

How to make resettlement constructive

11 September 2018

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Introduction

Resettlement and transitions between services is a current strategic priority for the Youth Justice Board.

Despite several resettlement support initiatives, outcomes for children leaving custody remain poor. Recent research into why difficulties continue to prevail suggests that a likely explanation is the lack of a definitive resettlement ‘theory of change’ and aim. The research concludes that the aim of resettlement should be to support a child to shift their identity from pro offending to pro social. Only by doing so can we achieve long term desistance from offending and a child moving towards a positive future.

This document introduces Constructive Resettlement as an approach to help the sector apply this research evidence across policy and practice. It will enable all agencies to adopt a common framework and set of principles necessary to improve resettlement outcomes.

In the concluding section, we outline the steps the YJB is taking to enable both custody and community agencies to implement this new approach. We recognise that it represents a fundamental change of culture across the youth justice system. Consequently, we are working both strategically and operationally to support this change.

To support the sector in delivering Constructive Resettlement we want identify barriers to its effective implementation, and are committed to working to overcome these. In turn, we are keen to support innovative application of this approach to drive improvement. We also want to explore with the sector how this approach can help support a child successfully navigate other transitions in youth justice.

This constructive, strengths-based and future-focused approach is in line with the YJB’s guiding principle of “Child First, Offender Second”.

In publishing this document, we invite you to join with us to develop resettlement practice that will ensure children who leave custody live a safe and crime-free life and make a positive contribution to society.

What we mean by resettlement

When we talk about ‘resettlement’ in youth justice, we generally mean the support that a child receives as they re-enter the community from custody. It relates to a period of transition that children face, and the help that they need to navigate it successfully and reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

However, being released from custody is not the only difficult transition that children in contact with the youth justice system might need help to navigate. For instance, children might need help to ‘resettle’ when entering and leaving care, or when moving in, around, and out of the criminal justice system.

The dictionary definition of resettlement is “settlement of people in a different place¹”. This could also apply to the journey a child takes when they attempt to move away from offending behaviour – and the changes to their circumstances and mind-set that will allow this transition to take place. Indeed, practitioners in North Wales have found that research-informed principles for effective resettlement from custody apply equally to work with other high-risk children².

This document introduces ***Constructive Resettlement***. Whilst this document relates this approach specifically to resettlement from custody, we encourage you to consider whether *Constructive Resettlement* is useful in your wider work with children. At the time of publication, we are aware that several local authorities³ have started to adopt or adapt this approach to guide all their work with children in youth justice and beyond. We will be interested in the outcome of this work and learning that might be shared more widely.

¹ Collins English Dictionary definition of “Resettlement”.

² Hazel N and Hampson K (2017) Youth Resettlement in North Wales and the Resettlement Broker Project Llamau / Youth Justice Board Cymru

³ For instance, Kent, Lewisham and Medway.

Why is Resettlement a Priority

Resettlement of children from custody is a statutory responsibility of local authorities, in partnership with the police, National Probation Service and health⁴ and HMPPS Youth Custody Service (YCS)⁵.

By the very definition and nature of custody, children within the secure estate are the most vulnerable and damaged. Also, the behaviour of these children often holds greatest impact for the communities in which they live.

For these very reasons resettlement of children from custody is a priority, to ensure they and their communities are given the very best chance of a positive future and do not re-offend.

Support should be provided to a child from the very point that they enter custody to prepare them for their return to the community. This support should continue the length of the time a child is in custody and continue following release for the whole course of the order and where necessary beyond.

Youth offending team (YOT) partnerships have been guided in their resettlement planning by the [YJB Pathways to Resettlement](#). These pathways encourage case managers to consider seven areas of support, including accommodation and health, required to provide end-to-end service provision for children serving custodial sentences.

Over the years there have been a range of initiatives to improve resettlement outcomes for children. For instance, the YJB has worked with the Welsh Government, YOT Managers Cymru, Heads of Children's Services, the third sector, academics and other key stakeholders to develop resettlement and transitions practice in Wales. This included the development of a resettlement checklist, the establishment of resettlement broker projects and the formation of reintegration and resettlement panels and partnerships in several Welsh YOTs. The establishment of resettlement consortia elsewhere is another example. We commissioned independent evaluations of the consortia approach and were encouraged to see that improved outcomes are possible and that there are effective ways to make improvements⁶.

