

# EFFECTIVE APPROACHES WITH YOUNG ADULTS

A guide for probation services



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## A guide for probation services

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**The T2A Alliance** – a coalition of 13 leading criminal justice, health and youth charities – provides evidence and promotes the need for a distinct and effective approach to young adults (18-25 year olds) in the transition to adulthood, throughout the criminal justice process. The T2A Alliance members are: Addaction, BTEG, Catch 22, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (CCJS), Clinks, Criminal Justice Alliance (CJA), Howard League for Penal Reform, Nacro, the Prince's Trust, Prison Reform Trust, Revolving Doors Agency, the Young Foundation and Young Minds.

[www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)

**Clinks** is the national membership body for voluntary sector organisations working in criminal justice. Clinks supports, represents and campaigns for the voluntary sector working with offenders, and aims to ensure the sector and all those with whom they work, are informed and engaged in order to transform the lives of offenders.

[www.clinks.org](http://www.clinks.org)

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# FOREWORD



“ Every interaction between a practitioner and young adult is an opportunity to engage, support and influence. ”

I am delighted to introduce this guide on developing effective approaches for working with young adults. In recent years there has been a growing recognition amongst probation practitioners and managers of the specific needs of young adults and the importance of developing a distinct approach. Although the National Probation Service (NPS) and Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) are relatively new organisations, the desire to improve services for young adults remains strong. This has certainly been the case in the area in which I work where the enthusiasm and commitment of probation services and our partners has resulted in a programme of system-wide changes aimed at improving services for young adults. Young adults are over-represented in both NPS and CRC caseloads, and within breach and reoffending figures. As probation services become increasingly outcome-focused, and the need for smarter deployment of resources becomes more pressing, there is a growing imperative to ensure that our approach and interventions are consistent with the evidence of effectiveness.

The NPS and CRC work with young adults during one of the most important developmental stages in their lives – as they make the transition to adulthood – which presents both challenges and opportunities. This time can be fraught with risk and difficulties, not least because many young adults in contact with the Criminal Justice System have had to make multiple transitions between children and adult services. Developing maturity, together with their often multiple and complex needs, can result in young adults presenting as chaotic and struggling to engage with our services during this time. However, both the NPS and

CRCs have an invaluable opportunity to positively influence young adults and support them in desisting from crime.

This guide provides a range of practical suggestions on how probation practitioners and their managers can engage young adults, deliver a tailored and effective approach, and achieve improved outcomes. Importantly, the guide draws on the experiences of both practitioners and young adults themselves. Several of the suggestions do not require additional or significant resources but instead involve doing things differently. In my experience, it is often the small things that make a big difference when working with young adults. The guide also highlights how ‘every contact counts’ – a valuable and practical concept that emphasises how every interaction between a practitioner and young adult is an opportunity to engage, support and influence.

Finally, one of the many strengths of this guide is that it can be used in a variety of ways. Individual practitioners can refer to the guide in developing their own knowledge and skills. Team Managers can also use the guide to aid discussion and support the development of team practice. However, I would also encourage Senior Managers, with the support of Learning and Development departments, to use the guide as a springboard to develop an organisation-wide approach, equipping all frontline practitioners and managers with the knowledge, skills and resources necessary to meet the needs and aspirations of young adults, and ultimately secure reductions in reoffending. The guide will also be relevant for practitioners and managers in other services working with young adults in the criminal justice system, including voluntary sector organisations and other partner agencies.

## Grace Strong

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The aim of this guide is to give probation practitioners, whether in the National Probation Service or Community Rehabilitation Companies, the tools to deliver a more effective approach to young adults. It provides practical suggestions for effective ways to engage young adults and support their desistance from crime. It also includes suggestions for managers on what they can do to enable practitioners to improve outcomes within probation services.

Young adults (18-24-year-olds) constitute less than 10% of the general population but make up one third of those involved in the criminal justice system (CJS). However, young adults are the most likely age group to desist and grow out of crime, and the wrong intervention at this time can slow desistance and extend the period that a young adult is involved in the CJS. Getting it right at this critical time is crucial to assisting young adults to make a successful transition to a crime free adulthood.

It is now known that brain development and maturity are not complete until the mid-twenties amongst the general population, and young adults in the CJS often face additional challenges as a result of abuse or neglect in childhood. In recognition of this, almost all European countries have accepted that the specific needs of young adults should be reflected within their justice systems, and many have set their youth/adult threshold at 21 or older.

Probation services often find young adults harder to engage than older adults in services, which

can be due to maturity levels, chaotic lifestyles and difficulties building a trusting and effective relationship with the practitioner. Young adults are the most likely age group to reoffend and to breach Orders.

We have spoken to probation practitioners and service users to learn from them the most effective approaches to working with this age group. This guide includes:

- Practical suggestions to assist probation practitioners in their day-to-day work with this age group;
- Information on the specific issues facing young adults and how they impact on their engagement with probation, including maturity, trauma, health needs and the development of life skills;
- Guidance on how to tailor services to specific groups of young adults with particular needs such as women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) young people, those with disabilities and care leavers;
- Views of young adults themselves on what they feel makes a good probation officer;
- Measures that managers and commissioners can take to enable effective engagement of young adults and adapt services where necessary;
- Examples of how different probation services have adapted their approaches for young adults.





## Top tips for working with young adults – From probation officers, for probation officers

These are the key suggestions made by probation practitioners we spoke to on how to effectively engage with young adults and support them to desist from crime.

1

Recognise that no-one becomes a fully developed adult on their 18th birthday. Give young adults flexibility and support to meet the requirements of their Order and complete statutory demands.

2

Every contact counts – treat every contact, however short, as an opportunity to help them move towards desistance from crime. Your manner during every interaction makes a difference.

3

Show them you want them to complete their Order, and that you are not there to trip them up but to enforce the law fairly. It is very important for young adults to know that you have an interest in their compliance. You may be the only consistent, supportive person in their lives.

4

Be aware of the impact of trauma and attachment issues on young adults, and how these affect their behaviour.

5

Keep up to date with research – and be aware of specialist issues like brain injury, ADHD and learning disabilities so that you can support appropriately and/or signpost.

6

Learn from colleagues – maintain contacts in other agencies such as the Youth Offending Service, mental health services and the voluntary sector, and use their expertise to inform your work with young adults.

7

Seek access to other agencies' records for information on a young adult's needs, such as the Youth Offending Service's ASSET database or Comprehensive Health Assessment Tool results carried out in custody.

8

Build your knowledge of other statutory and voluntary sector services available in your area, and work closely with mentoring services where they exist to provide more intensive practical support than you may have time for.

9

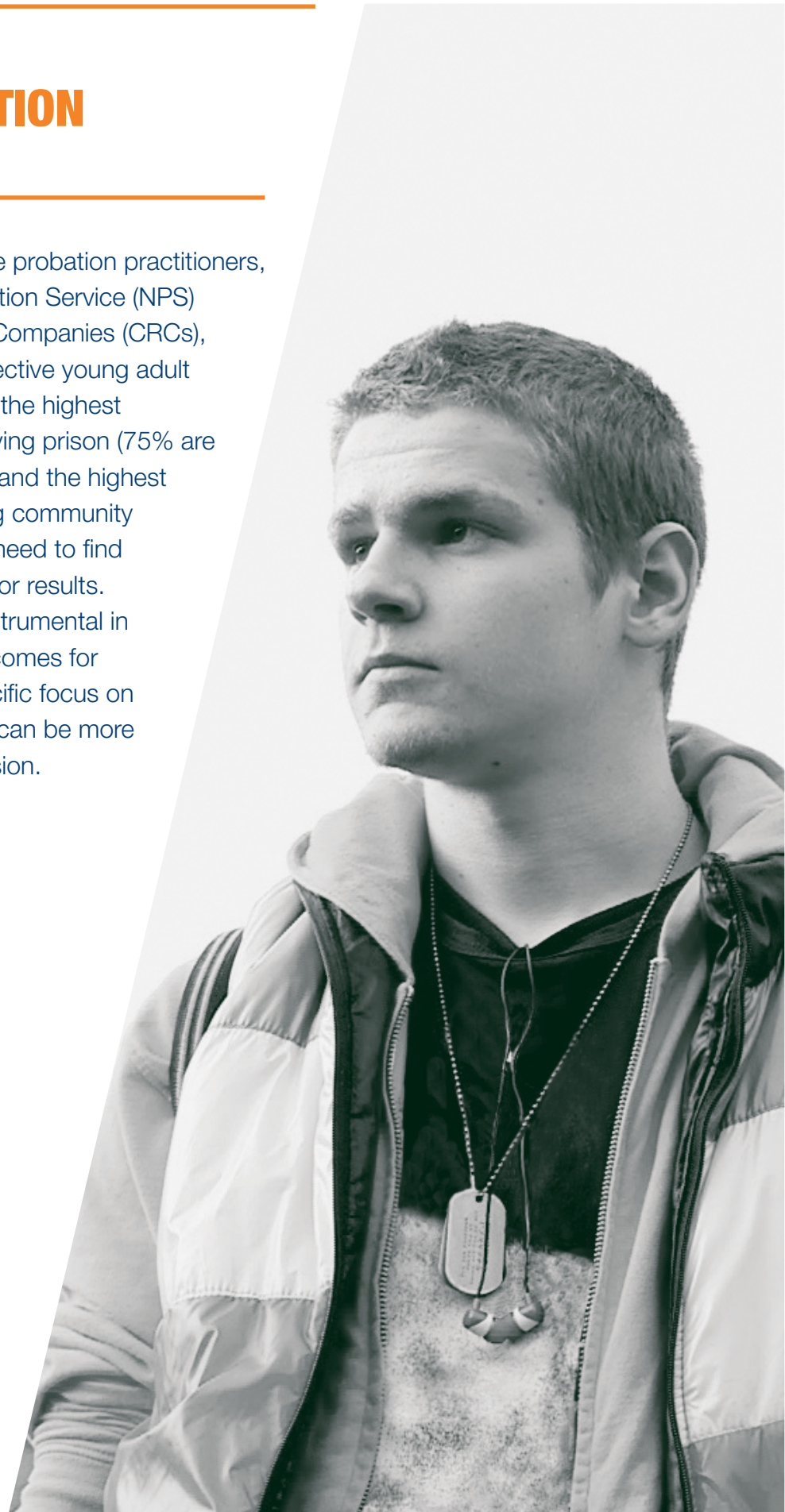
Be creative in how you engage with young adults, for instance try out resources and activities that suit different learning styles. Where possible, meet up with young adults in different locations, such as community centres, or even just for a walk outside the office.

