
FOREWORD

Reform sometimes carries unintended consequences. Over the last five years Government has put considerable effort and investment into establishing the Youth Justice Board, developing youth offender teams and trying to improve custodial regimes for under-18 year-olds who offend. In stark contrast, conditions for, and the treatment of, 18 to 20 year-olds appear not only to have stood still but in many cases to have deteriorated.

This report gathers information from Independent Monitoring Boards, reports from the Chief Inspector of Prisons and accounts given by young people in prison. Together they present a bleak picture. Despite some pockets of good practice, thousands of young prisoners face high levels of movement from jail to jail, impoverished regimes and inadequate preparation for release. Small wonder perhaps that three quarters are reconvicted within two years of leaving prison.

Scarce resources, education and skills training, sports and other activities, advocacy and family support, personal officers and sentence planning schemes, have been ring fenced for the under 18s, leaving many of the 15,000 or so young adults who enter prison each year stranded without the support and supervision they need. Yet these young people are at a critical stage when planned intervention could help them to take responsibility for their lives and neglect could confirm them in a criminal career. Most people expect a period at college or university to make an important impression on developing minds. No-one should forget that prison too leaves a lasting mark on young people in transition from adolescence to adulthood.

A Manifesto commitment was given in 2001 to build on the youth justice reforms to improve things for 18 to 20 year-olds. This report reveals the social and economic costs of a broken promise. Importantly, it also sets out an agenda for change and points the way to reserving prison for those sentenced or remanded for serious and violent offences. It recommends developing effective community penalties for this group, strengthening court diversion and liaison for the mentally ill, and creating smaller custodial units closer to home for those comparatively few young adults for whom there is no alternative to imprisonment. A complete review of provision, proper planning, a substantive increase in resources and the appointment of a director for the young adult estate would begin a process of responding to the needs of a lost generation in the prison system.

Juliet Lyon

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1 INTRODUCTION

We will build on our youth justice reforms to improve the standard of custodial accommodation and offending behaviour programmes for 18-20 year old offenders.

(Labour Party, 2001).

As part of his Labour Party Manifesto pledge ahead of the last election the Prime Minister gave this commitment to tackle persistent offending and create 'strong and safe communities'. It was an open acknowledgement that provision for so called 'young adult prisoners', 18-20 year olds, was in need of urgent reform after years of neglect.

In its first term in office the Government focused on children who offend, creating a new youth justice system under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which led to a radical overhaul of services – integrated multi-agency youth offending teams, a new emphasis on parental support, a range of intensive community sentences and improvements in the juvenile prison estate. But these reforms neglected the 18-20 year olds who, still in transition from adolescence to adulthood, were deemed too old to benefit from the changes, despite the fact that in 2000, under protective legislation, young people leaving care were offered on-going support until they are 21 (Children (Leaving Care) Act, 2000).

Under the Crime and Disorder Act the sentence of Detention in a Young Offender Institution for under-18s was replaced by the Detention and Training Order. However, it continued to apply for 18-20 year olds. In response to this change, in 1999 the Home Office issued a consultation paper on 'Detention in a young offender institution for 18-20 year olds' (Home Office 1999). The following year a Prison Service briefing confirmed that the Government was 'considering the current sentencing arrangements for 18-20 year olds ... This will involve a thorough assessment of whether alternative arrangements would be more effective in meeting the accommodation, regime and resettlement needs of the young adult age group'.

The Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 subsequently abolished the sentence of Detention in a Young Offender Institution. But the Government's plans for reform soon stalled. A commitment was made to 'not implement the abolition of the sentence of Detention in a Young Offender Institution until we have prepared a Prison Service Order to prison governors covering young adult offenders. We shall do that in consultation with interested bodies' (Hansard, House of Commons written answers 24 November 2000). The new guidance to governors has not materialised and all the plans for reform have been lost due to the recent rise in the prison population and financial constraints. The consequences have carried a high social and economic cost.

Today an unjust two-tier system exists. There has been a massive injection of ring-fenced funds for the juvenile estate by the purchaser, the Youth Justice Board, to the provider, the Prison Service, together with the establishment and monitoring of standards (PSO 4950), creating improved regimes for the under 18s. In contrast, there has been a marked deterioration in standards and programmes for older teenagers in custody. The huge disparity has been consistently highlighted by the Chief Inspector of Prisons who, in her annual report stated:

It is disappointing to report that there continues to be no coherent national strategy, standards or new funding for this important group of young prisoners. All the Young Offender Institutions that we inspected suffered from a lack of resources for crucial work and education. At every YOI inspected, we called for more resources and better co-ordination of those that there were.

(HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2004).

Apart from money earmarked under the 'Custody to Work' initiative there have been no extra resources available for young adults. The Prison Service has had to make the best use of the money available at a time of limited budgets and considerable population pressures.

In April prison numbers reached a record high of 75,544. On occasions over the past year there has been little room left to house more prisoners with the 'headroom between the prison population and the maximum useable accommodation in the whole estate less than 200' (HM Prison Service, 2004). In recent months the population has declined slightly but there are still almost a thousand additional people in prison compared to a year ago and over 80 of the 139 jails in England and Wales are overcrowded.

Young offenders have been significantly affected by the population pressures. Many are held in local adult prisons, also designated as Young Offender Institutions (YOIs), which are under great strain and have been extremely overcrowded. Although the YOIs which hold only under 21s do not face the same pressures, some, such as Reading, Glen Parva and Northallerton, have recently had more than half of all prisoners sharing cells designed for one person.

This report examines the impact of overcrowding on young people in custody and looks at the main issues they are facing. It is not intended to be an in-depth research study. Instead by consulting Independent Monitoring Boards, the watchdogs appointed by the Home Secretary to monitor prison conditions, and by conducting a small number of focus groups at four establishments, the report aims to provide an insight into life for young adults in our prisons, and in particular, to establish to what extent they are being moved around the estate due to population pressures.

The time young people spend in custody has a formative influence on them and a significant impact on public safety. The peak age for offending for males is around 18 and 42 per cent of first time offenders are aged 18-20 (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). So the period in custody is critical. Prison staff have to manage those who are at the peak of their offending and who could be diverted from progressing to more prolific activity. Yet the latest reconviction data shows that prison is failing to rehabilitate nearly three quarters of young men, with 71 per cent being reconvicted within two years of release from jail, and nearly two-thirds of young women, with 63 per cent being reconvicted (Home Office, 2003).

Despite their developmental needs and high risk of re-offending 18-20 year olds in custody have been overlooked. They continue to lack a regime that is specifically designed for their age group and with their needs in mind. As this report demonstrates, far too many older teenagers are being moved around the prison system, experiencing impoverished regimes involving long hours locked up, without the support and supervision they require if they are to have any hope of leading a responsible life on release.

1.1 Profile of the Young Adult Prison Population

On 8th October 2004 there were 8,152 prisoners aged 18-20 in England and Wales, 11 per cent of the total prison population.

Around one in five of young adult prisoners are on remand. The most recent available statistics show that at the end of June 2004 there were 1,890 young adults on remand, 22 per cent of the 18-20 year old prison population (Hansard, House of Commons written answers 15 September 2004).

Of all the young adults in prison there are around 500 young women. According to the most recent statistics in November 2003 there were 474 young women in custody, of whom 125 were on remand (Home Office, 2004).

In the last five years the overall young adult population has remained fairly stable (see Table One).

Table One: Population of young offenders aged 18-20(1) in prison establishments, by custody type England and Wales, 30 June (Hansard, Commons Written Answers, 15th September 2004, Home Office (2000))

Year	Immediate custodial sentence	Remand	Total
1999	6,758	2,098	8,856
2000	6,670	2,103	8,780
2001	6,728	1,867	8,597
2002	6,766	2,189	9,018
2003	6,779	1,920	8,789
2004	6,543	1,890	8,513

(1) The figures include young offenders who have turned 21 but who have not been reclassified as adults.

Looking at the number of young adults in prison in terms of the population on a given day or a given month, does not reveal the total number of 18-20 year olds who enter prison in a year (referred to as 'receptions') because most only spend a matter of months in custody.

The most recent Home Office statistics show that in 2002, 16,230 young adults aged 18-20 were received into prison on remand awaiting trial or convicted awaiting sentence. In the same year just under 14,500 sentenced young adults were received into prison¹. They accounted for 31 per cent of all sentenced receptions. Thus, while young adults make up just over one in ten of the average daily prison population they account for almost a third of all those who enter prison under an immediate custodial sentence (Home Office, 2003).

In the five years since 1997 the number of sentenced receptions of young adults increased by 10 per cent but in the ten years since 1992 it has risen by 49 per cent.

The most dramatic proportionate rise has been in the number of sentenced young women entering custody. Over the last decade it has increased by 270 per cent from 265 in 1992 to 986 in 2002 (*ibid*).

1.1.1 Type of Offence

The vast majority of young adults who receive custodial sentences have not committed violent crimes.

Table two shows that in 2002, one in five sentenced young adults were sent to prison for theft and handling stolen goods, more than for any other offence. Overall over eighty per cent were sentenced to custody for non-violent offences.

¹ A person first enters the remand population when remanded in custody on or after his/her first appearance in court on a charge or summons. If subsequently received under sentence, he or she is counted in that category also. Therefore total receptions cannot be calculated by adding together receptions in each category because there is double counting.

Table Two: Receptions into prison under sentence in 2002 by type of offence (ibid)

Offence group	Male	Female	Total
Violence against the person	2,226	150	2,370
Sexual offences	123	0	123
Burglary	1,705	60	1,765
Robbery	1,061	78	1,139
Theft and Handling	2,764	334	3,098
Fraud and Forgery	166	37	203
Drug offences	678	122	800
Motoring offences	2,269	22	2,291
Other	2,133	156	2,289
Not recorded	387	14	401
Total	13,512	986	14,498

1.1.2 Sentence length

The majority of young adults are short term prisoners. In 2002:

- more than a quarter (27 per cent) were sentenced for three months or less,
- more than half (55 per cent) were sentenced for six months or less; and
- nearly three-quarters (74 per cent) were sentenced for 12 months or less.

(*ibid*)

In terms of the number of people in prison at any one time, there is a significantly higher proportion of prisoners serving less than 12 months in the young prisoner population (26 per cent) compared to the adult estate (17 per cent) (Home Office, 2003).

The Prison Service experiences many difficulties in dealing effectively with the needs of those serving short-term sentences. Young Offender Institutions are often no better at managing and delivering effective short term sentences than adult prisons. Consequently, as will be highlighted in this report, young adults experience impoverished regimes with limited purposeful activity and long hours locked in their cells.