However, despite considerable work to improve resettlement over the past years, outcomes for children exiting custody remain poor. In 2015/16, 68.1% of children released from custody reoffended. A 2015 HMI Probation inspection of resettlement described outcomes and practice as 'shocking', because 'too few

⁴ Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sec 38(4)(h-j)

⁵ Crime and Disorder Act 1998 sec41(5)(i-ja)

⁶ For example, [Hazel N, Wright S, Liddle M, Renshaw J and Gray P \(2012\) Evaluation of the North West Resettlement Consortium: Final Report. Centre for Social Research, University of Salford and ARCS UK](#)

of these children are being provided with what they need to lead crime-free lives'⁷.

Against this background, in 2018 the YJB made *Resettlement and transitions between services* one of our strategic priorities. Our intention is to work with youth justice partners, both locally and centrally, to translate the evidence base for effective resettlement into both policy and practice. If we can improve understanding across the sector and government of what good resettlement looks like we will enable better policy and practice, and drive better outcomes for children and the communities in which they live.

Professor Neal Hazel, YJB Board member and academic leader in this area will provide a strategic steer for this to enable us to achieve this aim.

This document marks the beginning of this work and aims to fulfil three primary purposes:

- an overview of the current evidence in relation to resettlement
- the launch of the concept of Constructive Resettlement as a way for the sector to utilise this evidence
- begin to help the sector make this approach work on the ground.

We need the support of all our partners to achieve our aim of improving outcomes for children being resettled. We invite you to join us in working towards a future where children who leave custody are no longer stuck in a revolving door. We want to see these children fulfil their potential and live a safe and crime-free life and make a positive contribution to society.

And remember, even if you are fortunate to work in an area where only small numbers enter custody, the Constructive Resettlement framework can still inform the work you do. We hope that this document provides a useful framework to help you put evidence into practice.

⁷ [HMIP \(2015\) Joint thematic inspection of resettlement services to children by Youth Offending Teams and partner agencies London: HM Inspectorate of Probation](#)

What the evidence tells us

There has been considerable research and work into resettlement over the past 20 years, much of it funded by the YJB. This taught us what it takes to enable successful resettlement. Crucial elements for effective support include:

- a continued focus on resettlement throughout a sentence
- early preparation for release
- effective communication between institution and community agencies
- a coordinated holistic response involving multi-agency partnerships⁸.

However, as the HMIP inspection noted, everyday practice has not reflected learning from this evidence: “So, even when we know the solution... why on earth is it not being done?” ([HMIP, 2015: Foreword](#))

In recent years, the Beyond Youth Custody (BYC) partnership⁹ has been pivotal in identifying the answer to that question. The six-year research programme concluded that the lack of success in resettlement, and high reoffending rates, can be explained by a lack of a definitive resettlement aim for practice, or a ‘theory of change’, that would lead to reduced offending. All too often, resettlement activity occurs removed from an overall picture of what is needed to help a child in a sustainable way. Consequently, support is typically process driven, with disconnected agencies centred on managing the immediate presenting issues. Resettlement in this context will never be successful, despite considerable resources and practitioner effort.

The research evidence showed that resettlement should be recognised as a journey for the child rather than a single transition event. That journey may involve relapses. Sustainable resettlement (including the sustained cessation of offending) occurs when a child shifts their identity from one that allows offending to one that encourages a crime-free life, social inclusion and wellbeing. The child changes the way they see themselves and their place in the world. This concurs with previous ‘desistance research’ literature focused on (mainly) adult offenders¹⁰.

Consequently, BYC concluded that the definitive aim for all agencies involved in resettlement practice should be to support that shift in a child’s identity¹¹. It is

⁸ The learning from evaluations of projects focused on resettlement, including a list of relevant projects, is summarised in [Hazel N and Liddle M \(2012\) Resettlement in England & Wales: Key Policy and Practice Messages from Research](#), London: YJB

⁹ Beyond Youth Custody was a Big Lottery Fund sponsored partnership of Nacro, ARCS UK, the University of Salford and the University of Bedfordshire.

¹⁰ See [McNeill F and Weaver B \(2010\). Changing Lives? Desistance Research and Offender Management. SCCJR Project Report; No.03/2010](#)

¹¹ [Hazel N with Goodfellow P, Liddle M, Bateman T and Pitts J \(2017\) Now, all I think about is my future: Supporting the shift. London: Nacro / Beyond Youth Custody](#)

imperative, it argued, that all support was consistent with facilitating the child's personal desistance journey. This would be achieved by developing a personalised route of interactions, roles and activities. Currently, the lack of such an aim means that practical support often bears limited or no relevance for the child's personal identity shift. For example, training opportunities may be found, but are not meaningful to the child, fail to engage him or her, and do not help them on their desistance journey.