10

Get support from your manager and co-workers to help you to stay creative and inspired in your work engaging young adults.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this guide is to give probation practitioners, whether in the National Probation Service (NPS) or Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), the tools to deliver a more effective young adult approach. Young adults have the highest reoffending rates of those leaving prison (75% are reconvicted within two years) and the highest breach rates for adults serving community sentences. It is clear that we need to find solutions to address these poor results. Probation practitioners are instrumental in helping to shape positive outcomes for young adults, and with a specific focus on the needs of this group there can be more effective support and supervision.





## Why a focus on young adults?

Young adults are less than 10% of the general population but are disproportionately involved in the criminal justice system (CJS), making up more than one third of those commencing a Court Order, one third of the probation service's caseload and almost one third of those sentenced to prison each year. This alone demonstrates the importance of recognising the distinct needs and circumstances of young adults in developing effective sentencing and rehabilitation services.

Young adults are the most likely age group to desist and grow out of crime, although the wrong intervention at this time can slow desistance and extend the period that a young adult is involved in the CJS. Getting it right at this critical time is crucial to assisting young adults to make a successful transition to a crime free adulthood.

Developmental and neurological maturity – expanded on later in this guidance – is key for consideration. 90% of what we now know about brain development in young adults has only been learnt in the last 20 years, and so represents a new but vital area of understanding in how we work with this group.

In recognition of what is now known about varying maturity, almost all European countries have accepted that developing maturity should be reflected within their justice systems.<sup>1</sup> For example, in the Netherlands juvenile justice provisions are applied to young adults up to age 23, while in Germany juvenile justice measures can be fully applied in decision making about young adults up to the age of 25 on a case by case basis, including giving the courts far greater flexibility when sentencing.

## The Transition to Adulthood Alliance approach

The Transition to Adulthood (T2A) Alliance identifies and promotes the need for a distinct and radically different approach to young adults in the CJS. The approach aims to be proportionate to maturity and responsive to specific needs.

'Young adults' within T2A reports usually refers to people aged 18-25, but work to support transition to adult services needs to start while they are 17. Many youth services and voluntary sector agencies work with 16-25 year olds which allows for a flexible approach to varying levels of maturity.

## About the guide and how it was developed

This guide was commissioned to build on the evidence and good practice developed by the T2A and Clinks to assist the day-to-day work of probation practitioners with young adults. Clinks has worked with T2A Alliance, service providers, probation practitioners and service users to develop this guidance, to enable a consistent evidence-based approach to help those on an often difficult journey as they transition between youth and adult criminal justice systems and move towards adulthood. The guide has been co-authored with a Young Advisor who has experience of the CJS; his role was to advise the project, carry out visits speaking to service users, and co-write the guide.

The authors visited services working with young adults on probation to speak to practitioners and service users about what approaches are effective with young adults. The services visited were:

- **YSS**, a West Midlands-based charity working with young people and families. YSS developed one of the original T2A pilots<sup>2</sup> working with young adults in the CJS in 2009, and now has a strategic partnership with Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company (see **Section 7**)
- **Pecan's Moving On Project**, a young women's mentoring service in London that provides intensive through-the-gate mentoring to young women leaving HMP Holloway<sup>3</sup>
- **Cardiff Integrated Offender Management team's Youth to Adult (Y2A)** service (see **Section 7**)
- **Remedi**, a Yorkshire-based charity specialising in the delivery of restorative services within the criminal justice system. Remedi runs one of T2A Alliance's current Pathway Projects, which offers restorative mentoring to young adults (see **Section 7**)
- Leicester, **Leicestershire and Rutland Young Adults Project**, a multi-agency partnership improving outcomes for young adults. We spoke to the project's practitioners' forum which consisted of staff from the Community Rehabilitation Company, National Probation Service and Youth Offending Teams.

We are grateful to all the staff and service users for contributing their time and expertise to the development of the guide, and to those who read and commented on drafts.

## Who is the guide for?

The guide will be useful to the following groups in particular:

- Probation practitioners and managers from both the National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies;
- Other organisations delivering community-based rehabilitation services;
- Staff from prisons, the Youth Offending Services, the police, Job Centre Plus, and Integrated Offender Management teams;
- Voluntary sector organisations; and
- Others involved in the lives of young adults in the CJS.

While the majority of the guide is aimed at practitioners to support their day-to-day work with young adults, **Sections 6** and **7** focus on what managers and commissioners can do to support effective work with this group.



This guide builds on two other T2A resources that are useful for probation services working with young adults:



**Going for Gold: Developing effective services for young adults throughout the criminal justice process**

📄 [www.t2a.org.uk/going4gold](http://www.t2a.org.uk/going4gold)



**Taking Account of Maturity: A guide for probation practitioners**

📄 [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)

# 2 CHARACTERISTICS AND NEEDS OF YOUNG ADULTS

This section summarises the key distinctive characteristics of young adults, and outlines the implications these have for probation practitioners and services.

## Maturity

Varying levels of developmental and neurological maturity are now formally recognised as a contributing factor to how young adults behave. Approaches that take account of maturity enable practitioners to understand the physical, intellectual, neurological, emotional and social development stages a young adult goes through to reach 'full' adulthood. Different levels of maturity naturally exist between young adults; although physical maturity is largely complete by the end of adolescence, neurological, emotional and social maturation typically continues into the mid-twenties.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, it is important to understand how mature an individual is in order to understand their actions and conduct. An awareness of a young adult's maturity level makes it more likely that appropriate programmes of intervention and treatment are selected, which makes it less likely that they will re-offend. The creation of effective and informed assessments will play a big part in this.





### How can T2A's 'Taking account of maturity' guide help probation practitioners to do this?

The guide, developed by the University of Birmingham, enables probation practitioners, using the OASys tool<sup>5</sup>, to recognise and obtain evidence that a young adult's level of maturity may be relevant to their offending behaviour and form judgements about how this might inform the information analysis and proposals in pre-sentence reports, and the design and delivery of initial sentence planning and supervision.

The guide equips assessors to reach a professional judgement about maturity, informed by up-to-date research and theory.

It includes specific questions which can be asked during OASys assessments based around relevant OASys sections, for example, on education, training and employability, alcohol misuse, relationships, lifestyle and associates etc.

It also provides tips on how to take account of maturity from the language used in pre-sentence reports and sentence planning through to maximising the practitioners influence.

 [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)

## Trauma, attachment and experience of care

Research is clear that people who have offended are more likely than non-offenders to have suffered adverse emotional, social, neurological and developmental effects from traumatic experiences in childhood and adolescence, and some of these experiences appear to be linked to offending behaviour, affecting their ability to interact and form relationships with professionals and other people.<sup>6</sup> It can be difficult for them to communicate and negotiate appropriately with people from various services such as housing, health, employment, and education.

A significant number of young adults involved in the Criminal Justice System have been in care or experienced abuse or neglect. Care leavers and young adults who have experienced trauma may often have difficulties interacting with people in a position of authority, and this often manifests in ways that can be interpreted as aggression or stubbornness.

### What is attachment and what does it mean for probation services?

Young adults who have experienced neglect or abuse in early childhood are likely to have difficulties with attachment. Attachment refers to the close bond between an infant and their primary care giver in the early years of life.<sup>7</sup> When this is disrupted, it affects the child's ability to form and maintain close and trusting relationships later in life. Many young adults in the CJS have not had healthy, secure relationships throughout their childhood and adolescence, and this affects their ability to trust and open up to adults who may be able to help them. Probation practitioners may be one of the very few consistent, supportive adults in a young adult's life. This makes the quality of the relationship between the practitioner and the young adult particularly important.

- Probation services should use a **trauma-informed approach** to work effectively with these young adults.
- The probation practitioner should be **aware of the service user's experiences of trauma**, and therefore have an understanding of the impact caused to the young adult as a result.

- **Services need to be adapted** for young adults with such experiences – for example, it is best practice for female staff should supervise young adult women, ideally in a specialist women's centre rather than a probation office.
- Probation practitioners should **model appropriate and respectful behaviour** to service users so this is mirrored back to them.
- It is important for probation practitioners to be **aware of and understand the context of the young adult's family background** and the resulting impact on that individual. In some cases it may be appropriate to have a meeting with the young adult's family (with their consent). Young adults often have a uniquely dual role within the family as being both the child within a family home and also a parent themselves of young children.

### What is trauma-informed practice?

Many young adults who enter the criminal justice system have grown up with the trauma of abuse, neglect, bereavement and separation. If these experiences are not taken into account, their life chances are much reduced.

Trauma-informed practice may involve awareness raising and training, the provision of safe environments, reducing the scope for re-traumatisation and the co-ordination of provision designed to increase resilience and support. Trauma-informed approaches can be thought of as incorporating three key elements: an understanding of the prevalence of trauma; recognition of the effects of trauma both on those affected and on those who work with them; and the design of services which are informed by this knowledge.

For more information, see *Developing trauma-informed resettlement for young custody leavers*, by Beyond Youth Custody:



[www.beyondyouthcustody.net](http://www.beyondyouthcustody.net)

## Life skills

Throughout their transition to adulthood, the different experiences they go through help a young adult develop as a person and aid them in acquiring important life skills. The great majority of young adults, whether they have experience of the Criminal Justice System or not will gradually go on to acquire the life skills needed to live independently, however this does not always occur by the time they are 18. No-one will turn into a fully mature adult overnight on their eighteenth birthday.

Young adults who have been in custody or social care may not have had opportunities to develop these necessary life skills, which can leave them in a vulnerable position when leaving custody. Such skills include independent living, finances and meeting the requirements of their probation license. These life skills are formed through experiences as young adults grow older.