1.1.3 Ethnic breakdown

It is widely accepted that young black people, particularly young black men, are over-represented in the prison population. Research by the Commission for Racial Equality has found that in 2002 there were more African Caribbean entrants to prison (over 11,500) than there were to UK universities (around 8,000) (HM Prison Service and Commission for Racial Equality, 2003). In many Young Offender Institutions a noticeable proportion of the population are from a minority ethnic group. In a report on Aylesbury YOI last year, the Chief Inspector of Prisoners noted the 'failure to address the needs, and recognise the experience, of the 50 per cent black and ethnic minority young prisoners' (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2003).

The only official statistics available provide a breakdown for all sentenced young offenders under 21, including children. They show that in 2002, nearly a quarter (23 per cent) of sentenced young offenders were from minority ethnic backgrounds. Black prisoners (16 per cent) form the largest minority, (significantly higher than the two per cent of the population they represent (Home Office, 2003)), with a further four per cent from Chinese and other ethnic groups and three per cent were South Asian.

The figures for remand prisoners are similar. Overall a quarter of young men on remand come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Once again black prisoners (17 per cent) form the largest minority, with a further five per cent from Chinese and other ethnic groups and three per cent were South Asian (Howard League, 2003).

Ethnic minority groups also are serving, on average, longer sentences. In 2002, nearly nine out of ten sentenced young blacks and nine out of ten sentenced young South Asians were serving sentences of 12 months or more, compared to just under three quarters of whites. Home Office research concluded that in 1990 black young offenders received, on average, sentences which were 36 days longer than would be expected, taking into account the age of the offender, the type of the offence and the type of court sentencing, than the average for all offenders (Home Office, 2003).

1.1.4 A background of social exclusion

Young offenders overwhelmingly come from disadvantaged and deprived backgrounds. They exhibit a range of social problems such as unemployment, mental health disorders and low educational achievement. A large number will have left school well before the age of 16 with no qualifications. Many experience developmental delay and a significant number have learning disabilities or difficulties (Myers, 2004). They are an extremely needy and challenging group of older teenagers who are at the very margins of society, and are one of the most excluded groups in the prison system.

- Young offenders have poor literacy and numeracy skills. Just over a third (34 per cent) have basic skills deficits, compared to under 25 per cent of those aged 25 and over (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).
- Their schooling will either have been disrupted or terminated early. Nearly three quarters (72 per cent) were excluded from school at some stage and a quarter (26 per cent) have terminated their education by the age of 14 (*ibid*).
- The majority of young offenders are out of work. Nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) were unemployed at the time of arrest, compared to 46 per cent for those aged over 25 (*ibid*).
- Many young offenders have housing problems. The Chief Inspector of Prisons suggested that one in five young prisoners had no idea where they would live on release (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 1997).
- Up to 40 per cent of all young prisoners have been in local authority care and many will have slept rough (Lyon, 2000; NACRO, 2001).
- Behavioural and mental health problems are particularly prevalent. Of prisoners aged 16-20 around 85 per cent show signs of personality disorder and 10 per cent exhibit signs of psychotic illness, for example, schizophrenia, compared to 0.2 per cent of the general population (Singleton et al, 2000).
- Drug and alcohol abuse are major problems. Of prisoners aged 16-20 over half reported dependence on a drug in the year prior to imprisonment. Over half the female and two-thirds of the male prisoners had a hazardous drinking habit prior to entering custody (*ibid*).
- Up to 30 per cent of young women in custody say they were sexually abused in childhood (Farrant, 2001).

- Both young women and young men in prison are more likely to be parents than young adults in the general population (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

1.1.5 Suicide and self-harm

One in five young men in custody have attempted suicide at some stage in their life and more than a third of young women (Singleton et al, 2000). It is not surprising therefore that young people are among the most prolific self-harmers in the prison system. They are twice as likely as their adult counterparts to injure themselves (Howard League, 1999). The level of self-harm amongst women is particularly high. In 2003, nearly two-thirds of women under 21 in prison harmed themselves repeatedly. (Prison Service, Safer Custody News, 2004). However, there is frequently a lack of understanding of self-harm behaviour which can result in a failure to provide appropriate intervention and care (Farrant, 2001).

A Thematic Review on Suicide by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons in 1999 revealed that suicide rates for 18-20 year olds were significantly higher than those for younger prisoners (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 1999). Last year 13 young adults took their own lives out of a total of 94 suicides. Five of them were young women, including two eighteen-year-olds.

1.2 Establishments holding young adults

At the end of July 2004 there were 58 prisons holding young offenders aged 18-20 years old (Poole, 2004). All the young women in custody were held in adult establishments as there are no dedicated Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) for women aged 18-20. There were 16 dedicated YOIs for males, some of which also held boys under 18. The rest were being held mainly in local prisons which had dedicated sections for young offenders. However, some were held in local prisons not intended specifically to take young adults.

In total there were ten prisons each holding fewer than five young adults, the majority of them holding just one or two² (*ibid*). These prisons will not necessarily be holding young offenders all the time. Some months they may not have any in their custody. It is a reflection of how young adults have been spread out across the prison estate due to population pressures and raises questions about closeness to home and appropriateness of the regime and facilities.

1.2.1 Overcrowding

Appendix one lists the 47 prisons which, at the end of July 2004, were holding five or more young people³. It shows that at the end of the following month, more than half, 28 of the 47 establishments, were overcrowded. The majority were male local prisons. The most overcrowded was Exeter, which was overcrowded by 69 per cent holding 526 prisoners in accommodation intended for 312. This was followed by Dorchester, overcrowded by 64 per cent holding 235 prisoners in accommodation intended for 143 and Altcourse, overcrowded by 63 per cent, holding 1,000 prisoners in accommodation designed for 614. Six of the dedicated Young Offender Institutions were overcrowded. For example, Northallerton, was overcrowded by 53 per cent holding 233 prisoners in accommodation designed for 153.

Appendix one also shows that over the last financial year 30 of the 47 establishments had prisoners sharing single cells. In 13 prisons more than four out of every ten prisoners had to live two to a cell intended for one person. In Altcourse, Dorchester, Northallerton, Reading and Doncaster more than six out every ten prisoners were sharing a cell designed for one.

These statistics suggest that a large proportion of the more than 8,000 young adults in prison today will be living two to a cramped cell, in conditions that were supposed to house one prisoner. They will have to be in the cell while their cell mate defecates and will have to eat

² These were Blakenhurst, Bullingdon, Cardiff and Liverpool which had one young offender. Parkhurst and Winchester had two, East Sutton Park and Wandsworth had three and Manchester and Foston Hall had four.

³ Bronzefield women's prison opened in June and at the end of July was holding nine young women but is not included due to the fact that it had only just started taking prisoners.

their food in the same room. The Chief Executive of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), Martin Narey, has openly criticised this situation.

The conditions in which prisoners have to live in overcrowded cells, cells in which they have to eat together and in which they have to defecate in front of one another are, we know, deeply inadequate...where we unnecessarily allow prisoners to languish in doubled up cells nearly all day and every day, the inadequate becomes the unacceptable.

(Speech to Prison Service annual conference, 2003)

1.3 The Research

This report is intended to provide a unique insight into the current situation for 18-20 year olds in prison in England and Wales. It combines information from three sources, the independent watchdogs appointed by the Home Secretary to monitor prison conditions, known as the Independent Monitoring Boards (IMBs), an analysis of Home Office figures and current research findings, and focus group interviews conducted with young adults in four prisons.

A letter from the director of PRT was sent to the Chairs of all the IMBs of prisons holding 18-20 year olds (see Appendix Two). The letter asked IMBs what were the main issues, if any, affecting young offenders at their establishment. It said that PRT was particularly interested in the impact of overcrowding and the extent to which young offenders were being moved around the estate due to population pressures. The letter also outlined other areas of prison life, such as education and sentence planning, that IMBs were asked to consider. The primary concern was to hear from IMBs in their own words, rather than impose a rigid reporting mechanism.

The letter was sent to all 58 establishments that, at the end of June, were holding young adults. However, at that time some of these prisons only held a few 18-20 year olds and the following month they did not hold any. They are local prisons which occasionally have one or two young offenders, but do not routinely hold them. It was therefore decided to discount these prisons from the research sample and to focus on the situation in the 47 jails that, at the end of July 2004, were holding five or more young adults⁴.

Two-thirds of the IMBs (31 out of 47) responded to the letter. The member of the IMB National Council with special responsibility for young offenders invited PRT to attend a meeting at Glen Parva Young Offender Institution at which further discussion took place with IMB chairs. Overall, about half of the IMBs raised concerns relating to the movement of prisoners around the estate. They also addressed a wide range of other issues affecting different aspects of prison regimes. These included purposeful activity, visits and family contact, education and training programmes, staffing and resettlement.

In order to convey the views of young offenders in the research a small number of focus groups were conducted. (The time constraints for the research meant it was not possible to carry out individual in-depth interviews.) Four prisons were visited; a female YOI, Bullwood Hall, a large male local prison that had a young offender wing, Doncaster; one YOI which also held under 18s, Feltham, and Onley which had recently switched from holding young adults and under 18s to holding adult prisoners alongside the 18-20 year olds.

Each prison was asked to select randomly, using the Prison Service internal database, a representation of young people to make up a group of between eight and ten. At two prisons

⁴ Bronzefield women's prison which opened in June and at the end July held nine young women, was not included due to the fact that it had only just started taking prisoners.

the groups included remand as well as sentenced prisoners. In total 33 prisoners took part. In one prison all those who attended the session were on an enhanced regime.

In each of the group sessions a discussion was carried out on the basis of a semi-structured interview schedule that concentrated on four areas – movement of prisoners around the estate, purposeful activity, family contact and resettlement. Time constraints meant that it was not possible to complete the full schedule in every discussion.

This report has been structured around the four areas that were examined in the focus groups with chapters on each: movement of prisoners, family contact and visits, purposeful activity and resettlement.

2 THE IMPACT OF OVERCROWDING: 'DOUBLING UP' AND 'THE CHURN'

2.1 Doubling Up

Population pressures have forced establishments holding young adults to take emergency action to accommodate the increase in numbers. This has often meant that single cells designed for one person have been fitted with bunk beds to contain two prisoners in a process described by prison staff as 'doubling up'.

It was noted in the previous chapter that in the last financial year, 2003-2004, Prison Service statistics show that 30 of the 47 establishments that hold young adults had prisoners doubling up in single cells. In nearly half of the 30 prisons, four out of ten prisoners were sharing cells that had been designed for one person.

