nomis	The database used by the prison service.
NPS	National Probation Service: a single national service that came into being in June 2014. Its role is to deliver services to courts and to manage specific groups of

	offenders, including those presenting a high or very high risk of serious harm and those subject to MAPPA
Outcomes	The ultimate result as opposed to the process to reach the result.
Personal officers	YOI staff who are the key contact for the child.
Providers	Providers deliver a service or input commissioned by and provided under contract to the NPS or CRC. This includes the staff and services provided under the contract, even when they are integrated or located within the NPS or CRC.
Resettlement	Returning into the community after time in custody
ROTL	Release on temporary licence: facilitates time in the community prior to release. It should be used as an aid to successful resettlement.
SHPO	A Sexual Harm Prevention Order is an order imposed by a magistrates or Crown Court on an individual who is considered to pose a risk of sexual harm to either the general public or a certain group of people or individual person(s). SHPOs replace the previous similar order referred to as a Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO).
Team around the child	The team around the child approach brings together a range of different practitioners to support an individual child or young person and their family. It places the emphasis firmly on the needs and strengths of the child, rather than on organisations or service providers.
Transition	The move from children's offending services to adult offending services
YCS	Youth Custody Service
YJAF	Youth Justice Application Framework: an online platform created for YOTs and Secure Estates to communicate effectively (including sharing AssetPlus, case diary entries, etc) and download formal documents and templates from the YJB that are not suitable for sharing with the wider public.
YJB	Youth Justice Board: a government body responsible for monitoring and advising ministers on the effectiveness of the youth justice system. Providers of grants and guidance to the youth offending teams
YOT	Youth offending team: teams/services based in the community working with children who have offended.
YOI	Young offenders institution: custodial facility for 15–18-year-olds.

Annex 2: Methodology

The fieldwork for the custodial phase of this thematic inspection was carried out during the annual inspections, by HMI Prisons, of the five YOIs: HMPYOIs Parc, Cookham Wood, Feltham, Werrington and Wetherby & Keppel, from October 2018 to March 2019.

During fieldwork, we examined a sample of cases across the five sites. Cases were selected for their proximity to release. HMI Probation inspectors carried out case reviews and interviewed YOI case managers and children, where possible. HM Prisons inspectors provided information about resettlement work in health and ETE.

The YOI fieldwork consisted of:

- 50 case reviews
- 39 interviews with YOI case managers
- 5 meetings with YOI heads of casework
- 36 meetings with children.

Case profile

- All male and sentenced to detention and training orders
- 10 (20 per cent) children were held in a Welsh YOI
- 47 (96 per cent) identified English as their first language
- 28 (57 per cent) were white
- 29 (58 per cent) were either currently or previously looked after by a local authority.

There were indicators of:

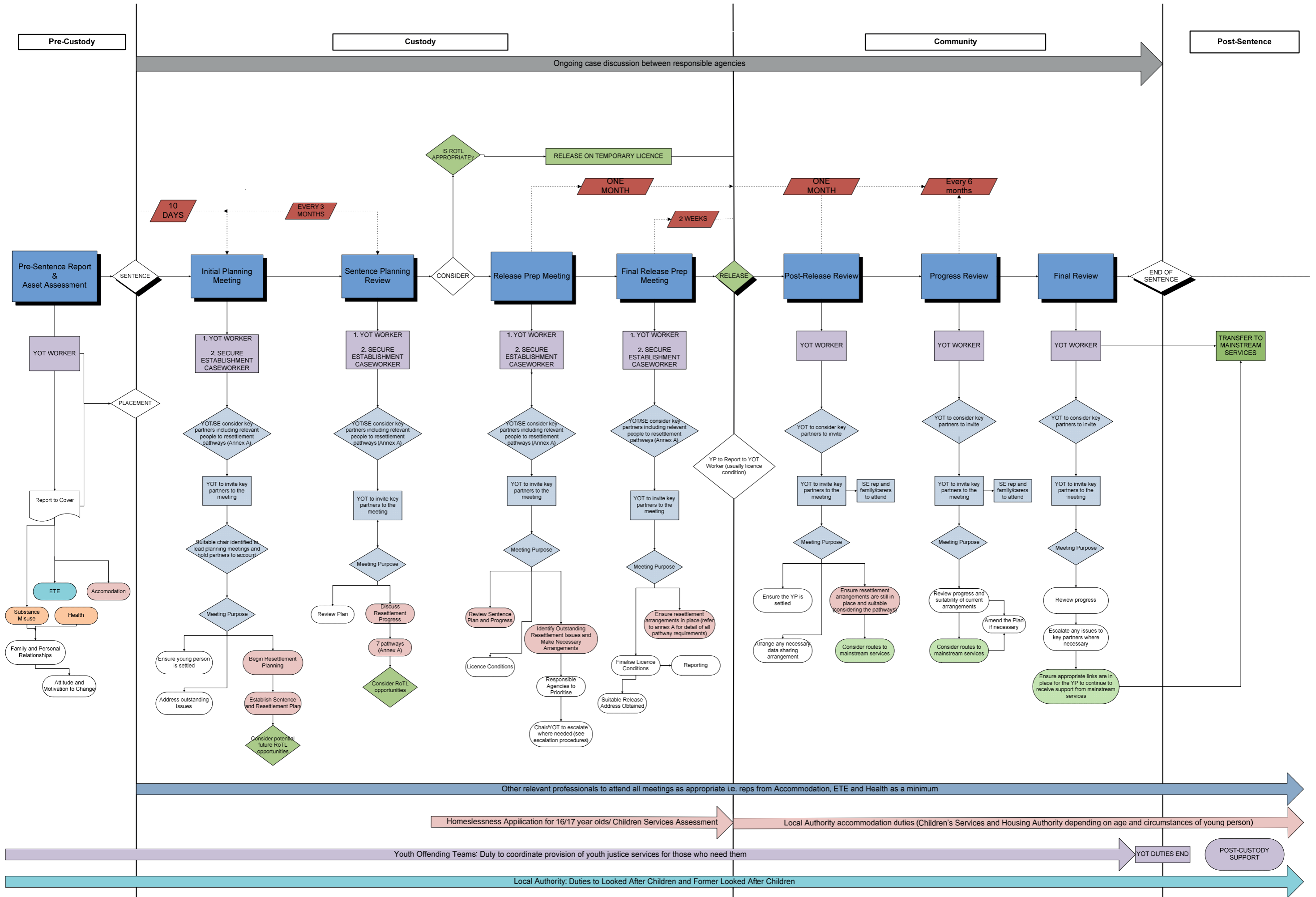
- sexual exploitation in 5 (10 per cent) cases
- county lines in 9 (19 per cent) cases
- modern day slavery/trafficking in 3 (6 per cent) cases
- gangs in 22 (44 per cent) cases.

In the community phase, which commenced on 01 April 2019, we tracked the cases into the community and inspected them approximately three months after the child was released from custody. Where possible, the community inspection interviews took the form of round table discussions with all the professionals involved with the child. We invited the YOI case managers to take part in those round table discussions to promote better understanding and joint work across custody and community. Separate interviews were undertaken with children and parents.

The YOT fieldwork consisted of:

- 72 interviews with YOT workers
- 9 interviews with probation supervisors
- 22 interviews with other professionals
- 16 interviews with children
- 16 interviews with YOI case managers in the community.

Annex 3: Young Person's Journey: Resettlement





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