A large number of young adults involved in the Criminal Justice System have poor literacy skills. Half of 15-17 year olds entering public sector Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) were assessed as having the literacy levels equivalent to that expected of a 7-11 year old.<sup>8</sup>

- When working with young adults, probation services need to **take into consideration the level of skills**, including literacy, the young person has. There is guidance on how to assess literacy levels and learning disabilities on The LDD Navigator website at [www.lddnavigator.org.uk](http://www.lddnavigator.org.uk)
- Probation practitioners working with young adults should tailor some of their interventions to a focus that helps them **acquire new life skills and develop existing ones.**

## Health needs

The health of a young adult can also be linked to their offending behaviour. Mental health problems and substance misuse may often contribute to the young adult's criminal behaviour.

Registration with or access to health services may not be straightforward, particularly if a young adult does not have a permanent address, so they may need support to manage their health and to engage with GPs, opticians and dental services, as well as secure and maintain more specialist provision.

**Mental Health:** Young adulthood is a peak age for emergence of mental health problems, and young adults can experience depression and anxiety in

early adulthood, something which is very prevalent for those in the Criminal Justice System. A 2011/12 survey of 15-17 year olds in YOIs found that 27% of young men in custody felt they had emotional or mental health problems.<sup>9</sup> Early adulthood is also the key time for emerging personality disorder.

The transition from children's mental health services to adult services can be difficult for a young adult, because they may not meet the often tighter criteria to access adult services, leaving them without access to support after children's services are withdrawn at age 18.<sup>10</sup>

- Probation practitioners should **be aware of how mental health difficulties manifest themselves**, be alert to the reasons for certain behaviours, and refer to local mental health services for assessment and support where necessary.
- Probation services need to be **alert to the impact of mental health services** ending at 18 and refer young adults on to appropriate alternative support where possible.

**Brain injuries:** 60% of children in custody have reported experiencing a traumatic brain injury which may have been caused by abuse and neglect, falls, sporting injuries, fights and road collisions. Taking account of a young adult's brain injuries can give significant insight into the reason for their offending. Brain injuries are often overlooked in a criminal justice context. The consequences of a brain injury can include loss of memory, loss of concentration, decreased awareness of one's own or others' emotional state, poor impulse control, and, particularly, poor social judgment. Unsurprisingly behavioural problems such as conduct disorder, attention problems, increased aggression and impulse control problems can be a direct contribution to offending behaviour.<sup>11</sup> The Comprehensive Health Assessment Tool (CHAT) is used to assess the presence and extent of young people's brain injuries in YOIs.

- Probation services **should identify individuals who may be experiencing the effects of a brain injury** by checking the results of the Comprehensive Health Assessment Tool for those who have been in custody.
- Probation practitioners can use the **Brain Injury Screening Index (BISI)** to screen for head injuries and any other associated conditions to establish whether an individual has sustained any brain injuries (see Section 8).

**Substance misuse:** Alcohol is a factor in criminal behaviour for nearly 50% of 18-24 year olds and 69% of young adults have taken an illicit drug in the year previous to being convicted.<sup>12</sup> Drug misuse is more common amongst young adults who have offended than in the general population.

The drugs taken by young adults may be different to drugs commonly taken by older adults. Adult services for drug users may not be suitable for young adults; their problems may not be appropriately addressed and can leave them in a vulnerable position (see Addaction's 2012 evaluation report of its transition to adulthood drug and alcohol service <http://www.t2a.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/TransitionReport.pdf>). With the rise of legal highs, it is more difficult to know if a young adult has been misusing substances, which substances they are misusing and how that links to their behaviour.

- Probation practitioners should **ensure that young adults are accessing appropriate substance misuse services** where needed. This will not only result in improved health benefits but will also have an important impact on offending and re-offending.



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# 3 TAILORING SERVICES TO ALL YOUNG ADULTS

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Probation services are most effective when they are tailored to the specific needs of individuals. This section sets out the particular issues for certain groups of young adults: women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) young adults, those with disabilities and care leavers. Young adults may of course have multiple characteristics (such as being from a BAME community and having a learning disability) and it is important to tailor all services to the specific needs and issues faced by the individual.





## Women

A gender-specific approach is widely recognised as being necessary within the Criminal Justice System, and generally speaking, women who have offended tend to have more complex needs than their male counterparts, and are often described by workers as having higher levels of need or sometimes being more 'chaotic'. Young women who have offended experience higher levels of home violence, sexual abuse, care history, education deficit, mental health problems, poor self-image and self-harm.<sup>13</sup> For women, relationships and parenthood are more likely to be linked to offending, whereas for men they tend to be factors that can help them stop. Offending by women can include higher rates of coercion from male partners or others. Young women are often primary carers for children and therefore have greater housing needs; they are less likely than men to live with parents after leaving custody, and safe accommodation is harder to find, particularly if women-only accommodation is needed.

Working with young women can require a greater degree of multi-agency work, intensive support and home visits (where relevant). Specific issues that may need to be considered when working with young women are safeguarding, domestic and sexual violence and engagement in sex work. Young women are more likely to have experienced abuse, and have come to see abusive relationships as normal, so working with them around healthy relationships (with friends and professionals as well as partners) is often important. It is important to understand young women's roles and status within gangs; for example high levels of sexual activity may be an indicator of abuse.<sup>14</sup> An awareness of trauma, and avoidance of inadvertently re-traumatising women, is essential.



## What can you do?

- Ensure that young women **have the option of a female probation practitioner** if preferred. Victims of sexual and domestic violence in particular may feel more comfortable with a female worker.
- **Establish whether coercion is a factor contributing to the young woman's offending**, and if so take this into account when considering breach and recall, and enable the young woman to access support services to help her to develop safer relationships.
- **Assess whether there are safeguarding issues** including involvement in gangs and involve safeguarding teams if needed.
- **Engage specialist women's services** such as domestic violence services, rape crisis or counselling services and women's community projects (working with women offenders) to refer the young women to where relevant.
- Due to experiences of abuse, perception of **safety is an important consideration** for many young women. This means that the location of services is likely to be important: smaller, quieter offices or quiet cafes are likely to be more appropriate than meeting in a large busy probation office with lots of male clients present.
- Be aware of the **specific mental health issues faced by young women, with higher levels of self harm and eating disorders**. Ensure that any mental health services you refer them to are appropriate, for some women attending mixed sex mental health services may exacerbate rather than alleviate difficulties.
- **Consider the appropriateness of group work programmes** for young women – they may be challenging due to low confidence, making one-to-one work more effective, especially initially to build confidence.

## Black, Asian and minority ethnic young adults

Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people are over-represented in the CJS, and even more so in the youth justice system, with 43% of 15-17-year-olds in custody coming from BAME backgrounds.<sup>15</sup> Whilst youth offending has dropped for the overall population, the proportion of BAME children in the criminal justice system has increased. Disproportionality exists throughout the CJS from the earliest stages of contact: BAME young adults are more likely to be stopped and searched, more likely to plead not guilty and more likely to be tried.<sup>16</sup> Fifteen per cent of people under probation supervision are from a BAME background.

BAME communities are of course not a homogenous group, and there are differences in outcomes between and within different ethnic groups. However, on average BAME young adults face higher levels of deprivation and disadvantage which may make their offending and reoffending more likely. For example young Black men have the highest unemployment rate amongst young adults in the UK, with just under 50% being unemployed. BAME children are over-represented in the care system and are also more likely to be permanently excluded from school.

The experience of people from BAME backgrounds within the CJS is often different from their white counterparts. For example, in prison, Black or mixed origin service users are subject to higher rates of adjudication, spend more days than average in segregation and are more frequently subject to the use of force. Many offenders from BAME backgrounds experience differential treatment within the CJS, and a recent review of outcomes for Black and Muslim young men found that Black prisoners feel they are stereotyped as drug dealers and Muslims stigmatised as extremists. For probation services, this means that demonstrating a commitment to anti-racist and culturally sensitive provision is important for engaging effectively with BAME service users.<sup>18</sup>

When in custody, those from BAME backgrounds may find not being with others from a similar background very isolating, and for some, language barriers can contribute to misunderstandings.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, family expectations can be very different for young adults from BAME backgrounds, sometimes with conviction or custody being seen to bring 'shame' onto families, resulting in a loss of contact.<sup>20</sup>



### What can you do?

- Probation services need **to be culturally competent**, demonstrating a commitment to racial justice throughout provision.
- Ensure that as a probation practitioner you **understand the BAME young adult's cultural and family context** to appreciate the impact on these relationships and how these backgrounds may have affected the young adult's offending behaviour. However, in taking these cultural differences into account, you should be aware that there is diversity within as well as between different communities and avoid assumptions about 'typical' responses within particular groups.
- As a probation practitioner you can take into account the BAME young adult's background and **address any issues they may have with being a BAME young adult in the criminal justice system**. For example; feeling singled out, being stopped and searched, and being stereotyped. Be aware of how the CJS can amplify previous experiences of discrimination.
- **Develop links with local BAME voluntary sector organisations** in order to be able to refer BAME young adults to additional specialist support, in turn informing probation service provision.<sup>23</sup> <http://www.clinks.org/directory>

## Young adults with disabilities

Physical and learning disabilities and difficulties are more common amongst people who have offended than in the general population, as are communication difficulties.<sup>24</sup> Amongst those in youth custody, 43-57% have dyslexia, 23-32% have a learning disability, and as many as 60% have experienced a traumatic brain injury. Over half of adults being supervised in the community have a long term medical condition or disability.<sup>25</sup> Among children in custody, the prevalence of brain injury and its impacts are particularly severe (see **Section 2**).

Working with young adults with disabilities may require specialist knowledge of their particular disability and how it affects their ability to comply with probation requirements and access services. Particular disabilities and conditions that you may need to be aware of include Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), autism/Asperger's

syndrome, brain injury and dyslexia. It is important to identify when a young person has disabilities, low literacy and other specific issues, but many people with learning disabilities and low literacy are often adept at hiding difficulties due to the stigma they have faced.