The doubling up of single cells has led to many young adults being held in conditions that are not only cramped but unhygienic and unhealthy. A concern expressed by some IMBs was that prisoners were having to use in-cell toilets in front of their cell mate and also were having to eat their meals in the same room. After finishing their meal some had to use the wash basin to clean their plate and utensils:

There are two wings at Northallerton. A wing, the largest, has inadequate accommodation. Cells originally built for one person now accommodate two plus a lavatory, and prisoners have to take all their meals in the cell and do the washing up in their wash-hand basin. Many of the young men do prefer to share a cell, but this does not detract from the inadequacy of the accommodation.

(Northallerton IMB).

In Reading the cells should be single occupancy but they are all doubles using bunk beds. They eat their 3 meals a day in their cell along with a lavatory with a small decency screen at the end of the bed. In winter they complain at night they are cold and in summer on a very hot day they are too hot.

(Reading IMB).

There are some prisons that do not have decency screens. In one establishment that we visited to conduct a focus group with young men, two thirds of the young adults in the prison were doubling up and none of the cells had a decency screen. The young men complained about the 'embarrassment' of having to use the toilet in front of their cell mate. They also complained about not always being supplied with a toilet brush for cleaning. One young man said he had to buy his own toilet brush from the prison shop.

In another prison where some of the young men were sharing cells, concern was expressed about the number of different cell mates that people had to cope with.

I have shared a cell with seven different inmates, it drives you mental, I am on my eighth now. They put you with people who are going to be here for a short period.

Others complained about having to share with people that had committed more serious crimes or who had complex problems.

Some of them are here for violent crimes and are armed robbers, I have not done a violent crime.

One time I had a cell mate who was a recovering drug addict and he needed to talk late one evening because he was feeling suicidal so he called the governor, he had run out of cigs and wanted to talk to somebody urgently, but the governor was not very helpful.

In recent months the prison population has stabilized. This appears to have eased the pressure on the young offender estate. A number of IMBs said that overcrowded conditions were no longer a major issue. However, concerns were expressed about the movement of prisoners from jail to jail and young offenders being held long distances from home.

2.2 The Churn

One of the less obvious consequences of overcrowding is the impact it has on the movement of prisoners around the estate, known within the Prison Service as 'the churn'. Prisons have had to free up space on a regular basis to cope with increasing numbers of new prisoners arriving from the courts each day. Prisoners have therefore been moved on more quickly and have had to travel great distances across the country to an establishment that is less crowded. Those who are on remand awaiting trial may initially be held in a local prison close to the local courts but pressure on places can result in their being moved to another prison where they will be held until being moved back to the local jail shortly before their court case is due to commence. For sentenced young adults the churn has a different impact. They should spend the best part of their sentence in one prison, but this is not always possible due to overcrowding and they can be moved at short notice to any establishment that has available places. For some prisoners this has happened numerous times. Movement around the system in this way can be extremely disruptive and damaging as the Prisons and Probation Minister, Paul Goggins, acknowledged speaking to the Home Affairs Select Committee in May 2004.

I do not think it is necessarily the total numbers that is the real challenge, I think it is the amount of movement within the prison system that results from the very tight situation that we have at the moment. Last year there were some 100,000 transfers within the prison estate. It is that movement around that makes it difficult to work effectively on rehabilitation and resettlement. People are doing certain courses and then get moved to a different prison.

(Home Affairs Select Committee, 2004)

The Prison Service does not routinely monitor the number of transfers that are due to population pressures. In response to a recent parliamentary question which asked how many young adults had been moved as a result of overcrowding Mr Goggins said:

This information on overcrowding drafts is not available, as the reasons for transfers are not recorded centrally. Altogether there were around 13,000 inter-prison transfers of young prisoners (aged 18 to 20) in 2003-2004. As this figure refers to all movements in this period, it may include some young prisoners who were transferred more than once during this period. It is not possible to identify how many of these transfers were on overcrowding drafts, although the considerable majority will have been the result of normal sentence planning procedures.

(Hansard, House of Commons written answers, 11th October, 2004).

But according to the Chief Inspector of Prisons it is not uncommon for 18-20 year olds to be moved from prison to prison, usually at short notice, because of overcrowding. In some establishments they can be held for just a matter of days before being transported elsewhere. In her report on Lancaster Farms Young Offender Institution earlier this year the Chief

Inspector noted that sentenced young adults spent an estimated average of just 11 days before being moved to make space for others.

Many sentenced young adults spent only a matter of days in the establishment. In the three months between 13 October 2003 and 14 January 2004, for example, 303 young adults had been transferred out of Lancaster Farms to other establishments; this was a turnover greater than the entire young adult population of the prison.

(HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2004a).

For those serving long sentences the opposite situation applied with them having to mark time 'waiting months for allocation to an establishment that suited their needs' (*ibid*).

A high turnover in prison numbers resulting in very short stays and prisoners being shipped long distances due to overcrowding has also been highlighted by the Inspectorate in recent reports on Northallerton and Castington Young Offender Institutions (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 2003 and 2003c). It is a concern which occupies the minds of a number of Independent Monitoring Boards. Some have brought it to the attention of the Home Secretary in their annual reports. The IMB at Glen Parva YOI in Leicestershire drew attention to the large number of young offenders being transferred great distances.

The Board has serious reservations regarding the number of overcrowding drafts received during this year. A total of 309 prisoners have been transferred from Chelmsford, Norwich, Feltham and Woodhill, all being situated some distance outside our catchment area.

The Board is aware that the Prison Service needs to maximize the use of spaces available, however more thought should be given to how this is achieved, and more examination needs to take place on the lack of restrictions surrounding the transfer of prisoners. Our applications have increased by 11 per cent, with many of them from prisoners wishing to be transferred back nearer to their families.

(Glen Parva IMB, 2004)

Transfers in and out of Glen Parva YOI clearly have been a serious problem. It is not the same in every establishment that holds 18-20 year olds and some prisons do not believe it is the most pressing problem they face. Indeed a number of IMBs who responded to the Prison Reform Trust's letter said that there had not been a noticeable increase in applications for transfers or in overcrowding drafts. However, half of the Boards did highlight the movement of young people around the estate and the problems it causes.

We have noticed that we are receiving prisoners from a wider geographical area than we would have expected – we are in effect the short sentence YOI for much of London, Kent, Surrey, Sussex and Essex.

(Rochester IMB).

We are forever shipping out on overcrowding drafts, simply to make space for people coming in from the courts. If 15 come in from the courts we will have to ship out 15. Moving people on like this has become a fact of life and we have learned to manage it. When the boys arrive they are often bewildered and don't know where they are.

(Brinsford IMB).

...we have many transferred here, mainly from Brockhill when they have only a few weeks and in some cases a few days left of their sentence. This does not help to facilitate resettlement.

(Bullwood Hall IMB).

There was a big problem last year with overcrowding, particularly after Buckley Hall ceased housing young offenders. This led to current residents in Buckley Hall being transferred to New Hall and inmates in New Hall being transferred to Low Newton. It caused significant disruption to staff and inmates alike. The continual transfer of prisoners clearly raises numerous issues; no consistency due to different regimes etc, difficulty maintaining family ties, higher risk of mental health problems or not being able to feel settled and problems trying to set up effective resettlement links.

(New Hall IMB).

The IMB at Feltham in west London pointed out that transfers were being made to a YOI at the other end of the country in Northumberland.

The continuing high turnover of inmates continues to cause concern with trainees unable to complete their courses. Prisoners are transferred to other establishments as far afield as Castington.

(Feltham IMB).

Some graphic examples were given of young men having their lives hugely disrupted. One case involved somebody who was due for early release under the Home Detention Curfew Scheme, which allows those who have been risk assessed, to leave jail ahead of their release date and be placed under electronic monitoring.

The clearest case of apparant unthinking removal must go to Reading who sent a lad to Onley on the 19th August who was due for tagging on the 20th and for full release on the 12th October. The lad lives on the Isle of Wight with a stable partner and their baby with everything in place for an easy decision on his tagging to be made, a home and landline phone. We are still working on this one.

(Onley IMB).

Another IMB member drew attention to the case of a young man she had met whilst visiting Glen Parva YOI for an area meeting of IMB chairs. He had spent time in five separate prisons in less than six months.

I spoke with a young man who started his sentence in Brinsford (1 week) transfered to Parc (8 weeks) asked for a transfer nearer to home and was moved to Stoke Heath (8 weeks) before moving to Ashfield for a court appearance (6 weeks) and arrived at Glen Parva from there. At no time until he reached Glen Parva did he have a sentence plan – 23 weeks achieving very little. Visits are a problem as his brother is in Featherstone and his mum cannot afford to visit both too often.

Movement on this scale severely disrupts an older teenager's development. It can damage further a group of people who will already have spent unsettled periods in their lives possibly being placed in local authority care or living away from home with other family members. It also means that their time in custody cannot be used constructively as transfers curtail

education and training courses and other programmes that have been started. This was of particular concern to some IMBs.

Young Offenders are moved in the 'churn' from Reading on a frequent basis, but generally not more than about 10 in one go. The problem that we find is that often the inmate is at a crucial stage in his education and nothing can be done to stop the move. We have spoken to the Governor about this problem and it was also mentioned at the IMB conference last week. It seems that a number is given to each establishment and that is it.

(Reading IMB).

We still operate a policy here that sentenced young offenders are allocated and transferred as soon as possible providing there are no outstanding court cases. This can cause problems sometimes as they may have started group work or psychology interventions and are then transferred.

(Woodhill IMB).

...work is available in some prisons but not others, so prisoners can't continue in work when they are moved. They are being set up to fail and are inevitably disgruntled when they arrive at a prison and find that they can't continue with work or education programmes.

(Onley IMB).

The same IMB added:

...one case where a lad who had been transferred from Bullingdon ...the same lad had part completed an NVQ Horticulture course at Bullingdon which is not available at Onley. It's a pity common sense could not be applied in situations like this, but we do not know the reason why he was shipped out and education planning may have been the last thing on the mind of the prison officer arranging the move.

(Onley IMB).

In some establishments such as Lancaster Farms and Buckley Hall, where young men and women stay for a short period of time, it means that they never have the opportunity to begin courses.

Due to movement the boys are not with us long enough. It is particularly worrying that there has been under use of facilities, education and training skills courses are affected. We have a new education block purposefully built for YOs and a new gymnasium is expected to be completed in September.

(Lancaster Farms IMB).

The very short sentences limit what is available to them in the prison and some of them spend more time on the wing rather than in purposeful activity as there is not enough time to do anything constructive.