A new policy and practice approach is required to help the sector apply this research evidence and support the shift in identity. Sitting alongside this, evidence consistently supports the need for strong strategic leadership¹² centrally within the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Youth Custody Service and wider government and at a local level in YOT partnerships. This leadership will provide a cohesive, evidence-based vision for resettlement with clear aims and objectives. This will enable joined up working to deliver improvements in outcomes which reduces the cost to the public purse¹³.

¹² [HMIP \(2015\) Joint thematic inspection of resettlement services to children by Youth Offending Teams and partner agencies London: HM Inspectorate of Probation](#)

¹³ See Renshaw J (2007) The costs and benefits of effective resettlement of young offenders *Journal of Children's Services*, vol. 2, issue 4, pp18-29

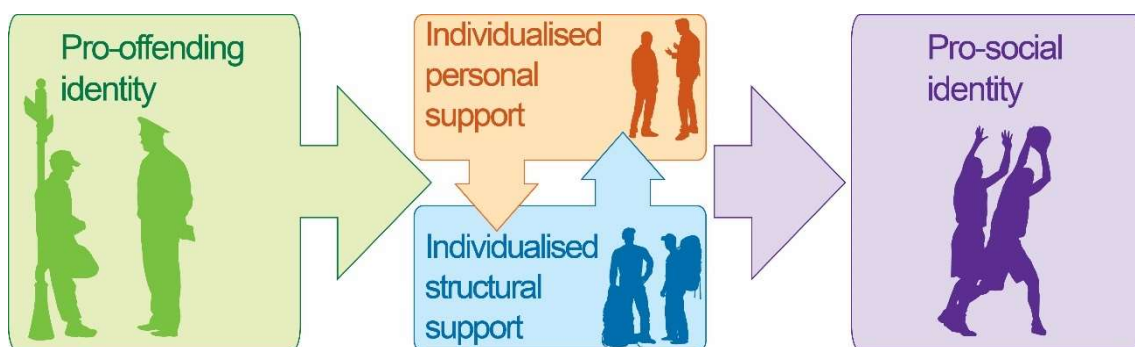
Constructive Resettlement

Constructive Resettlement is the new approach that applies this evidence base to work across the whole sector. It translates the research on resettlement into a common policy and practice framework for all agencies to work with a consistent understanding, language and aim. This approach will enable all agencies to adopt the ways and principles of working that are necessary to improve outcomes.

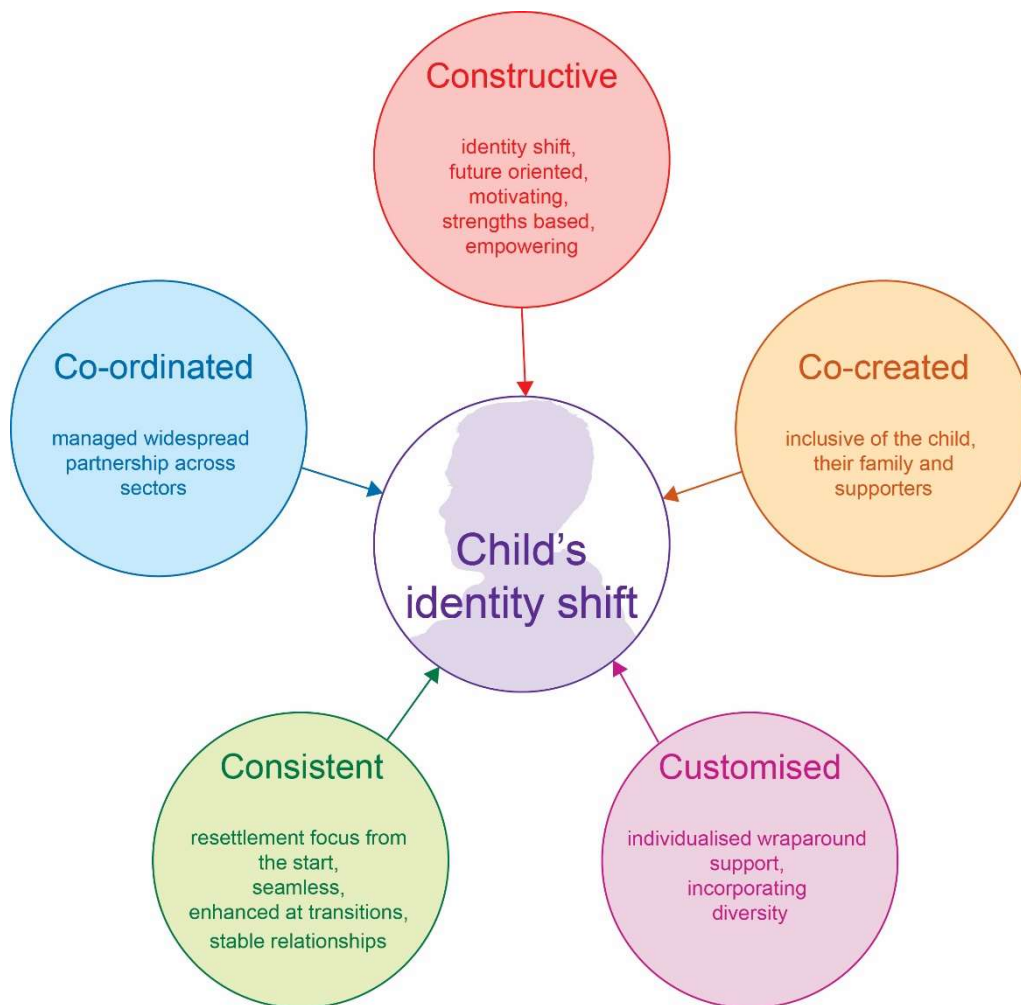
We define Constructive Resettlement as collaborative work with a child in custody and following release that builds upon his or her strengths and goals to help them shift their identity from pro-offending to pro-social. Consequently, within this approach, the clear overall role for all agencies (in policy and in practice) is to facilitate the child's identity shift.