### What can you do?

- **Use screening tools** to ensure that you identify those who may have disabilities or health needs, such as the LDD Navigator website and the Brain Injury Screening Index tool (see **Section 8**).
- **Include information on any disabilities in the pre-sentence report** and sentence planning so that this can be shared with other agencies at the earliest opportunity.
- **Where appropriate contact social services** to ensure that the young adult is accessing the support that they are entitled to, and that liaison and diversion services are engaged to divert the young adult away from the criminal justice system as soon as possible.<sup>26</sup>
- **Work with local specialist organisations** such as liaison and diversion services, advocacy services and disabled people's organisations to support young adults with disabilities.
- **Check the level of literacy of all young adults** and do not presume written information can be understood. Read through and discuss sentence plans, Orders and letters (e.g. breach warning letters that may go unread) with clients and ask questions to check that they have understood.
- Use a variety of resources and activities with young adults including visual resources to **respond to different learning styles and abilities**.

## Care leavers

There are large numbers of care leavers involved with the CJS. Just 1% of children are looked after by local authorities, but those in care make up 33% of boys and 61% of girls in custody.<sup>27</sup> Although precise figures are not known because care leavers are not always identified within the CJS, it is estimated that 24% of the adult prison population were in care as a child (24% for men and 31% for women).<sup>28</sup> Adults who have been in care tend

to have been younger at their first conviction than those not in care, and are more likely to be reconvicted within a year of leaving prison.<sup>29</sup>

Care leavers face particular challenges as they transition to adulthood due to their common experience of trauma, poor or absent support from families and their experience of living in institutions or foster care. For more information on the impact of trauma and attachment, see **Section 2**. They are more likely to be attempting to live independently from a young age and less likely to be in education, training or employment than other young adults. However they are entitled to practical and financial support from local authorities, and it is important that probation services identify care leavers to enable them to access all the support they are entitled to.



### What can you do?

- **Ensure that you are aware of the financial and other entitlements** of care leavers and where they need to be referred to locally to access these. Refer to the Care Leavers' Association practice guide for details on legal status and entitlements for young care leavers and screening questions to ask young people.<sup>30</sup>
- Be aware of **NOMS Practice Guidance on working with care leavers** and incorporate key practical actions around care leavers in local transition protocols.<sup>31</sup>
- Refer young adults who have left care to local organisations that support care leavers, and to national bodies such as the Care Leavers Association.<sup>32</sup>
- **Take into account the impact of trauma** in your work with young care leavers (see actions above).
- Be aware that young care leavers you are working with **may not have had help to develop the key life skills** that they will need to live independently, such as budgeting, grocery shopping, paying bills, planning and organising their time etc. For example they may have had a social worker doing lots of these things for them, including paying for their travel or food, so adjusting to managing these things themselves can be a challenge. See **Section 4** for practical things you can do to help young adults develop life skills.

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# 4 HOW TO WORK WITH YOUNG ADULTS ON PROBATION: PRACTICAL ACTIONS

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This section covers practical things that probation staff can do in their day-to-day work with young adults to make their service as effective as possible. Whilst many of these measures may also be effective with people of all ages, they are particularly important for overcoming some of the barriers to engagement that affect work with young adults



## Building trust and modelling behaviour

Many young adults in the Criminal Justice System have difficulty trusting adults and professionals (see **Section 2**). It often takes longer to build a good working relationship with a young adult compared with an older one. Investing time and energy in building trust is worthwhile, not only to assist with compliance but also to support the young adult on their journey away from crime. For young adults with experience of trauma and attachment problems, it is particularly important to find ways to demonstrate that you care for and respect them; they are then more likely to respond positively in turn.

Because of their level of maturity, many young adults do not consider the long term consequences of engaging or not engaging with their offender manager. They are more likely to engage with probation because they like you personally. The way you behave with them and the attitude you present has a big impact on how well they engage.



### What can you do?

- **Develop the relationship at an early stage:** The quality of relationships between young adults and professionals is critical and can make all the difference to choices to people desist from crime or continues to offend. Engaging with the young adult in custody prior to release will help to support them through the immediate transition period and will provide an opportunity to develop trust with them at a critical point in their criminal justice journey.
  - **Demonstrate respect and care:** You can do this through the way you interact with a young adult, including by
    - » asking the young adult how they are feeling, and showing that you are listening to their responses
- 
- » texting or calling between meetings to check how they are and that they understand what is expected of them
- 
- » checking case notes before each meeting starts and referring back to previous sessions and things discussed and agreed
- 
- » showing that you are willing to ‘go the extra mile’ by taking actions based on issues they have identified.
- 
- **Set boundaries and stick to them:** You may be the first person to have done this consistently with the young adult. For example, a mentoring service we spoke to agrees in advance with clients what to do if they lose their temper (such as leaving and calling later, or following them if they storm off).
  - **Try to avoid setting targets the young adult cannot achieve.** You have no control over the order, but you may be able to avoid breaches or other issues by using professional discretion in decisions. For example, young adults’ body clocks are set later than those of older adults, so afternoon appointments may work better.
  - **Pro-social modelling:** Try not to rearrange appointments at short notice. Inform the young adult as early as possible if an appointment needs to be changed (for example, ensure that a colleague calls the young adult if you are on sick leave). Keep promises.
  - **Reducing formality:** Some young adults will respond well to more informal approaches. When possible, meet outside the office such as in a café or community centre, or just by going for a walk, even if you can only do this every so often.
  - **Common interests:** Try to build rapport and relate to the young adult on a personal level.

## Pre-sentence reports and sentence plans

Pre-sentence reports (PSRs) should include an assessment of maturity and recommend an effective response when a lower level of maturity is identified. They should also include information about any specific needs or issues such as disabilities or brain injury.



### What can you do?

- **Check with Youth Offending Service** (even if the young adult is not a direct transfer) for Asset<sup>33</sup> information that will be relevant to probation assessments
- **Explain the maturity assessment<sup>34</sup> findings in the PSR** and use the assessment to create the subsequent sentence plan for the young adult
- When advising courts on sentencing, **ensure you are familiar with community-based interventions** that could be included as part of a Rehabilitation Activity Requirement.
- Consider using both mandatory and non-mandatory interventions as part of the Order.

## Orders and breaching

Many young adults fail to comply with licence requirements because they do not understand them, because they don't make long-term judgements to avoid negative consequences of their actions, or because they lack life skills and experience that would otherwise help them to comply. Compliance can be particularly problematic for young adults who have previous experience of Youth Offending Services which may have been more flexible, and struggle to adjust to the very different approach taken by probation. These young adults may need more time to adjust to the adult system than those who have entered the system after age 18. See **Section 7** for an example of how the Youth to Adult service in Cardiff helps to facilitate this transition.



### What can you do?

- **Explain the Order:** Explain the content of an Order clearly and ask questions to ensure that the young adult has understood before going through the paperwork with them. Avoid jargon. Speech and language specialists can identify particular communication needs due to disability or other issues.
- **Working together, identify issues that might cause a breach:** Have a conversation early on about what the barriers are, what might cause them to breach and how this can best be avoided by working together.



- **Use your professional discretion:**

If an Order is not complied with, assess the person's level of maturity (see **Section 2** above) and use professional discretion when considering whether to breach. If you know a young adult will find it hard to meet the requirements of the Order, try to be flexible. You may also consider greater flexibility for those who have experience of the Youth Offending Service and are adjusting to the different requirements of the adult system. There may be better long-term outcomes if the young adult is not immediately breached but given warnings and the opportunity to change their behaviour to avoid breach in the future.

- **Use breach to help the young adult to learn:**

Breach can be used positively. After a young adult is breached, it is important to continue to see them even though they have breached the Order. Write breach reports as late as possible so you can include how they have progressed or addressed issues since the breach.

- **Support the development of life skills:**

Help young adults to develop life skills to assist compliance, such as buying a diary and using phone reminders (see section below). Send reminders by text, or phone about appointments if necessary.

## Working with families

Families often have a more direct role in the lives of young adults than with older offenders, so it is particularly important to understand a young adult's family background and in some cases it is appropriate to meet other family members. Youth Offending Services work much more closely with families than probation does, so for young adults transferring from the Youth Offending Service to probation, this difference can sometimes be confusing for both them and their families.

Whilst it can sometimes be beneficial to work directly with family members, this should only be done with the young adult's consent, and then only if it is beneficial to involve the family (occasionally the family can make it harder rather than easier for the young adult to move away from crime).



### What can you do?

- Where possible, **meet with the young adult at home** at least once so that you can gain a better understanding of their family context.
- Consider **meeting the young adult along with a parent or family member** if this is appropriate (and only with their consent), but always have the initial few appointments with the young adult on their own in order to build rapport with them first.
- **Many young adults are parents themselves**, and may need support in their parenting role. For some young adults, becoming a parent can be an important trigger for them to move away from crime (although for some, parenting can be a trigger for offending). Provide encouragement around parenting skills, and refer clients to specialist parenting and family support available locally.
- **Refer clients to family support and mediation services** if beneficial for developing better relationships with family members.



## Developing life skills

Many young adults have not yet developed life skills they need for their day-to-day lives, and for those in the criminal justice system this can affect their ability to comply with Orders. There are many ways in which probation practitioners can support young adults to develop the life skills they need.

### Restorative justice

The use of restorative approaches or participation in restorative justice interventions can help young adult offenders to develop maturity and skills as well as support the desistance process. Benefits of participation in restorative justice can include building self-esteem, encouraging personal responsibility and humanising their victims.<sup>35</sup> The Remedi mentoring service uses a restorative approach to working with young adults in the criminal justice system (see example in **Section 7**).



### What can you do?

- **Enabling and encouragement:** Don't do things for them but encourage them to do things for themselves and then give them encouragement afterwards, for example praising their phone manner after they have made a phone call to housing services, job centre or other services.
- **Developing interpersonal skills:** Address poor negotiation skills (for example clients who quickly become confrontational if there is a problem) by modelling good behaviour when you are with them, setting boundaries so they can get used to having boundaries elsewhere, and attending appointments with them if possible, then reflecting on how it went afterwards.