(Bullwood Hall).

An overcrowded prison system also means it is difficult to move young offenders to an appropriate establishment after they have been sentenced by the courts. They can end up being held in establishments that cannot meet their needs, spending long hours locked in their cells. This can have serious consequences.

In August 2003 sentenced young offenders were transferred out of High Down and it was intended to only receive remand young offenders who could mix with adults. In practice it was difficult to move immediately young offenders who had just been sentenced (because of population pressures) and they were locked up for 23 hours a day because they could not mix with adults. They did not even receive exercise. There were a few instances of young offenders who once sentenced became so depressed at the prospect of being locked up for so long that they self-harmed and refused food.

(High Down IMB).

In some circumstances a prison might need to move a troublesome or particularly vulnerable prisoner to another jail for his own safety or for the safety of others. This has been the case at Thorn Cross YOI, an open prison in Cheshire. Because the system has been so overstretched it has proved difficult.

Recently, there have been cases when an inmate has needed to return to closed conditions (e.g. punishment or own safety) and there has not been a place for him to return to or Thorn Cross has taken one inmate in exchange for returning one. This means he stays at Thorn Cross longer than necessary.

(Thorn Cross IMB).

Young adult prisoners are often not as mature as their age may suggest. They are still developing both emotionally and psychologically. There is a high prevalence of mental health issues and learning difficulties. Being moved to a different jail is likely to be unsettling and there is a danger of causing further damage by suddenly uprooting a young person who may well already be experiencing problems. The IMB at Glen Parva, which has one of the highest turnovers out of young offenders, highlighted the link with self-harm amongst 18-20 year olds.

They are parcels being moved around with no control over their lives, that's why you get people self-harming; to show control and as a cry for help.

(Glen Parva IMB).

2.3 The impact of the churn on young offenders in custody

Almost two-thirds of the young offenders who took part in the focus groups that were conducted at four prisons had spent time in another jail. In the majority of cases they had only been in one other establishment, either on remand or for a brief period after being sentenced. But there were some examples of people who had been moved to a number of different prisons.

Example One:

John (not his real name) was on remand in HMP Doncaster for six weeks and then after being sentenced was sent to Hindley YOI near Wigan in Lancashire. This was a long way from his family who lived in Doncaster so he asked to be moved closer to home. After spending seven weeks in Hindley he was sent to Moorland YOI which is just outside Doncaster. He stayed there for three weeks before he had to return to court for a separate offence. He was then moved back to HMP Doncaster. In just under four months he was moved on three separate occasions.

Example Two:

Peter (not his real name) was on remand in Brinsford YOI near Wolverhampton. Nearly four months later he was sentenced but was soon moved to Glen Parva YOI in Leicestershire on an overcrowding draft. He only spent two months in Glen Parva because he says he was feeling very unsettled and did not get on well with the staff. This led to him getting into a fight with a prison officer so he was moved to another establishment, Stoke Heath in Shropshire. Two months later he was taken to Feltham YOI in west London for a court appearance relating to another offence. In just two months he had been in four different prisons.

2.3.1 Disruption to courses

One of the main complaints about being transferred to another prison that was expressed by a third of the young adults was the disruption to education and training courses. Places can be limited, especially for the most popular training programmes, and more often than not there will be long waiting lists, as was the case for one young man.

I was about to start a computer engineering course at Rochester, I was only a week away from starting after waiting for a long time. The last thing I wanted was to be moved to Woodhill, I was really disappointed and frustrated when I got there because there weren't any good courses. Some prisons don't have any good courses so if you get to a prison that does you've hit the jackpot.

For others, once they had been moved it was not always possible to continue with the courses that they had already started since being in custody.

I was doing education, english and maths classes that were going okay. I also did some mechanics course. But when I was shipped to Glen Parva it all ended, I was just locked up.

Few prisons have specific provision for foreign national prisoners as this young woman discovered.

At Holloway I did a lot of education, there was a foreign nationals course and I learned English, but here it's no good. There is a computer class but you don't really learn anything.

For another young man the most difficult aspect of being transferred was the deep frustration and anger he felt because he had never been given a clear explanation about why he was moved. He felt particularly aggrieved because he had been chosen to take part in the highly commended Transco programme at Glen Parva which provides training and then employment on release.

I had been picked out of a hundred to do the gas pipe fitting course for Transco and it was going really well. But I was then put down the block for suspicion of doing something. I was told I was being sent to Onley and I could carry on with the course there, but when I got here I found out it wasn't running. I had really wanted to continue with the course, it was a golden opportunity for me. When I got here I was so pissed, for three weeks I was kind of mad. I have never been properly told what I did wrong. I think the prison screwed me.

2.3.2 Instability and distress

Prisons are intimidating and harsh institutions. Relationships between prisoners are often volatile and, particularly among young offenders, there are high levels of assaults and violence. A victimisation study carried out in prisons in 1996 found that nearly a third of young offenders said they had been assaulted in the previous month, nearly half had been threatened with violence and one in ten had been robbed (Edgar et al, 1996).

Each jail will also have its own particular routines and way of doing things. This means that starting again in a different establishment, even for those who have spent time in other prisons, can be very unsettling. For older teenagers who are still in the process of growing up and maturing, arriving at a prison is very unnerving. Many young people said that being moved to another prison was distressing.

I was in a real mess about being moved, it did my head in. I had settled down and got used to it all and then suddenly I was off to another jail. It messed me up big time.

I did not like being moved, don't like it at all. You settle and then get moved to a different place. You have to get used to the staff and the food and you can end up in a bad jail with no social and lots of bang up and the inmates can be really difficult with lots of arguments, especially when you first get there.

You are settled and you know how it works, every jail works a certain way, there are different rules, you know who you get on with. So, once you get settled in it is hard to move on.

One young man said that one of most difficult thing for him was simply going on to the wing for the first time.

It is one of the worst things, when you walk on a wing and don't know anybody. It can be very scary.

2.3.3 Prison escorts

During the focus group with young women concerns were raised about the physical conditions and treatment they had experienced whilst being escorted between prisons and from court to prison.

The young women gave various examples of the escort staff being insensitive and dismissive.

It is horrible, they slam the brakes on. Your legs are crammed up against the side and it really hurts. They say the excuse was that there was a cat crossing the road.

They turn the heating on in summer and you get dehydrated and they just give you one drink.

You have to wait hours before going to the toilet, I've waited up to three hours.

I was on the bus and I asked them to turn up the radio and they said "no, you don't need it you are a prisoner".

Some of the drivers are really horrible and they will smoke a cigarette on the bus when they are not supposed to, just to wind you up.

There were also complaints about being put in the same escort van as men.

If you are going to court you might have to share the van with a load of men, it might be seven men and one woman.

They know if you are the only woman on the bus, and sometimes they start talking dirty.

An example of inappropriately placing prisoners who could pose a threat to one another in the same escort van was also noted by one Independent Monitoring Board.

One young offender who was first time in prison, serving a four month sentence for theft, was assaulted on his second night by two young offenders with a violent history. He told me that he could cope with one person hitting him, but not with two. To make matters worse, he was transferred to a Young Offender Institution in the same van as one of his assailants.

(High Down IMB).

The Chief Inspector of Prisons has already raised concerns about the quality and standards of prison escorts. An inspection of Onley Young Offender Institution last year noted:

It is deplorable to find, as we did, that some young people were not only reduced to urinating in the escort vehicle, but also had to clean it out on arrival.

(HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2003a).

An in-depth review of prison escorts is currently being conducted by the Inspectorate and is due to be published in 2005.

The next chapter will explore family links and distance from home which is one of the key issues for young offenders, particularly young women.

3 FAMILY CONTACT AND DISTANCE FROM HOME

Maintaining family relationships can help to prevent ex-prisoners re-offending and assist them to resettle into the community.

(Home Office, 2004a).

The Home Office's 'Reducing Re-offending National Action Plan' recognises the importance of helping prisoners to stay in contact with their family whilst in custody. For 18-20 year olds family relationships are a vital support network. The distress of arriving in an alien environment will lead some young people to turn in on themselves and become isolated. Their family and close friends might be the only outlet for them. Families can therefore provide important information for prison staff, particularly for those older teenagers who are feeling vulnerable and at risk of self-harm. Families should also play an important role in preparations for the resettlement of young adults back into the community.

The Youth Justice Board, unlike the Prison Service, has had a target to reduce the number of children in custody who are held long distances from their home town. It attempted to ensure that by March this year, 90 per cent of children sentenced and remanded to secure facilities were accommodated within 50 miles of home. By December 2003 only 71 per cent were being held within fifty miles of their home. The Youth Justice Board said that 'the reconfiguration of the juvenile secure estate, within the available budget, means that further progress toward achieving this target may be limited' (Youth Justice Board, 2004).

The Prison Service would definitely not be able to meet the Youth Justice Board's target on distance from home if it were applied to 18-20 year olds. According to the latest available figures on 7th July 2004, more than a third (35 per cent) of all the 18-20 year olds who were in custody at the time were being held more than fifty miles away from their home town. Just under a quarter (23 per cent) were being held between 50 and 100 miles, and more than one in ten (12 per cent) were being held over a hundred miles away (Hansard, House of Commons written answers, 7th September 2004).

The Chief Inspector of Prisons has highlighted how increasing distance from home has hindered attempts to maintain family contact, especially for young adults. In a report on Onley Young Offenders Institution she noted:

Our survey showed a marked contrast between juveniles and young adults in their experience of maintaining contact with family and friends through visits. Juveniles reported a slight improvement in contact with their families and friends, with 21 per cent saying that it was difficult for family and friends to visit. However, 71 per cent of the young adults surveyed reported that it was now difficult or very difficult for family and friends to make visits. We concluded that this was likely to be related to the continuing effects of chronic prison overcrowding in the south, resulting in an overall migration north of the young adult population. This was clearly an area that the establishment needed to investigate further, to ensure that it was doing all that it could to reduce the detrimental effects of separation.

(HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2003b).

In a report on Northallerton YOI the Inspectorate was also critical of the limited opportunities young people had to inform their families before being transferred to another establishment.

In most cases young adults were told of their transfer on the morning it was to be effected. There was no telephone in reception for young people to contact their families to tell them that they were moving to a different establishment, and they had to rely on staff on their unit to do this for them.

(HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2004b)

With so many young adults being held more than fifty miles from their home town nearly half of the Independent Monitoring Boards recognised the negative consequences this has had for family ties.

On the issue of family visits, yes they are affected by distance. The difficulty here is the same for other establishments, if an inmate is convicted or sentenced away from his home and is then either remanded or serving in Kent, there will be a degree of difficulty in visits.