The evidence suggests that to facilitate the child's identity shift, work to support resettlement needs to be organised in a **two-stage framework**. The first stage should always direct the second:

1. **Individualised personal support** to guide the shift. This includes identifying the pro-offending narrative, strengths and goals, a pro-social identity and the route to achieving this.
2. **Individualised structural support** to enable the shift by building the route identified in personal support. This ensures a child has suitable practical support required for their personal resettlement route, including accommodation, healthcare, education training and employment and constructive leisure.



Constructive Resettlement also reflects the evidence that all work with a child needs to follow the following **five principles**:



We recognise that support for a child is not just for a single transition event, but facilitates a longer-term journey towards sustainable positive outcomes. The child's shift in identity from one that allows offending to one that encourages positive behaviour choices promotes the YJB vision that "Every child should live a safe and crime-free life and make a positive contribution to society".

Constructive Resettlement is in line with the YJB's guiding principle of "Child First, Offender Second". It promotes their individual strengths and capacities as a means of developing their pro-social identity for sustainable desistance, leading to safer communities and fewer victims. All work is constructive and future-focused, built on supportive relationships that empower children to fulfil their potential and make positive contributions to society.

The personal nature of identity, and its relationship to background and culture, highlights the importance of recognising and embracing diversity when working with a child. This is particularly relevant given the disproportionate representation of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) children within the

secure estate¹⁴ and the youth justice system more widely. Practitioners should recognise the presence of race and ethnicity in a child's identity, including its potential in shaping a pro-social identity.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the YJB has also prioritised working strategically to tackle disproportionality.

Constructive Resettlement complements **trauma informed work**, which recognises the impact of negative experiences, such as abuse, on a child and his or her behaviour. Trauma informed work aims to increase a child's sense of safety and help them understand the trauma they have experienced and move forwards¹⁶. The introduction of SECURE STAIRS¹⁷ across custody is an example of such an approach. Such work is crucial to helping trauma affected children shift the way they see themselves and their place in the world. Many children will need to reconcile their negative experiences, past and present, so they can look meaningfully to the future.

The child is our greatest ally in preventing reoffending and protecting the public.

The principle of "Child First, Offender Second" necessitates the move away from a deficit model that sees children in terms of risk of reoffending. Instead, a constructive model builds on the child's strengths, seeing them on a desistance journey towards a safe and crime-free life and making a positive contribution to society. Risk factors for reoffending are reframed as barriers to their desistance.

The deficit model's concern with the overall risk of reoffending is satisfied because of the child's move from a pro-offending to pro-social identity.

This positive identity shift builds resilience and internal controls that guard against offending, rather than needing to rely on external controls. It can also help improve safety in custody because children encouraged to see themselves in a pro-social way will be less likely to engage in poor behaviour counter to that identity.

While Constructive Resettlement is a model for sustainable desistance, it does not preclude any of the required public protection measures in the short-term. Informed by accurate assessment, these may be necessary to manage

¹⁴ In 2016/17 BAME children comprised 45% of the youth secure estate population, 2.5 times the BAME 2011 census population. In the same time period 54% of remand cases were BAME children, 3.5 times the 2011 census population.