- **Get a diary:** Enable them to keep appointments by encouraging them to buy a diary or helping them program the calendar on their phone – they may not have thought of this before. You may also wish to give them a print out of a weekly or monthly diary sheet if they have a lot of appointments related to their sentence or other activities (commonly used by Integrated Offender Management teams and by Intensive Support and Supervision orders in the Youth Offending Service).
- **Identify and assess any disabilities:** Make sure that you are aware if the young adult has low literacy or learning disabilities (which they may be adept at hiding), by using screening tools such as the LDD Navigator website (see Further Resources).
- **Budgeting:** Managing finances can be very challenging for a young adult. Provide them with access to budgeting advice and keep abreast of changing welfare and benefits rules, as they may impact heavily on the young adult's circumstances, particularly as debt can be a contributory factor in offending behaviour.
- **Prioritisation:** Help them to make a list of what they want to achieve or aspire to in their life, and help them to prioritise it.
- **Attitudes, thinking and behaviour:** This is likely to be an under-developed area in many young adults in the CJS, and you can help the young adult to develop these skills through using tools and activities focused on attitudes, thinking and behaviour in your appointments with them, and by discussing consequences of their actions.



## Practical support

Most young adults need some practical support and encouragement to enable them to gradually live independently. Young adults on probation are likely to need extra support to assist them with accommodation, benefits, access to training, employment and in other areas of their lives. This is why intensive, holistic support is so effective with young adults to enable them to desist from crime.

### Intensive support and mentoring

Where possible, it is good for offender managers that work with young adults to have flexible or reduced caseloads to enable them to spend more time with these clients (see **Section 6**). This practical support might include:

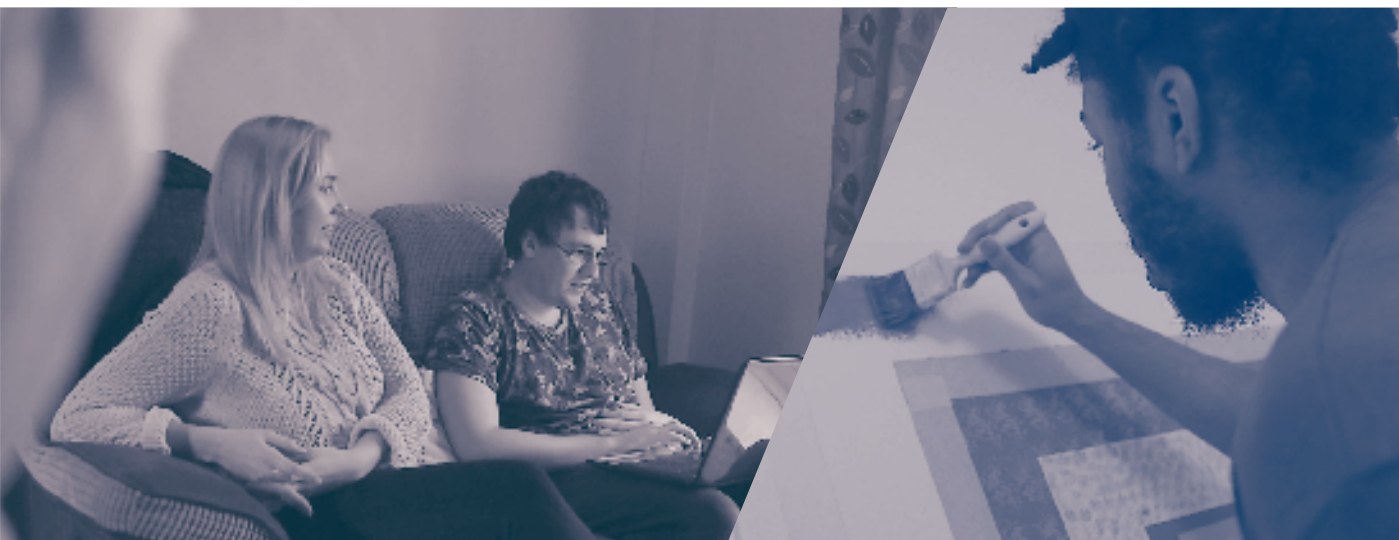
- Attending appointments with the young adults
- Providing information about entitlements to benefits, housing or other services
- Advocating on their behalf to navigate housing, health and benefits systems
- Helping them to prepare a CV or make a job application
- Encouraging and enabling them to access training or education.

If it is not possible to deliver this level of support within your probation service, you can try to ensure that there is other support in place such as from a mentoring service locally.



## What can you do?

- **Multi-agency liaison and brokerage:** Make contact with other key services locally such as the care leavers' team to ensure that the young adult is accessing all the support available to them
- **Refer to local mentoring services:** Familiarise yourself with local services that offer mentoring or other support to young adults, and refer them to these services. When making a referral, speak to the service and introduce the young adult directly, rather than just giving the young adult details to do it themselves, as it may not be followed up. With the young adult's consent, pass on their case information so that they do not have to repeat their story. Where possible, attend the first appointment with the young adult to personally introduce them to the staff, which shows commitment and avoids them feeling 'moved on'.



# 5 IN THE WORDS OF YOUNG ADULTS - WHAT MAKES A GOOD PROBATION OFFICER?

It is vital for probation officers and young adults to develop good and trusting relationships. In this section we asked young adults on probation licenses to describe what they identified in probation officers that had made a difference to their lives.

## Working with young adults

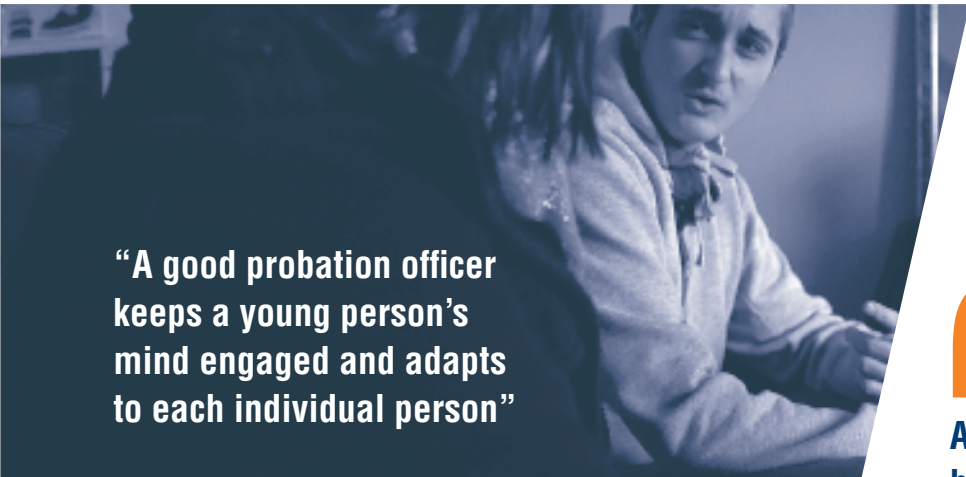
Working with young adults in the criminal justice context can often be a challenge and particularly intensive due to their high support needs and (for some) a reluctance to engage with services. This role requires an array of skills and creative approaches from practitioners to work effectively with young adults. To understand the skills required for this role, it is important to ask the young adults themselves. Some of the young adults we spoke to described their ideal probation practitioner as:

“A probation officer empowers you, helps you choose your path and provides an insight into the opportunities available”


“A good probation officer provides support and shows empathy. They are willing to spend time to talk to you”

“If the probation officer acts like they know it all, the less likely I’d be to say anything to them”

“My probation officer was good because they had some leniency”



**“A good probation officer keeps a young person’s mind engaged and adapts to each individual person”**



**“They have to be a good talker and know how to have a laugh”**



**“They show that they care and stick to their word”**

“

**A good probation officer has to be able to work with different people and not be judgemental of me based on anything until they meet me. They have to show that they really believe I can stop offending and achieve better things. If they do, it will help me believe I can be different. My probation officer needs to show an honest care of my welfare and everything going on in my life. Showing a genuine interest in my life will help me feel like they are on my side because at first it just feels like they are part of the system like the rest**”

”

Some of the probation practitioners we spoke to said that working with young adults is sometimes unpredictable due to the chaotic lives led by some young adults. Therefore, it is important that the probation officer can adapt differently to the needs of each young adult, depending on the situation - which can change on a daily basis. Some probation practitioners also said that their personal experiences have impacted on their overall approach, in turn leading to a positive impact on the young adult. Finally, probation practitioners need to be robust and refrain from taking offence easily; young adults often say things in order to test boundaries and don't always mean everything they say.

# 6 WHAT CAN MANAGERS DO TO ENABLE EFFECTIVE WORK WITH YOUNG ADULTS?

This section covers ideas for managers and service commissioners on what is needed to enable effective work with young adults within probation services. It includes a range of key enablers, some of which are easily implemented with little to no cost, and some of which may require more significant service redesign. The suggestions below all exist within probation services across the country, but no probation service currently does them all. See also Section 7 for specific examples of how several probation services have enabled effective work with young adults.



## Going for Gold: Developing effective services for young adults throughout the criminal justice process

Those managing, designing and commissioning services should also refer to 'Going for Gold', a Clinks and Transition to Adulthood Alliance resource which offers a step by step guide to developing young adult services based on the experience of organisations that have already done it. It provides senior strategic leads and commissioners with a benchmark from which they can develop effective, evidence-based approaches that have been proven to support young adults to desist from crime. Being mindful of diminishing local resources it includes a "bronze, silver and gold approach" that offers practical ways services can be developed with very little resource, or when possible, with enough resources to commission a bespoke service.



[www.t2a.org.uk/going4gold](http://www.t2a.org.uk/going4gold)

## Case allocation

Young adults usually require more intensive support than many other probation clients, so caseloads should reflect the actual amount of time needed to enable clients to move away from crime and meet the requirements of their Orders.

- **Young adult specialists:** Cases should be allocated so that officers who have the skills, experience and interest in working with young adults can develop a specialism in this area of work
- **Flexible caseloads:** Individual officers' caseloads should reflect the level of intensity of support and supervision required by those clients, with workers who see a lot of young adults (or others with particularly complex needs) having a lower number of overall cases. This will allow for appointment times to be slightly longer, more contact between appointments and more multi-agency work and other follow up support. This is more cost effective in the long run than providing the same level of service to all clients regardless of the complexity of their need, which results in increased numbers of breaches, recalls and reoffending for young adults.