(Elmley IMB).

Making visits easier for families would significantly help young offenders to maintain bonds with their family members. Often families are required to travel long distances and visits are therefore often short and unsatisfactory.

(New Hall IMB).

Our catchment area is large and this does restrict prisoner contact with family. Though the Governor has increased visiting time to try to alleviate this problem, it is still a problem.

(Northallerton IMB).

Visiting is difficult and costly because of the distance, and obviously resettlement will be a problem.

(Norwich IMB).

The rise in the under-21 populations most common complaints related to difficulties associated with transfers and allocations nearer home areas.

(Forest Bank IMB)

At Reading YO1 arrangements have been made to provide the opportunity for the IMB to meet with the families of prisoners. However, difficulties still remain.

We hold tea sessions with families each month to try to find out their problems. Many do find it difficult to get there, although Reading prison is served by good rail and bus routes, but visitors often travel from London or Portsmouth areas. Many have very young babies and we do not have baby changing facilities in the waiting room before they go over to the visits area. We have brought this up in annual reports and meetings with the area manager and governor.

(Reading IMB).

On arrival at a prison, after having the necessary paper work processed, young people should be able to contact their family to let them know where they are being held. But in at least one prison this did not always happen.

A young offender did not receive a reception phone call and because it was his first time in prison he did not understand the pinphone system. It was ten days before he was able to phone home. This is a common problem throughout the prison.

(High Down IMB).

Some young people may not want to be in contact with their family but many are eager to be held as close to home as possible. Overcrowding inevitably means it is not easy to make a successful application to be moved. Some young men have been violent in the hope that they will be moved as a punishment.

They say they haven't seen their mum for ages and she doesn't know where they are. They don't want to be so far from home and they kick off to try and get moved to a prison closer to home.

(Glen Parva IMB).

3.1 The Consequences for Young Adults

Figures on the parenting status of prisoners are not routinely collected by the Home Office so there are no accurate statistics for the number of 18-20 year olds in custody who are parents (Hansard, House of Commons written answers, April 28th 2003). It is estimated that 25 per cent of young offenders in prison are fathers and 39 per cent are mothers (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 1997). This means that keeping in touch with family is not just about maintaining contact with parents or siblings. It is also about being able to fulfil some kind of parental role. Young prisoners have identified parenting as a key concern whilst in custody (Lyon, 2000). Trying to maintain any kind of link with their children can be more difficult for young people when they are transported to a prison which is a long way from their home town.

Two thirds of the young adults who took part in the focus groups said that being moved to another prison had made it more difficult to keep in contact with their families. A number of them had children of their own. One young woman from Wales who has two children and was being held in a YOI in Essex did not receive any family visits.

I would prefer to be closer to home. It is 300 miles so if I don't move I won't see my kids for a few years till I am 22, one is one and the other is four.

It was a similar story for a young man from London who was being held at a YOI in the Midlands.

For me everything is down South. It is awkward with the two kids to come a hundred miles there and back to see me, so I don't get many visits here. When I was in Woodhill it was closer to home and I was able to see the kids more.

The psychological effect of being separated from one's children will inevitably impact on the mental health of a young person in jail. A few young adults spoke of how being transferred to prisons further from their home area had 'done their heads in'. However, it was difficult to gauge the full impact it was having on them.

For the group of young women interviewed distance from home was a key issue. With fewer female young offender institutions in the country young women are more likely to be held further from their home towns. The most recent official figures show that half of all young women were held more than fifty miles from home compared to a third of young men (House of Commons written answers, 12th October 2004). The IMB at Holloway noted that:

There is no young offenders unit for women in the south west of the country and this does certainly mean that visits from families in Southampton etc. are difficult.

(Holloway IMB).

Five of the eight young women expressed frustration at being moved further from home after being sentenced. Two of them were expecting their first visit when they had suddenly been transferred to another jail.

I got woke up very early in the morning and they told me to pack up and shift out and I had a visit that day, my first reception visit, so I missed my visit and had to wait another week when I got here. My mum was already near the prison. I was so pissed off and upset.

I had a visit on the Tuesday and they woke me up early that morning and said I had to go. When I got here I phoned my family and they were at the other prison, Holloway, waiting to see me. It wasn't fair on them or me.

This chapter has demonstrated that distance from home and the impact it has on trying to maintain family contact is one of the most important issues for 18-20 year olds in custody. It appears that, more often than not, a move to another jail means being further away from family and friends. For young women the distances can be even greater due to the fact there are fewer prisons in the female estate. The next chapter looks at the quality of prison regimes and the amount of purposeful activity that is on offer to young people in prison.

4 PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY

One of the twin objectives of the Prison Service is to provide 'constructive regimes which address offending behaviour; improve educational and work skills and promote law abiding behaviour in custody and after release'. Providing prisoners with sufficient purposeful activity is central to achieving this objective. In recognition of this the Prison Service has had a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) on purposeful activity for the last nine years. The target for 2003-2004 was to ensure that prisoners spend on average at least 24 hours per week engaged in purposeful activity. This includes a wide range of activities: education and training courses; employment; induction; resettlement and rehabilitation programmes; sports and physical education; religious activities and visits.

The Prison Service failed to meet its KPI target in 2003-2004 with prisoners spending an average of 23.2 hours each week in purposeful activity (HM Prison Service, 2004a). In the 47 establishments holding 18-20 year olds the average was slightly higher, 23.3 hours each week.

Table three shows that the lowest amount of purposeful activity in 2003-2004 for prisons holding five or more young adults was provided at Belmarsh in London with 14.6 hours per prisoner per week. This was followed by High Down in Surrey with 15.2, Woodhill near Milton Keynes with 15.4 and then there were three prisons, Chelmsford, Holme House in Stockton on Tees and Hull with 15.8 hours. These are all local prisons which also hold young offenders. The most amount of purposeful activity was in Thorn Cross, an open YOI in Cheshire, which provided 42.8 hours per prisoner per week. This was followed by the open female YOI, Askham Grange near York with 41.4 hours and Hollesley Bay, an open prison in Suffolk that holds young offenders, with 38.3 hours.

Engaging 18-20 year olds in constructive activities is vital not only for their rehabilitation but also for their personal development. Most will have missed out on long periods of their education, either being excluded or having missed lessons as a result of truancy, and a significant number will have terminated their education early. According to the Social Exclusion Unit nearly three quarters (72 per cent) were excluded from school at some stage and a quarter (26 per cent) left school by the age of 14 (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002).

Many young adults will therefore need dedicated programmes to address the causes of their offending, including mental health, alcohol and drug dependency problems. People in their late teens are often uncomfortable about accessing adult treatment programmes. What's more, the nature of their mental health and substance misuse problems will often be different to that of older people (NACRO, 2001).

It is important to acknowledge that this group of older teenagers will be still maturing whilst in custody. Late adolescence is a time of great change in an individual's life, a period of transition from childhood to adulthood that involves coming to terms with the demands and expectations of the adult world. This becomes clear when considering the way in which young people change during their time at college or university or as they enter the labour market. Prison too has a profound effect on the lives of young people sentenced or remanded to custody.

A significant proportion of young offenders suffer from learning difficulties or disabilities (Myers, 2004). They will not be as mature as their age may indicate and many will have complex emotional needs. Twenty four hours a week purposeful activity, which is often based

on a regime for adults, falls well short of the intensive support and specialist assistance they require.

The Youth Justice Board has recognised the different needs of children in custody and has set a target of 30 hours per week purposeful activity. The Board says that in January 2003, 'the average number of hours of purposeful activity across all Prison Service juvenile establishments during that month was 48 hours,' more than double the average amount of purposeful activity available for 18-20 year olds. In fact for the last financial year only six prisons holding young adults achieved the Youth Justice Board's target of an average of 30 hours purposeful activity each week.

Limited purposeful activity results in long hours locked up. Table three also shows that in 2003-2004 the average amount of time that prisoners in establishments holding 18-20 year olds spent out of their cells during the week was 9.6 hours a day. At the weekends it was 8.1 hours.

The prisons with the least time out of cell during the week were Hull with 5.7 hours a day, Highdown in Surrey with 6.1 hours and Rochester in Kent with 6.3 hours. Overall, just under two thirds of the 47 establishments in table three unlocked prisoners for less than ten hours a day. At the weekend the situation was worse. In Glen Parva, High Down and Belmarsh prisoners were unlocked for less than five hours a day. Only nine establishments unlocked their prisoners for more than ten hours at the weekend.

The Prisons Inspectorate recommends that all young prisoners should be unlocked for at least ten hours a day. But in her annual report the Chief Inspector of Prisons noted that young adults were spending long hours in their cells in the seven YOIs inspected over the year.

In most establishments, young prisoners spent far too much time in their cells. This was directly related to the availability of work and education spaces. At any one time, 30 per cent of prisoners in Glen Parva and 50 per cent at Aylesbury could be in their cells. Those not in employment at Aylesbury could be locked in their cells for all but one and a half hours a day, if association was cancelled, which it often was.

She goes on to say that, in the local prisons inspected which held young offenders, the situation was no better:

Young prisoners tended to experience the same advantages or disadvantages as adults: long periods of lock-up in cells at Woodhill, insufficient activity or education at Norwich, Chelmsford and Doncaster.

(HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2004).

It is important to note that within a particular prison there can be a wide variation in the amount of time young adults in different sections of the establishment spend out of their cell. At Reading YOI the Inspectorate recently found that:

The average of seven hours masked the reality that some young men on A wing spent up to 22 hours a day locked up, while those in the resettlement unit had up to 16 hours out of cell.

(HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2004b).