¹⁵ See [Wright S, Francis C and McAteer L \(2015\) Ethnicity, Faith and Culture in Resettlement London: Nacro/BYC](#)

¹⁶ See [Wright S and Liddle M \(2014\) Developing trauma-informed resettlement for young custody leavers London: Nacro/BYC](#)

¹⁷ SECURE STAIRS is an NHS England led project, being delivered in partnership with DfE, YJB, HMPPS and MoJ. It aims to support trauma-informed care and formulation-driven, evidence-based, whole-systems approaches to creating change for young people within the Children and Young People's Secure Estate (CYPSE).

the immediate risk of harm, and in turn provide space for work to support a shift in identity required for longer-term public protection.

This approach represents a fundamental culture change for agencies across the youth justice system. It will take commitment, effort and time to implement. However, the evidence shows that helping children shift their identity in this way is the key to less reoffending for the future. We will be able to measure progress through national data and use data held locally by YOT partnerships. If successfully applied, Constructive Resettlement will increase public safety and satisfaction with the youth justice system. More effective resettlement also leads to financial savings for public-sector bodies in the medium to long term¹⁸.

Similarly, we can anticipate intermediary benefits such as improvements to behaviour management and safety within the secure estate; staff retention and job satisfaction.

¹⁸ See Renshaw J (2007) The costs and benefits of effective resettlement of young offenders *Journal of Children's Services*, vol. 2, issue 4, ppp18-29

What we plan to do

The YJB plans to work within our functions with the aim of improving resettlement outcomes for children¹⁹: We will seek support from all youth justice partners to work collaboratively for the benefit of children and their communities.

Several defined workstreams have or will be established. These are outlined below.

1. We are reviewing the data and information we collect from the sector to ensure these provide us with an accurate picture of resettlement outcomes and additionally a means of measuring progress. We do not expect any additional burden will be placed upon YOTs. However, we ask that YOTs continue to prioritise the quality of data they submit to ensure a true picture. In turn the YJB is here to support YOTs in this task. We will use this data to help establish any structural barriers that might hinder progress and to inform our work. Good quality data also helps local areas understand the prevailing issues and leverage support. The more we collectively understand the issues the more we will be able to do to address them.
2. To supplement data, we will host two roundtable events with senior representatives across community and custody in Autumn 2018. These events will enhance our understanding of the challenges that the sector will face in implementing Constructive Resettlement and offer an opportunity to engage in collective problem solving. We will take these challenges to our policy partners, and to the Youth Justice System Oversight Group (YJSOG), which has senior representation from across government.

¹⁹ The YJB monitors the operation of the youth justice system and the provision of youth justice services within England and Wales. Specific functions include:

- using information and evidence to form an expert view of how to get the best outcomes for children who offend and for victims of crime
- advising the Secretary of State for Justice and those working in youth justice services about how well the system is operating, and how improvements can be made
- identifying and sharing best practice
- promoting the voice of the child
- commissioning research and publishing information in connection with good practice
- monitoring the youth justice system and the provision of youth justice services
- making grants, with the approval of the Secretary of State, for the purposes of the operation of the youth justice system and services
- providing information technology related assistance for the operation of the youth justice system and services

3. We are examining the resettlement needs of children who are remanded. We want to understand the issues faced by children who are acquitted at trial or receive a disposal that does not involve YOT supervision. We are working with the MoJ to achieve this aim and will agree a course of action depending upon our findings.
4. We are taking the available evidence base and the concept of Constructive Resettlement to policy partners. To date, we have met with MoJ and YCS who have both signed up and stated their commitment to ensuring both are reflected in the reform of the youth secure estate. We have additionally begun to engage a wide range of stakeholders across government.
5. We have also started introducing practitioners from both the statutory and voluntary sectors to *Constructive Resettlement*. We are convening a working group with support from the community and custodial sector to come together and consider how best this approach can be operationalised to identify and disseminate existing compatible good practice.
6. We will use the Youth Justice Resource Hub and other channels to share research and good practice and harvest support from the sector.
7. We are reviewing the National Standards for Youth Justice Services to move towards an outcome focused approach. Advice to ministers on National Standards will reflect the aim of Constructive Resettlement and principles in to ensure good futures for children. We will provide timely and constructive advice to ministers and departmental colleagues to support improved outcomes for children and their communities.
8. We will work with the sector to explore how Constructive Resettlement principles can be applied beyond resettlement of children released from custody, in respect of broader transitions.

If you are interested in working with us in developing Constructive Rehabilitation to improve outcomes for children, or have any examples of good practice, we are keen to hear from you. You can contact us at enquiries@yjb.gov.uk

Meanwhile, we will keep you updated on developments through the YJ Bulletin, the annual Youth Justice Convention, email and other vehicles.