## Support and supervision for staff

Because young adults often have complex needs, they can be particularly challenging to engage and work with. Practitioners working with young adults need effective support for the high intensity of support required to work with young adults in order to avoid 'burn out' and maximise the impact of their service.

- **Support and supervision:** Effective supervision and support from managers is essential for staff carrying out intensive work with young adults. Services that provide intensive mentoring to young adults usually provide clinical supervision for staff. While resources may not allow this level of supervision for probation staff, good management support is important to allow practitioners to reflect on their work and develop creative approaches to engage young adults
- **Peer support and team working:** Staff working within the same team can provide important support to practitioners in their work with young adults, both through sharing learning and providing moral support to address potential 'burn out'. Managers should ensure that officers have the opportunity to collaborate and provide each other with peer support
- **Multi-agency learning:** Facilitate multi-agency learning, especially between Youth Offending Services and probation. This can be done by establishing a joint practitioners' forum and/or running joint training. See **Section 7** for examples of areas that have done this.
- **Continuing professional development:** Provide practitioners with access to appropriate training and development relevant to their work with young adults, including on the subjects of attachment, trauma and its impact, learning disabilities and brain development.

## Multi-agency work, co-location and referrals

Young adults often need support in many areas of their lives including mental health, accommodation, and training or employment; and multi-agency work enables this to take place.

- **Integrated Offender Management (IOM):** The IOM approach is particularly effective for working with young adults because it can provide a higher frequency of contact and access to services from a range of agencies within a co-ordinated team. Consider using IOM arrangements to develop a specific young adult approach (see Cardiff IOM example in **Section 7** below)
- **Co-location in community settings:** Consider situating probation staff in community hubs or centres with other services, to facilitate referrals, information sharing and joint working. See for example Croydon probation services (in **Section 7** below) who have established a young adults' community hub. Basing probation staff in community settings can be particularly effective to enable clients to access voluntary sector services and/or volunteering opportunities, reduce the stigma of attending probation premises, and support desistance by enabling them to feel part of the local community. It can also provide practitioners with peer support, shared ethos and an environment with a young adult focus
- **Intensive mentoring:** Research and pilots have shown the effectiveness of intensive, wrap-around support for young adults in the CJS.<sup>36</sup> This may involve several contacts per week with the young adult, providing practical as well as emotional support, and brokering relationships with other services. While this is outside the scope of what most probation services can directly provide, ensure that probation staff are aware of any locally available mentoring services, and consider commissioning a mentoring service if none is available. See for example West Mercia probation which commissions intensive supplementary key worker support (**Section 7**).

## Practical aids to effective practice

Small, practical adjustments to services can make a very big difference to workers' ability to engage effectively with young adults and other clients with complex needs. The following are some practical measures that are low cost and easy to implement. They were suggested by probation practitioners we spoke to as enabling factors in their work with young adults, and in place in some probation services.

- **Enable staff to meet clients outside the office:** In order to develop effective relationships and trust with young adults, it is helpful to have some meetings outside the probation office, even if only occasionally. Whilst it may not be possible in all probation premises or with all service users, it is worth considering what can be done to enable it to happen. This could include, for example, meeting a client at another agency where they are accessing services (and introducing them to staff there), meeting in a café near the probation office, or just going for a walk outside instead of staying in the office for the appointment
- **A phone for each practitioner:** It is critical that the client is able to get hold of their probation officer directly and vice versa, and a direct mobile phone enables workers to contact their clients to remind them of meetings, to check how they are or to follow up with extra information. It is not enough to only have access to a team mobile. Where resources allow, providing a smart phone enables the use of the 'Whatsapp' application - a free messaging service which is used by many young adults who have internet access but not phone credit. In addition, having a phone with internet access enables workers to quickly look up information online when with a client, such as opening times or addresses for referral agencies.
- **Tea and coffee making facilities:** Something as simple as a shared hot drink can enable workers to build relationships with clients and reduce formality by offering to make them a drink or having a chat in a more informal setting than an appointment room

- **Flexible fund for purchasing small items for clients:** If possible, it is helpful for workers to have access to funds to buy small items for clients, such as a cheap mobile phone (or phone credit) if they do not have one – this is less expensive than missed appointments
- **Women/youth only sessions:** Consider having a session when only female clients use the probation office, such as one morning a week/fortnight, in order to create a safer space where these clients feel more comfortable. While safety is of particular importance with female clients, this could also be beneficial for young adults, so you may consider having a morning where younger clients can access services without coming into contact with older probation service users.



6 What can managers do to enable effective work

# 7 DIFFERENT MODELS OF PROBATION WORK WITH YOUNG ADULTS

The focus of most of this guide is on what probation practitioners can do in their day-to-day work with young adults. This section provides examples of various ways probation services have designed or commissioned specific initiatives or services for young adults.



## Cheshire & Greater Manchester CRC's Intensive Community Order

Cheshire & Greater Manchester Community Rehabilitation Company (CGM CRC) runs an Intensive Community Order (ICO)<sup>37</sup> in Greater Manchester that is specifically targeted at young adult offenders aged between 18 and 25. The aim of the ICO is to tackle the revolving door of short custodial sentences by providing an alternative to custody that supports and challenges young adults to change their behaviour, addressing the reasons for their criminality and giving them the tools to turn their lives around.

It was commissioned by the Greater Manchester Justice and Rehabilitation Executive chaired by the police and crime commissioner Tony Lloyd, initially using a 'success payment' from the Ministry of Justice Financial Incentive Model (Justice Reinvestment Pilot). Since the programme started, reoffending rates have dropped with 80 per cent completing the Order and over a quarter of unemployed offenders on the ICO orders finding full-time work.

The ICO involves an intensive curriculum of activities, offering rehabilitation, punishment and reparation through partnerships between probation and other statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations. A mentor works alongside offender managers to encourage motivation and support compliance and a strong emphasis is given to working towards employment, and family support is an integral part of the ICO programme.

Identity, Adulthood, Maturity (I-Am) is a short group programme for adult males aged 18 to 25. It is informed by practitioner experience and the principles of the Intensive Alternative To Custody team. The programme is for people who have developmental needs in maturity, impulse control, positive self-identity and social responsibility.



**“ A probation officer empowers you, helps you choose your path and provides an insight into the opportunities available ”**



### **Young Adults Project: Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland**

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Young Adults Project (YAP)<sup>38</sup> is a multi-agency partnership taking a ‘whole system approach’ to improving outcomes for young adults in the Criminal Justice System. Commissioned by the police and crime commissioner and involving a range of different agencies, the project has entered its implementation phase after having carried out a year of scoping and data collection. Its planned interventions include:

- Bespoke sentencing options for young adults (using the new Rehabilitation Activity Requirements introduced by the Offender Rehabilitation Act<sup>39</sup>)
- The National Probation Service (NPS), CRC and Youth Offending Service jointly developing a local model of effective practice working with young adults
- Ensuring that local Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and Integrated Offender Management (IOM) arrangements consider variable maturity and tailor their approaches accordingly
- Development of bespoke services for women, BAME young adults and care leavers
- Development of a youth to adult transitions protocol by NPS, CRC and YOS that includes IOM taking on a developmental and tracking role for quality and performance purposes
- A young adult involvement strategy which includes having young adults represented on the project’s delivery group.

In addition the project has a joint practitioners’ forum which meets bi-monthly, allowing shared learning between YOS, CRC and NPS staff working with young adults.



## Cardiff Integrated Offender Management Y2A Service

Cardiff probation services have developed a Youth to Adult (Y2A) transitions project in which a dedicated Y2A worker manages the transition from YOS to probation. The service is managed by the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) team and all transitioning young adults become part of the IOM cohort, enabling them to benefit from integrated and intensive multi-agency support as they transition to probation services. The Y2A worker is based part-time with the Youth Offending Service and part-time with the National Probation Service, which enables them to share learning between both teams. They work with young people for approximately three to six months prior to their 18th birthday (depending on whether they are low/medium or high risk) and up to four months after, and are able to vary the exact time of transfer depending on the needs and situation of the young person.

Young people can transfer to probation but still access YOS services, and vice versa. As the worker handles this process, they gradually alter the way of working with the young adult to use less of a YOS and more of a probation approach, and uses this period as an opportunity to help them stop offending. They also write court reports for un-sentenced young people if they are in court three months prior to their 18th birthday, to ensure consistency in offender management which promotes positive working relationships and compliance.

In addition to the Y2A service, research is being carried out jointly with the Welsh Centre for Crime and Social Justice<sup>40</sup> to track what happens both to those who transfer with support of the Y2A worker, and to young people who are with the YOS but do not transfer directly to probation.



## Joint training for Probation and Youth Offending Service staff in Hampshire

Hampshire Youth Offending Team (YOT) has developed joint training with the probation service to enable staff from both agencies to reduce the potential negative effects on well-being, compliance and offending that are linked to the transitions of adolescence and the criminal justice system.<sup>41</sup> The two-day training enables staff to:

- Apply the nine principles of good transition to their work with young offenders
- Describe similarities and differences of YOT and probation service procedures
- Recognise the potential impact of transitions on well-being, compliance, and offending behaviour
- Manage the transition from YOT to adult probation in a way that minimises negative impact
- Apply techniques to assess the maturity of young people in transition.

Being jointly developed by probation and youth justice staff over the past two years, the project and the training itself have enabled shared learning and good working relationships to be developed between the two agencies.



## The Croydon Hub

The Croydon Hub was launched by London Probation Trust in 2012.<sup>42</sup> It provides young adults aged 18-25 years old with access to organisations and businesses that can provide advice, support and access to education, training and employment opportunities under one roof. Following the changes as a result of Transforming Rehabilitation, the Young Adults Hub continued under the London Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). The Hub Coordinator actively seeks referrals for the Hub from both the CRC and the National Probation Service (NPS). Service users attend a five week programme and are NEET (not in employment, education or training), of low to medium risk of serious harm, and fall within the 18-25 age bracket. Once referred, attending the Hub is compulsory when a service user meets the criteria.