Table Three: Purposeful Activity and Time out of Cell (Solomon, 2004; Prison Service Planning Group⁵)

Prison	Purposeful activity 2003-2004 (hours per week)	Time unlocked weekdays 2003- 2004 (hours per day)	Time unlocked weekend 2003- 2004 (hours per week)
Altcourse	34.4	13.00	13.00
Askham Grange	41.4	16.00	16.00
Aylesbury	19.1	8.88	6.32
Belmarsh	14.6	8.64	4.95
Birmingham	18.8	7.53	6.67
Brinsford	28.7	8.59	6.17
Bristol	22.3	8.00	6.17
Brockhill	18.1	8.65	7.15
Bullwood Hall	27.7	11.03	7.37
Castington	22.9	7.81	6.81
Chelmsford	15.8	9.80	6.54
Cookham Wood	22.6	7.95	7.11
Deerbolt	20.5	9.03	5.44
Doncaster	19.6	11.30	11.30
Dorchester	17.6	13.21	12.06
Drake Hall	33.3	16.00	16.00
Eastwood Park	17.9	10.59	8.20
Edmunds Hill	21.0	9.54	9.54
Elmley	20.6	8.57	7.75
Exeter	22.5	8.50	7.50
Feltham	28.1	7.05	7.56
Forest Bank	20.3	11.94	8.41
Glen Parva	17.3	7.09	3.53
Gloucester	20.2	6.80	5.00
Guys Marsh	22.4	9.20	7.40
High Down	15.2	6.14	4.39
Hindley	34.5	9.89	8.89
Hollesley Bay	38.3	15.50	15.50
Holloway	16.9	7.17	6.42
Hull	15.8	5.75	5.38
Lancaster Farms	26.1	10.06	8.80
Lewes	21.0	7.54	6.50
Low Newton	24.6	10.50	8.42
Moorland	27.6	11.42	5.23
New Hall	23.5	10.94	9.46
Northallerton	22.2	8.36	6.47
Norwich	17.9	8.33	6.61
Onley	28.1	8.44	7.77
Parc	26.3	9.80	9.96
Portland	20.9	8.20	5.43
Reading	18.3	7.85	6.64
Rochester	20.2	6.35	6.07
Stoke Heath	21.8	10.26	10.12
Styal	21.0	11.63	11.51
Swinfen Hall	28.7	10.40	6.75
Thorn Cross	42.8	12.50	14.58
Woodhill	15.4	8.76	7.22

⁵ This table includes the 47 prisons which at the end of July were holding five or more young adults. The data on time out of cell was supplied by the Prison Service.

The lack of purposeful activity is a major concern for Independent Monitoring Boards. Half of the IMBs who responded to the Prison Reform Trust said they were concerned about a lack of purposeful activity.

Our primary concern is purposeful activity, or more specifically the lack of it, in particular that which provides the opportunities to gain skills that will better enable prisoners to find work on their release. Until recently, the establishment has been operating at little over half capacity, as accommodation wings have been upgraded. In that time, it has proved difficult to provide sufficient purposeful activity to fully occupy all prisoners, although increasing use has been made of education facilities on offer. Our population is now rising rapidly as all accommodation areas have now been brought on stream, and will soon be at or near Certified Normal Accommodation. The situation in terms of purposeful activity can only deteriorate as a consequence, at least in the short term, whilst new opportunities are identified and made available. That however is not necessarily easily done, suffering as we are from staff shortages, and the consequences of ever tightening financial position.

(Rochester IMB).

The same IMB went on to conclude:

Because of a lack of purposeful activities, prisoners are spending more time locked in cells than we would wish to see.

(Rochester IMB).

Other IMBs expressed similar concerns about insufficient purposeful activity and long hours locked up.

Over the summer the regime for the prison has been very poor and time out of cell now is only about five hours a day.

(High Down IMB).

The big issue is the lack of purposeful activity, 30 per cent of prisoners (nearly a third) are unemployed, with nothing to do all day.

(Moorland IMB).

An issue that has been recognised by the Prison Service is that the increase in purposeful activity did not match the population growth in the prison (almost double!) and this is a wider issue but does affect the young offenders. It has been suggested that access to more physical education would greatly help this particular problem but I suspect that staffing would be the real issue for such an initiative.

(Hull IMB).

The regime within the unit has been more consistent but we are continually looking for more purposeful activity for prisoners to engage in. The general feedback from groups of prisoners is that they are keen to spend any time out of cell in constructive activities rather than just playing pool, etc.

(Woodhill IMB)

The prisons currently holding 18-20 year olds were not designed to hold such high numbers, so the population increases have meant that there is a shortage of places for education and training programmes and also in workshops.

There is potentially education or training for all inmates although we recognize that there are not sufficient suitable training or education places for everyone now the numbers have increased.

(Thorn Cross IMB).

Insufficient profitable employment is available to meet demand. The existing provision is impressive but the total supply of places is insufficient to meet demand. The same applies to education... The sports hall/playing fields are well and intensively used but are insufficient to meet total demand or need. This is especially the case with those on Induction.

(Deerbolt IMB).

...the facilities are very limited. A small astro turf football pitch (needs repairing) and gym with excellent equipment is all that is available in the sports area. Education is small and can only take max. 40 inmates at a time. There is no car workshop or bricklaying available but there is a small unit for teaching an accredited four week course on kitchen planning to include tiling, painting and simple plumbing and electrics. This is only available due to space for 10 inmates... YOIs need good outside sports facilities along with an education department that gives the majority of inmates the chance to learn skills useful to them on release, such as bricklaying, plastering, car mechanics etc.

(Reading IMB).

Unless they have a job around the jail there is nothing for them to do. There is a small education bloc and no workshops.

(Brinsford IMB).

As has already been highlighted, in some establishments young adults will stay for just a matter of days or a few weeks. This restricts the opportunities for them to engage in activities.

The very short sentences limit what is available to them in the prison and some of them spend more time on the wing rather than in purposeful activity as there is not enough time to do anything constructive.

(Bullwood Hall).

The education and skills training courses are appropriate though long-term education 'suffers' because of usually short stays.

(Hull IMB).

Some IMBs specifically linked the lack of activities to staffing problems.

...when there are only a few students it is difficult for management to justify the presence of an officer with the current low staffing levels. Today, for example, education was cancelled because that officer was cross deployed.

(High Down).

...there is not enough P.E. time because of staffing.

(Norwich IMB).

Staffing problems within New Hall were leading to a higher number of lockdowns earlier in the year, however, statistics held for the last three months, 7th June – 2nd August indicate there have been a total of only seven lockdowns on the young adult wing.

(New Hall IMB).

Staffing shortages are also a problem, particularly amongst discipline and instructional officers, with particular shortages of formally qualified tradesmen such as plumbers and bricklayers. Of course, such shortages link to the lack of purposeful activity.

(Rochester IMB).

The issues raised by the IMBs were largely mirrored by the young offenders who contributed to the focus groups. They also gave examples of courses or workshops being cancelled at the last minute due to staff shortages.

One week I went to education, I was looking forward to it, my hopes were high, but I was sent back. We was told there was no English lesson, I asked why, and was told the teacher was not present and that I did not need to know why. This happened for a whole week.

Yesterday education was cancelled, it happens quite a lot. It's a waste of time. You lose out for no reason.

Nearly all of the young adults were either engaged in some kind of work, education or training. This ranged from basic woodwork classes, english and I.T. courses, working in the kitchens or as a landing cleaner; to making garments in a sewing workshop. Those who were not in education or work were on remand and therefore were not obliged to participate in courses or employment.

It was noticeable how few of the young people were being trained in a skill that would provide them with a qualification. Some complained that there were long waiting lists for the courses that would enable them to find work on release. For example, in one establishment, a bricklaying training programme was very popular; but the waiting list was six weeks long.

There are loads of us who want to do the course but there are not enough places. By the time you get picked you may be about to leave. I don't know why they can't provide more places.

Some of the young adults were particularly concerned that they had been put on courses they did not want to follow.

I'm doing I.T and cookery, but I want to do a diploma in engineering. I told the teacher but she's done nothing.

When I got here they asked me what I wanted to do and I said I'd like to work in the gardens. But they didn't have any places so I had to wait two months working as a cleaner.

The Prison Service accepts that the appropriateness and usefulness of the work available in prisons does not match national skills shortages. The head of resettlement, Peter Wrench, recently told the Home Affairs Select Committee:

We want to see vocational training alongside the rest of education rather more than we have done in the past...vocational training will be incorporated [into education] in the same way it is in the community.

(Home Affairs Select Committee, 2004)

In some prisons there have been improvements in the range and quality of education and training. The IMB at Norwich highlighted the progress that has been made there.

There is probably more purposeful activity now with education, computer skills, Inside Out Trust (cycle repair workshop), decorating course, gardening and gym training.

(Norwich IMB)

This chapter has shown that far too many 18-20 year olds still spend long hours in their cells. Overall there continues to be a big shortfall in purposeful activity. In establishments that also hold under 18s, that have benefited from investment by the Youth Justice Board, the disparity is all too evident, as was pointed out by one IMB.

There will be further problems for New Hall when the new Juvenile Unit is opened next year as YJB money is currently used to provide enhanced privileges for 18 -21 year olds such as quilts, DVDs and play stations. When the new unit is opened these privileges will be withdrawn. In addition juveniles who reach 18 and are still serving their sentence will be automatically transferred into the adult prison. Transferring to the adult regime will be a big shock for them and it is felt they will have significant problems adjusting.

(New Hall IMB)

Unless there is an equivalent amount of extra funding provided for 18-20 year olds there is little prospect of there being much improvement, despite the best efforts of prison governors and their staff. This was the conclusion of the IMB at Rochester YOI.

Ultimately without appropriate levels of funding, even the most able of Governors and staff cannot be expected to work near miracles to deliver a decent safe and supportive environment geared to properly equipping young offenders for release. Without that funding, Governors are forced to compromise.

(Rochester IMB).

5 RESETTLEMENT

The re-offending rate for young people is extremely high with seven out of ten young adults who leave prison being reconvicted within two years of release. The transition from custody to community therefore is critically important. Young adults will need help with housing advice, financial support and management, guidance on training and employment opportunities and parental support. The many who have substance misuse problems or mental health disorders will need to be linked up with community treatment services. Yet despite these multiple needs and the high risk of re-offending, support and aftercare is poorly co-ordinated and at best services are patchy. As the Chief Inspector of Prisons has pointed out, compared to the provision available for under-18s that is planned and supervised by the Youth Justice Board, young adults are neglected.

...overall, for young adults, there is nothing that compares with the joined-up, centrally funded training and resettlement for under-18s.

(HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2004)

There are few specifically tailored programmes for 18-20 year olds and many find themselves having to make do with provision aimed at either the older or younger group.

Resettlement plans should begin the day a young person enters custody. A full needs assessment could alert prison staff to the support required to help turn a young person's life around. The two bedrocks of this process are sentence planning and personal officers.

A carefully constructed sentence plan is designed to map out the support that will be provided for each offender and the goals that they should try and achieve. It should also influence allocation to the most appropriate activities available in the prison. Prison Service Order (PSO) 4950 sets out the objectives expected of the sentence management process for under-18s in custody.

To ensure that a sentence plan is produced for every young person within 10 working days of their reception, based upon an assessment of the young person's individual needs. The plan, which must be regularly reviewed and updated during the course of the sentence, must address the young person's offending behaviour and prepare for their return to the community.

(PSO 4950).