The Hub consists of one-to-one discussions alongside a programme of presentations, workshops and off-site visits from the wide range of locally based organisations that support the Hub. Choosing the right lifestyle is an important message to get across; 'Bullybreed' – an awareness raising workshop by Battersea Dogs and Cats Homes advocates not using dogs as weapons; a financial capability workshop run by the Citizens Advice Bureau looks at budgeting, borrowing and renting your own home; and a Healthy Living Workshop covers healthy eating, exercise and how to stop smoking.



## Warwickshire & West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company strategic partnership

Warwickshire & West Mercia CRC has developed a strategic partnership known as 'One Step Beyond'<sup>43</sup> with local charity YSS and has commissioned a service providing Enhanced Support Service (ESS) for offenders, including young adults, at high risk of reoffending.<sup>44</sup> The purpose of ESS is to reduce reoffending rates by increasing the level of engagement by targeted offender groups with their supervision or licence requirements. It is a support service rather than a specified activity, but appointments with ESS key workers are mandatory. ESS provides intensive key worker support with either 10 or 20 face-to-face contacts spread over 12 weeks, backed up with texts and phone calls. The initial appointment with the key worker is two hours long, and meetings take place in community settings unless prevented by risk.

Though the ESS is not a service targeted at young adults, because the support is intensive and tailored to the individual, the specific needs of young adults can be met. 18-24 year-olds make up about a third of the caseload. The ESS programme builds on learning from the T2A pilot led by YSS.<sup>45</sup>

The key workers provide consistent and practical support, and can assist with issues like benefits, budgeting, registering with health and/or substance misuse services, access to housing, debt advice, training and education and employment support.

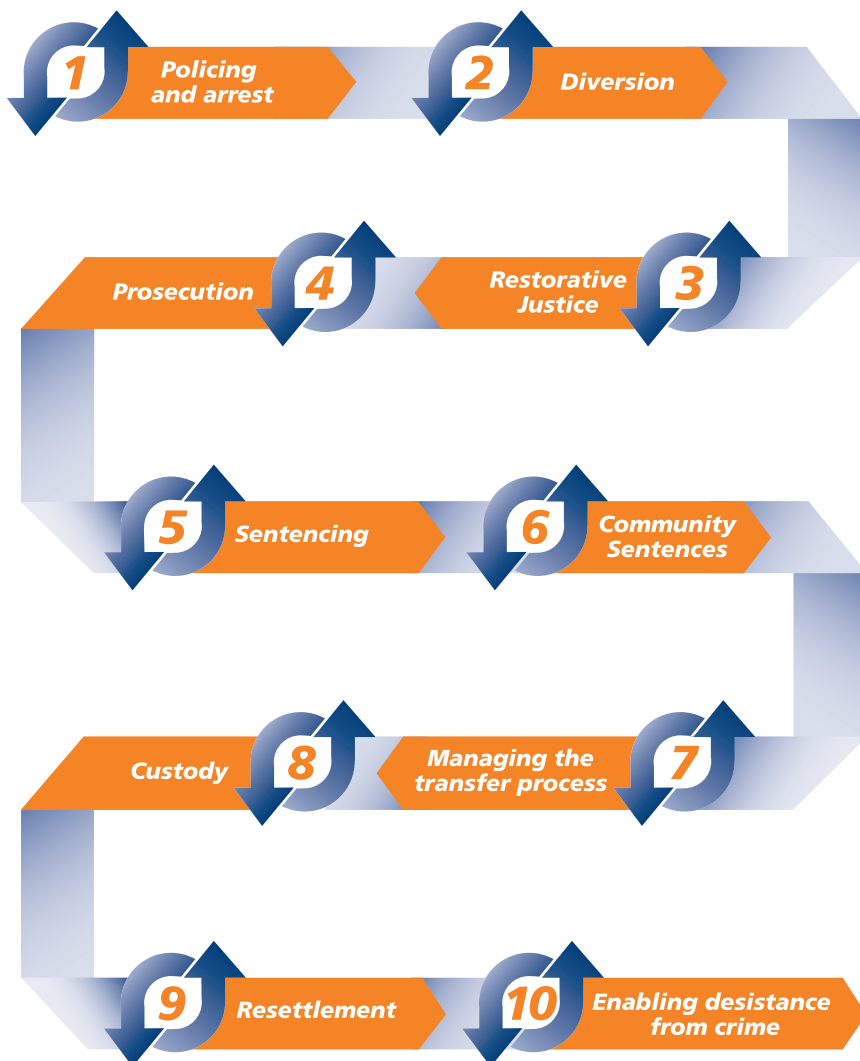
## T2A Pathway projects

The T2A Pathway is a framework that illustrates 10 stages in the criminal justice process at which effective interventions can be made to help young adults desist from crime. These include policing and arrest, sentencing and custody.

To build upon the work of the previous T2A pilots<sup>46</sup>, six projects across England were launched in 2014 to operate at different stages of the T2A Pathway, illustrating how a 'whole pathway approach' for young adults could be commissioned in a given locality. The Pathway projects all involve partnership working between statutory and voluntary sector agencies and most have match funding from local agencies.

The projects that work with young adults on probation or in resettlement are outlined below, and full details of all the projects can be found at:

<http://www.t2a.org.uk/pathway/>



### Remedi T2A Pathway Project

The project operates at stages 3 (Restorative Justice) and 6 (Community Sentences) of the T2A Pathway, and delivers restorative mentoring interventions to young adults aged 17-25 across South Yorkshire. The mentoring provided is 'restorative' in that it seeks to address the harm that has been caused by the offence. Remedi has found that that harm caused by an offender presents significant barriers in their life to successful resettlement and to their motivation or ability to stop offending. By combining a broad cross-section of mentoring (befriending, encouragement, guidance, practical and emotional support) with restorative practices (mediation, family conferencing, restorative conferencing), Remedi delivers a needs led service for the individual and the wider community.

150 referrals per year are made by Remedi's existing and long-established partners in the youth offending service and probation service. Typical mentoring relationships will last between 3 and 6 months. Two dedicated full time practitioners provide these specifically targeted intensive services for the young adult group, alongside existing mentoring teams working with a broader range of offenders.



## Prince's Trust T2A Pathway Project

This project delivers at stages 8 (custody) and 9 (resettlement) of the T2A Pathway, providing mentoring support aimed at routes to employment, education and training for young adults in the West Midlands, aged between 16 to 25, who have at least three months left of a custodial sentence. The project operates in two prisons: HMP Featherstone and HMP/YOI Brinsford (male prison and young adult male prison). The project supports young adults who volunteer to join the programme when leaving prison and re-entering the community, with the aim of preventing a relapse into offending.

Young adults in custody who engage with the service attend a pre-release session where the Prison Outreach Executive will introduce the project. The pre-release session covers such topics as: realising your potential, staying away from crime, mapping support, and commitment to change. The young adults are offered one-to-one mentoring sessions with the Prison Outreach Executive (three sessions before and three after release). Mentoring can last up to 6 months (3 months pre-release and 3 months in the community). As part of the mentoring provision the young adult work with the Prison Outreach Executive to develop an individual action plan for when they are released.



## PACT T2A Pathway Project

This project is delivered at stages 8 (custody) and 9 (resettlement) of the T2A Pathway, providing family support services for young adults (males and females) in custody, and on release from, three prisons in Staffordshire. The project, for the first time, brings together PACT's Transforming Relationships model with Family Group Conferencing, providing a family-led approach in custody and through to resettlement. PACT's Family Engagement Worker (FEW) provides case management for young adult prisoners and their families in YOI/HMPs Drake Hall (youth/adult female), HMP/YOI Werrington (youth male) and HMP Stafford (adult male).

The FEW works in each prison and with the families in the community. Referrals will come via the prison induction team with priority to those who meet Troubled Families criteria. PACT's Family Champions, recruited from among longer-sentence trained prisoners, are involved in an initial triage to determine levels of support and provide short-term interventions. PACT also provides effective signposting into existing resettlement services in prison and support services in the community. The planned average duration of support is 6 months across the FEW and Troubled Families teams combined.

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# 8 FURTHER RESOURCES

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This section provides further information on the tools and resources available to probation practitioners to use when working with young adults. It covers the practical tools available for probation services which practitioners have recommended. This section also includes further resources available to help guide probation practitioners in their day to day roles and where to find them.

## Tools and activities for use with young adults

### Transition workbook (youth to adult):

This pack aims to make the young person aware of the differences between youth and adult services in the Criminal Justice System.

 [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)

### Brain Injury Screening Index (BISI):

The Disabilities Trust Foundation has developed the Brain Injury Screening Index® to identify people with a history of brain injury. This short screening questionnaire has been developed for use by all levels of practitioners and is a key tool for people working with offenders and those at risk of homelessness. The BISI is freely available for use from The Disabilities Trust Foundation, subject to signing a Licence Agreement.

@ **Contact: [foundation@thedtgroup.org](mailto:foundation@thedtgroup.org)**

☎ **01444 239123** or for more information see:

 [www.thedtgroup.org](http://www.thedtgroup.org)

### The Jigsaw approach used by the Youth

**Offending Service:** This programme provides interventions to be tailored to work with young people from Standard through to Intensive levels. It is a programme that provides a comprehensive range of tools which can be delivered to different groups of young people, ranging in offending experience, ability and maturity, in both one-to-one and group settings.

 [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)

### Birmingham Treatment Effectiveness

**Initiative (BTEI):** The BTEI approach is based on 'node-link mapping'. This is a technique for discussing issues with clients and visually representing them in a series of 'maps', with text boxes connected by lines which represent different types of relationships.

 [www.nta.nhs.uk](http://www.nta.nhs.uk)

### Learning Difficulties and Disabilities

**Navigator:** This tool is designed to assist in assessing learning difficulties and disabilities in the Criminal Justice System.

 [www.iddnavigator.org.uk](http://www.iddnavigator.org.uk)

## Training and resources for staff

### Youth to adult transitions in criminal justice

**training:** This two day training course, aimed at probation practitioners, is on how to apply the key principles of a good transition. The course will describe the differences between Youth Offending Team and probation service procedures and assist practitioners with how to reduce the impact of transition.

 [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)

**Working Together with Young People:** Working Together with Young People is a slide pack used by Oxfordshire YOS and Thames Valley Probation Trust to encourage inter-service awareness and improve partnership working. **Contact:**

@ **Sue.Howarth@Oxfordshire.gov.uk.cjism.net**

☎ **01865 816500** or for more information see:

 [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)

## Other guides and resources

**Taking Account of Maturity:** A guide for probation practitioners (2013): This guide was developed to enable probation practitioners to use the OASys tool to recognise that a young adult's level of maturity may be relevant to their offending behaviour.

 [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)

**Going for Gold:** Developing effective services for young adults throughout the criminal justice process (2012): A step by step guide to developing young adult services providing senior strategic leads and commissioners with a benchmark from which they can develop effective, evidence-based approaches that have been proven to support young adults to desist from crime.

 [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)

### **Repairing Shattered Lives: Brain injury and its implications for criminal justice (2012):**

This report makes clear recommendations for service commissioners and providers in the health and criminal justice sectors as to how they should work together to respond appropriately, ensuring that acquired brain injuries are picked up early, treated effectively, and taken into account throughout the criminal justice process.

📄 [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)

### **You can't put a number on it: a young adult participation report on why maturity is more important than age in a criminal justice context**

(2015): This participation report is based on the words, thoughts and experiences of 18-24-year-olds with experience of the CJS. The report outlines their collected thoughts about how young adults experience the criminal justice process

📄 [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)

### **The Bradley Commission: Young adults (18-24) in transition, mental health and criminal justice**

(2014): This briefing from the Centre for Mental Health gives an overview of the needs of young adults in contact with mental health and/or learning disability services and the criminal justice system. It gives examples of good practice along the offender pathway, and includes practical and policy solutions for those working with and commissioning services for young adults.

📄 [www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk)

**T2A Substance misuse and young adults in the Criminal Justice System** (2011): This guide explores key facts and figures about substance misuse amongst young adult offenders, aged 18-24.

📄 [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)

### **Positive Practice, Positive Outcomes**

(2011): This Department of Health handbook is for professionals in the Criminal Justice System working with offenders with learning disabilities; it includes a section on probation services.

📄 [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

**The Power of Participation: Criminal Justice Services** (2014): A guide on how to involve young people with learning disabilities or communication difficulties, who are at risk of or involved in offending, in decision making in criminal justice services.

📄 [www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

### **The Young Review: Improving outcomes for young black and/or Muslim men in the Criminal Justice System**

(2014): A report that highlights the specific experiences and needs of black and Muslim men aged 18-24 in the Criminal Justice System, and sets out a series of recommendations that aim to ensure that action takes place to address unequal outcomes; from prison to resettlement.

📄 <http://youngreview.org.uk/reports>

**Lessons for Resettlement** (2011): A report outlining recommendations for improvements to resettlement services for Black, Asian and minority ethnic offenders, based on 'Double Trouble', a study on BAME people's experiences of resettlement.

📄 [www.clinks.org](http://www.clinks.org)

### **NOMS Practice Guidance: Working with Care Leavers (18-25), in custody and the community, to reduce reoffending and promote effective transition to adulthood**

(2013): National Offender Management Service guidance on working with care leavers.

📄 [www.careleavers.com](http://www.careleavers.com)

### **Clinks Directory for information on the voluntary sector**

📄 [www.clinks.org/directory](http://www.clinks.org/directory)

**Beyond Youth Custody:** A national programme set up to examine and promote best practice in the resettlement of young people and young adults leaving custody. Led by NACRO, the programme aims to develop sustainable models of resettlement that can be delivered and adopted nationally. They have a variety of guides for practitioners, including:

- Resettlement of girls and young women
- Developing trauma-informed resettlement for young custody leavers
- Young offenders and trauma: experience and impact
- Participatory approaches for young people in resettlement: a practitioner's guide
- Engaging young people in resettlement
- Gang involved young people – custody and beyond
- Disproportionality
- Diversity.

📄 [www.beyondyouthcustody.net](http://www.beyondyouthcustody.net)

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## END NOTES

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1. Transition to Adulthood Alliance (2015) *Better In Europe? European responses to young adult offending* [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)
2. <http://www.t2a.org.uk/t2a-pilots/>
3. Read a case study about Pecan and one of their service users at <http://www.clinks.org/health-case-studies>
4. Transition to Adulthood Alliance (2013) *Taking account of maturity* [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)
5. OASys (the Offender Assessment System) is used by prisons and probation services to measure the risks and needs of offenders under their supervision
6. Beyond Youth Custody (2014) *Developing trauma-informed resettlement for young custody leavers* [www.beyondyouthcustody.net](http://www.beyondyouthcustody.net)
7. IRISS (2014) *Attachment-informed practice with looked after children and young people* [www.iriss.org.uk](http://www.iriss.org.uk)
8. Ministry of Justice (2013) *Transforming Youth Custody: Putting education at the heart of detention* <https://consult.justice.gov.uk>
9. As above.
10. See Young Minds (2013) 'Same Old...' [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk) and T2A Alliance (2014) *Response by the Transition to Adulthood Alliance (T2A) to the Independent Review into Self-Inflicted Deaths in NOMS Custody of 18-24 year olds* <http://www.t2a.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Response-by-the-Transition-to-Adulthood-Alliance-to-IAP-FINAL.pdf>
11. T2A Alliance (2012) *Repairing Shattered Lives: Brain injuries and its implications for criminal justice* [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)
12. T2A Alliance (2011) *Substance misuse and young adults in the Criminal Justice System* [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)
13. Beyond Youth Custody (2014) *Resettlement of girls and young women: Research summary* [www.beyondyouthcustody.net](http://www.beyondyouthcustody.net)
14. Race On The Agenda (2011) *This is it. This is my life. Female voice in violence Final Report: On the impact of serious youth violence and criminal gangs on women and girls across the country* [www.rota.org.uk](http://www.rota.org.uk) . See also practitioner briefings at <http://msunderstood.org.uk>
15. BTEG/Clinks/Barrow Cadbury Trust (2014) *The Young Review: Improving outcomes for young black and/or Muslim men in the Criminal Justice System* <http://youngreview.org.uk>
16. As above.
17. As above.
18. Clinks (2011) *Lessons for Resettlement* [www.clinks.org](http://www.clinks.org)
19. Transition to Adulthood Alliance (2015) *You can't put a number on it: a young adult participation report on why maturity is more important than age in a criminal justice context* [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)
20. As above.
21. For information on cultural competence in a health and social care setting, see RIPFA (2010) *How can we ensure culturally competent services?* [www.ripfa.org.uk](http://www.ripfa.org.uk)
22. Clinks (2011) *Double Trouble: Black, Asian and minority ethnic offenders' experiences of resettlement* [www.clinks.org/double-trouble](http://www.clinks.org/double-trouble)
23. A directory of BAME organisations working in criminal justice can be accessed at [www.clinks.org](http://www.clinks.org)
24. For more information on communication difficulties and learning disabilities among young people in the CJS, see [www.mencap.org.uk/raisingyourgame](http://www.mencap.org.uk/raisingyourgame)
25. Clinks (2014) *Rehabilitation: What does good look like (Journal article)* [www.clinks.org](http://www.clinks.org)
26. For example, this is recommended for people with autism in the 'Think Autism' strategy [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)
27. Prison Reform Trust (2014) Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile: Autumn 2014 [www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk](http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk)
28. Ministry of Justice (2014) *Prisoners' childhood and family backgrounds: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners* [www.gov.uk/government/](http://www.gov.uk/government/)
29. As above.
30. Care Leavers' Association (2014) *Practice Guidance for Criminal Justice Practitioners*. Download from [www.clinks.org](http://www.clinks.org) and see also [www.careleavers.org](http://www.careleavers.org).
31. As above.
32. <http://www.careleavers.org>
33. Asset is the structured assessment tool used by Youth Offending Teams, see <http://yjbpublications.justice.gov.uk>. It is being superseded by AssetPlus in summer 2015, for more information see [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)
34. For guidance on assessing maturity, see Transition to Adulthood Alliance (2013) *Taking account of maturity* [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)



35. Transition to Adulthood Alliance / Restorative Justice Council (2013) *Restorative Justice for Young Adults: Factoring in maturity and facilitating desistance* [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk)
36. <http://www.t2a.org.uk/t2a-pilots/>
37. <http://cgm-probation.org.uk>
38. <http://dlnrcrc.co.uk>
39. Clinks (2015) *Clinks Briefing: Offender Rehabilitation Act* [www.clinks.org](http://www.clinks.org)
40. <http://wccsj.ac.uk>
41. [www.justice.gov.uk/](http://www.justice.gov.uk/)
42. [www.londoncrc.org.uk](http://www.londoncrc.org.uk)
43. [www.wmrcr.co.uk/](http://www.wmrcr.co.uk/)
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45. [www.t2a.org.uk/t2a-pilots/](http://www.t2a.org.uk/t2a-pilots/)
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# EFFECTIVE APPROACHES WITH YOUNG ADULTS

## A guide for probation services

Young adults constitute less than 10% of the general population but make up one third of those involved in the Criminal Justice System (CJS). However, young adults are the most likely age group to desist and grow out of crime, and the wrong intervention at this time can slow desistance and extend the period that a young adult is involved in the CJS. Getting it right at this critical time is crucial to assisting young adults to make a successful transition to a crime free adulthood.

Probation services often find young adults harder to engage than older adults in services, which can be due to variable maturity levels, complex lifestyles and difficulties building a trusting and effective relationship with the practitioner. Because of this, young adults are the most likely age group to reoffend and to breach their Orders.

We have spoken to probation practitioners and young adults to learn from them the most effective approaches to work with 17-25 year olds. This guide includes:

- Practical suggestions to assist probation practitioners in their day-to-day work with this age group
- Information on the specific issues facing young adults and how they impact on their engagement with probation, including maturity, trauma, health needs and the development of life skills
- How to tailor services to specific groups such as women, Black Asian and minority ethnic young adults, those with disabilities and care leavers
- What young adults themselves feel makes a good probation officer
- Measures managers and commissioners can take to enable effective engagement of young adults and adapt services where necessary
- Examples of how different probation services have adapted their approaches for young adults.



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