It is the task of the young person's personal officer to help them progress through the plan and be the main point of contact for any concerns they want to discuss. In effect the personal officer should act as their special guardian. According to the PSO the personal officer system 'provides every young person with an adviser with whom they have frequent, purposeful contact and with whom they can establish good relationships' (*ibid*).

This chapter will look at the provision of sentence planning, the work of personal officers and issues relating to the wider resettlement process for young adults.

5.1 Personal Officer Schemes

The standard and quality of personal officer schemes varies considerably across the young offender estate. Some Independent Monitoring Boards noted that the scheme was either not working at all or not very effectively and that this was as a result of staff shortages.

The personal officer scheme is still a problem and although it is being addressed it is far from 'up and running'.

(Drake Hall IMB).

...when challenged very few [young offenders] seemed to have made close contact with their personal officer and very few were able to name them.

(Onley IMB).

We do not have a personal officer scheme which the Board thinks is a shame. The regime does not allow personal officers anymore. We had to lose some officers when we were performance tested two years ago. I still believe that some officers will do as little as possible that they can get away with. Often on our visits we see officers in their office reading newspapers when we think they could be doing something with the inmates.

(Reading IMB).

The personal officer scheme is supposed to operate but in practice staff shortages make it very difficult.

(High Down IMB).

From the young adults who took part in the focus group discussions a mixed picture emerged. In two prisons the majority of young people did not know who their personal officer was. One young man simply said:

I did not know I was supposed to have one.

Of those who did know about their personal officer, half of them said they rarely or never had any contact with him/her and felt they were not helpful.

It said the name of the officers on the board, but I had to go and find them when I wanted to move on to enhanced regime.

His name is on my door, but that is it, I have never had anything to do with him.

They don't help me. I put in an application about housing and they don't do nothing to help.

5.2 Sentence Planning

A high turnover of young adults combined with short stays at any one prison can make it very difficult for staff to maintain any kind of sentence planning. This has been the case at Castington YOI, where the Chief Inspector of Prisons found that:

The principal officer responsible for the residential area where the young adult population were located had recently instigated a monthly board to review sentence plans. However, the major problem he faced was the lack of an efficient way of identifying which young people should be reviewed at what stage. While this problem was undoubtedly made more difficult by the high turnover of this group of young people, it was clear that the existing arrangements were entirely inadequate. As a result, the establishment could not support young adults in a planned way to help them serve their time constructively.

(HM Chief Inspector of Prisons 2003c).

Sentence planning is clearly an area that is overlooked in many establishments and does not work very well for many young adults in custody. In two of the prisons visited, the majority of the young offenders did not have a sentence plan. In one establishment it was not surprising given that the average stay was only 32 days and most of the group were on remand.

In the prisons where the young offenders said they did have a sentence plan, they were asked if they had been actively involved in its development, and if they were satisfied that it had been followed. Nearly half said they were not satisfied.

If you are doing a long sentence the screws are interested in you and it [the sentence plan], if you are doing a short one, they don't bother.

It is supposed to be reviewed every three months but we have only discussed it once in the last nine months.

There were, however, a number of young people who said that it was working well for them.

They give you personal targets and you stick with them. It's helped me.

He asked me if I have drug problems, we talked about it for a bit and then he arranged for to me get on this programme that has been really good.

Only a few Independent Monitoring Boards focused on the question of sentence planning. One remarked that it had been neglected as a result of low staffing.

Sentence planning tends to fall behind mainly due to staff shortages.

(Guys Marsh IMB).

At another prison efforts had been made to improve both sentence planning and the personal officer system.

The prison has reintroduced the personal officer scheme and this works well on the young offender wing. Sentencing planning is carried out by the resettlement team and at present there is work being undertaken by the unit and the resettlement team to offer a more consistent and effective custody plan. This will enable us to provide individual prisoners with specific services to address their problems and issues. At present we have not been able to provide specific drug related course or intervention and this is one area we are hoping to improve on.

(Woodhill IMB).

5.3 Resettlement Programmes

The patchy nature of resettlement provision was reflected in the four prisons visited. In two establishments all the young offenders said they knew who to contact for help with employment, finding accommodation and sorting out finances or benefits on release. At one prison there was a dedicated resettlement centre which was singled out for providing valuable information and support. At another jail a Job Centre Plus computer was available for young men to use to link up with outside employment services. A number of young offenders had positive experiences to tell about help they had received.

The bricklaying course has provided me with new skills and they are now linking me up with a college so I can get more qualifications when I'm released.

I have been worried about where I'll live when I get out but they have helped me with loads of information and they have contacted the council for me.

Those on remand had not been involved in any resettlement programmes and there were also some sentenced prisoners who felt they had not been given sufficient assistance in preparation for returning home.

The last time I was in prison I was let out and got a £37 discharge grant and that was it, I got nothing else, even though I had filled out all the forms, all I got was a letter saying that I was on the housing list and if I wanted to stay on it I had to write back.

The Prison Service is currently conducting a review of the discharge grant after concerns had been raised that it provides insufficient income for an ex-prisoner to live on until the first benefit is paid. Young adults aged 18-24 receive £37 whereas adults over 25 receive £46.25. It is considering 'standardizing the discharge grant at £45 for all prisoners leaving custody, with discretion, within available budgets being held by establishments, to pay £50 more to a housing provider' (Home Office, 2004).

At present the Prison Service's main resettlement initiative aimed at 18-20 year olds is the Custody to Work programme which is intended as a preparation for early entry to the government's New Deal for Young People scheme. It is delivered through JobCentre Plus working with young adults ahead of their release from prison. The aim is to provide offenders with employment and benefit advice and to link them up with training and further support in their home community.

The voluntary sector is also involved in providing some innovative, successful resettlement programmes working with young adults to help them develop a range of skills and to provide a package of continuous support once they return to the community. The IMB at Parc prison in Wales highlighted an impressive range of fifteen different resettlement programmes and initiatives, many run with the voluntary sector, that are intended for young offenders.

Get Real Workshops – aimed at prisoners with approximately two months left to serve and is run by prison staff and staff from outside agencies. All candidates are given an opportunity to work with staff from Jobcentre Plus and Careers Wales to explore job opportunities prior to release.

Resettlement Fayres – run monthly. Prisoners who are due for release are invited to attend the fayre one month prior to release. External support agencies, employers and recruitment agencies attend and are able to offer advice on employment opportunities, informal interviews and arrange appointments on release.

Worktrack – new training programme aimed at helping prisoners gain confidence and understanding of how to obtain and maintain employment.

(Parc IMB).

In some prisons there will be a number of outside organisations coming into the prison providing different programmes. One IMB felt that this can result in a lack of co-ordination, especially as there is no central body, like the Youth Justice Board.

Resettlement is a dog's breakfast; too many people from too many agencies are involved. They end up competing against each other to get the boys signed up to their particular courses.

(Brinsford IMB).

All 18-20 year olds leaving prison are currently supervised by the Probation Service for a minimum of three months post-release. Nationally there is no separate Probation Service provision for this age group, with the exception of young adult teams in London. Concerns were expressed by one IMB about the difficulties young adults have fulfilling the requirements of their probation licence.

Problems arise with young offenders maintaining appointments with Probation as they often have a chaotic lifestyle and forget to attend. If they fail to attend 2 appointments they are put back in custody. It is also difficult for young offenders living in more remote areas as it can often take a long time for them to travel to the local Probation Service and just getting there in itself can cause problems. This can lead to them not bothering to attend and once again being put back into prison.

(New Hall IMB).

The same IMB also noted the problems faced by prisoners with either learning difficulties or mental health problems.

Many inmates have learning difficulties and this in itself could lead to problems as they are unable to read letters sent to them and in addition follow instructions they are given. Mental health is a massive problem with many inmates not receiving the support and counselling they need when they are released back into the community.

(New Hall IMB).

The Home Office acknowledges that links between prisons and community services do not work very well and often break down completely. The new National Offender Management Service is intended to address this by introducing a system of 'end-to-end management of offenders, regardless of whether they are serving their sentences in the prison, the community or both' (Home Office, 2004b). The new concept of 'offender management' is to be piloted in the North West of England and initially will be set up with young offenders at Lancaster Farms and Thorn Cross Young Offender Institutions. The pilots will establish how 'through the gate case management' operates so that there is a smooth transition from custody to the community (Home Office 2004a).

Another pilot has already begun in the South West of England with 18-20 year olds at Guys Marsh Young Offender Institution. A 'Going Straight Contract', which was recommended by the Social Exclusion Unit in its report on re-offending by ex-prisoners, is being developed. The contract sets out a range of programmes and activities to reduce the risk of re-offending which the young offender is expected to participate in. Depending on their progress each person is subject to a range of rewards and sanctions. The aim is to deliver the contract 'via a seamless case management approach, from point of sentence through to release' (SEU, 2002).

5.4 Re-offending

At two prisons during the focus group discussions prisoners expressed their views on whether or not their time in custody had made them less or more likely to re-offend. The majority were negative, particularly those who had spent time in prison for previous offences.

Jail has done nothing for me, you come in and get big going to the gym and then go out and come back in. That's it.

It has made me worse. I think that when a judge gives you a jail sentence all it does is take away the problem, but when you get out it is back there.

I have got so used to jail that it is just an occupational hazard...it doesn't bother me, I just keep my head and do my time.

There are some good courses but because there are only a few it is hard to get on them and the waiting list is long. I am not learning anything at the moment here. If I get out and find a job then I will be okay, but if I can't find work I will go back to nicking.

For one young man what mattered was that his liberty had been taken away from him. He did not think that any of the activities in prison had made a difference.

I won't come back in my head even though prison is light, the only reason I won't come back is because you don't have freedom, you can't go down town, you can't wake up in your girl's bed.

The critical factor for another young man was the fact that he had not been able to spend time with his child.

It is my kid, he was six months when I came in, I have seen him twice in 14 months, when I get out he will be two. I have to be responsible when I come out.

There were some, however, who did feel that the courses they had completed whilst in custody had changed them.

I did a drug awareness course that lasted a week and it changed my mind. Made me think about what drugs were done to me and the affect it was having on me. I am getting too old for this crap now.

A lot has happened for me whilst I've been inside...I have looked at myself and thought about my life, I have learned how to read and write and I now know what I want to do, so it has had an effect on me, I won't come back.

6 CONCLUSION

Young adults in custody should be a high priority for government. They are a prolific offending group who have a strong likelihood of becoming long-term adult offenders. Their time in custody is critical if they are to be turned away from a life of crime. Yet this report has shown that they have been so neglected that they have effectively become a lost generation within the prison system. It is not surprising that nearly three quarters of young adults are reconvicted within two years of release from prison.

Drawing on information from the independent watchdogs who monitor prison conditions, the Independent Monitoring Boards, and interviews with young people in custody, the report has provided an insight into the lives of young adults in prison and revealed the shortcomings of a system that is failing to address their needs.

An overview of young adults in custody has shown that:

- In the last ten years the number of sentenced young adults entering prison has increased by 49 per cent. Over that time the number of sentenced young women imprisoned has more than trebled (Home Office, 2003).
- In 2002 more young adults were sent to prison for theft and handling stolen goods than any other offence. Overall more than 80 per cent were given custodial sentences for non-violent offences (*ibid*).
- Ethnic minorities, particularly young black men, are over-represented in the young adult prison population (*ibid*).
- Young adults receive short sentences. In 2002 more than half of them were sentenced to six months or less (*ibid*).
- They have much higher incidences of poor basic skills, unemployment and mental health problems. A quarter will have terminated their education early and up to 40 per cent will have been in local authority care (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; NACRO, 2001).

Once in prison many young people are held in overcrowded jails, which may mean they are regularly moved from prison to prison. Information gathered for this report shows that they spend short periods in a number of different establishments. In some young offender institutions the average time a young person spends there is just a matter of days before they are transferred to another establishment. This so called 'churn' of young offenders around the estate is extremely damaging, disrupting education and training programmes, and causing the young people concerned great distress. One young man said:

I was in a real mess about being moved, it did my head in. I had settled down and got used to it all and then suddenly I was off to another jail. It messed me up big time.

Movement between prisons also means being held long distances from home. More than half of young adults in prison are held over fifty miles from their home town and more than one in ten are being held over a hundred miles away. This undermines family ties which have been recognized by the Home Office as an important factor in preventing re-offending (Home Office, 2004a). One young woman said that she was moved the day her family was due to visit her for the first time.

I got woke up very early in the morning and they told me to pack up and shift out and I had a visit that day, my first reception visit, so I missed my visit and had to wait another week when I got here. My mum was already near the prison. I was so pissed off and upset.

Compared to the extra investment provided by the Youth Justice Board for under-18s, young adults experience impoverished regimes that fail to provide adequate purposeful activity. In 2003-2004 only six establishments holding young adults provided an average of 30 hours purposeful activity each week, which is the target that the Youth Justice Board set for under-18s. This lack of purposeful activity means they are spending long hours locked in their cells with nothing to do. It is a matter of great concern for Independent Monitoring Boards who identified a lack of resources and facilities, as well as staffing shortages, as contributing to unsatisfactory regimes for young adults.

Overall there are two main barriers to effective work with young people in prison today – inadequate resources and the damage caused by population movement. It is impossible for prison staff to engage constructively with young adults if they spend short periods in a prison that is a long way from their home town. A lack of investment means that even if young adults stay for longer, the standard of the regime is poor. They have to make do with what is available for adults, with very few programmes for their specific needs. In these circumstances prison can do no more than contain and control young people.

Even if custodial provision was better resourced, given that the majority of young adults are sentenced to less than six months in custody, it is questionable what benefit imprisonment will have for them. A short prison sentence can result in loss of accommodation, employment and family ties. This is particularly damaging for young adults who are making the difficult transition from childhood to adulthood. Short periods of imprisonment disrupt this process and exacerbate the difficulties they face, increasing the chances of re-offending on release. The Home Secretary, David Blunkett, made this clear when he said:

Our prisons are crowded places full of people on short sentences that do not allow prison staff to do one of the things they are best at – rehabilitation work. Prison staff work hard to provide programmes which tackle poor education and skills, and help people find jobs. Those on remand and short sentences are not inside for long enough for these programmes to make a difference – but they are there long enough to lose their jobs, their family relationships, and even their homes. This can push someone off the straight and narrow for good.

(The Observer, February 3rd 2002)

There needs to be a thorough-going review of imprisonment for young adults. It would be much better to create small settings, not huge prisons, for those few young men and women who need to be detained. These could be closer to home, with an emphasis on continuity of care and professional multi-agency staffing. They should be sited in the community and closely linked to statutory and voluntary services. Resettlement plans, age-appropriate regimes and the active involvement of young people should be central to their development. Above all they must be safe places of last resort, responsive to diverse needs, where adolescents can change.

6.1 Agenda for Change

Government should honour the commitment given in the Labour Party manifesto ahead of the 2001 general election and:

- Increase investment in provision for young adults in the criminal justice system. There has been a substantial investment in provision for children and there should now be a similar level of commitment to the development of intensive and effective regimes for young adults.
- Introduce small dedicated custodial units as close to home as possible for 18-20 year olds who present a genuine threat to public safety. Young adult units should be run under revised statutory rules and subject to performance criteria.
- Promote alternatives to custody for 18-20 year olds that build on the Intensive Change and Control Programme recently piloted by the National Probation Service which provides tailored programmes to meet their needs.
- Seek actively to reduce the use of custodial remands by the courts for young adults who commit non-violent offences.
- Institute a review of provision for 18-20 year olds in the criminal justice system to enable the National Offender Management Service to develop an informed strategy for young adult offenders.
- The Prime Minister should commission a report on young adults from the Social Exclusion Unit. This should consider the nature and challenges of young adulthood and review policy in all the relevant areas – including criminal justice, social security, housing and mental health service provision.
- Increase provision and improve the quality of court-based liaison and diversion schemes for young adults with serious mental health problems.
- The sentence of Custody Plus to be introduced under the Criminal Justice Act 2003 should be piloted initially with young adult offenders. Its development could then be informed by experience and practice with Detention and Training Orders for under 18s.

In the meantime the Prison Service should:

- Ensure that young adults are held only in dedicated wings in adult prisons or in young offender institutions and, in particular, end the practice of housing young people on remand with adult prisoners.
- Provide a minimum of 30 hours purposeful activity each week for young adults.
- Ensure that young adults spend at least ten hours each day out of their cell.
- Ensure that a sentence plan is produced for every young person, based upon an assessment of the young person's individual needs.
- Ensure that every young person has a personal officer with whom they have frequent, purposeful contact and with whom they can establish good relationships.
- Introduce a dedicated resettlement strategy based on the specific needs of 18-20 year olds.
- Seek to improve opportunities for skills training that are linked to recognised shortages in the labour market.
- Appoint a director for Young Prisoners, as recommended by HM Inspectorate of Prisons, with overall accountability and responsibility for the young adult estate.

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APPENDIX ONE

Population of establishments holding Young Offenders and Overcrowding end of August 2004 and Percentage of Prisoners Doubling Up in 2003-2004 (Prison Service 2004a, Solomon, 2004)

Prison Name	Population end of August 2004	Uncrowded capacity end of August 2004	Percentage overcrowded end of August 2004	Percentage of the population held two to a cell designed for one 2003-2004
Altcourse	1,000	614	163%	76.70%
Askham Grange	121	151	80%	0.00%
Aylesbury	363	356	102%	0.90%
Belmarsh	909	792	115%	0.00%
Birmingham	1,390	1,100	126%	41.50%
Brinsford	460	477	96%	11.50%
Bristol	585	420	139%	15.00%
Brockhill	130	164	79%	0.00%
Bullwood Hall	153	180	85%	4.10%
Castington	372	400	93%	0.00%
Chelmsford	571	446	128%	45.30%
Cookham Wood	129	120	108%	47.10%
Deerbolt	437	513	85%	0.00%
Doncaster	1,110	771	144%	61.90%
Dorchester	235	143	164%	76.20%
Drake Hall	272	315	86%	0.00%
Eastwood Park	274	310	88%	15.70%
Edmunds Hill	144	308	47%	0.00%
Elmley	975	763	128%	24.50%
Exeter	526	312	169%	41.50%
Feltham	648	761	85%	0.00%
Forest Bank	1,044	800	131%	17.70%
Glen Parva	740	668	111%	48.20%
Gloucester	303	229	132%	55.40%
Guys Marsh	543	519	105%	12.70%
High Down	741	646	115%	0.00%
Hindley	447	539	83%	1.80%
Hollesley Bay	272	330	82%	0.00%
Holloway	357	522	68%	0.00%
Hull	1,069	812	132%	42.90%
Lancaster Farms	501	480	104%	9.40%
Lewes	511	441	116%	28.90%
Low Newton	303	343	88%	28.70%
Moorland	753	740	102%	5.80%
New Hall	358	367	98%	12.50%
Northallerton	233	153	152%	68.20%
Norwich	755	568	133%	48.50%
Onley	528	580	91%	0.00%
Parc	996	788	126%	0.00%
Portland	437	447	98%	0.00%
Reading	262	196	134%	67.70%
Rochester	359	392	92%	0.00%
Stoke Heath	617	574	107%	28.80%
Styal	405	406	100%	7.00%
Swinfen Hall	431	431	100%	0.00%
Thorn Cross	275	316	87%	0.00%
Woodhill	783	650	120%	29.50%

APPENDIX TWO

To Chairs of Independent Monitoring Boards

July 2004

Young Offenders

As you know the sharp rise in the prison population over the past few years has placed a strain on the whole estate. In 2002 the Prison Reform Trust undertook a joint study with the then, National Advisory Council of Boards of Visitors to document concerns about the impact of overcrowding. Our report, 'Prison Overcrowding: The Inside Story', was presented to the Home Affairs Select Committee and discussed with the Home Secretary. It drew on submissions from 103 Boards. Its strength lay in the level of detail and clear illustration of the way in which overcrowding was affecting almost all aspects of the regime as well as putting pressure on prisoners, their families and staff. At the time this report was widely covered in the press and undoubtedly served to raise public and parliamentary awareness.

Now PRT is concerned to explore more fully the effects of overcrowding on young offenders in custody. In its last election manifesto the Government gave a commitment to improve custodial provision for 18-21 year olds. This pledge has yet to be honoured. We have therefore decided to take this step of writing to you so that we can be in a position to provide clear accurate, information to Ministers, officials, politicians and the public on the situation facing young offenders and those who work with them. We believe it is important to raise the issue higher up the political agenda and to draw attention to a group of young prisoners whose experience in custody has a formative influence on them and a significant impact on public safety.

It would be most helpful if you could let us know, either by email or letter, what are the main issues facing young offenders at your establishment. We are particularly interested in establishing to what extent young offenders are being moved around the estate due to population pressures. Are there increased applications or transfers? Are cells overcrowded? Are young prisoners spending more time locked in their cells and less time in purposeful activity? In your experience are family visits affected by increased distance from home? Are education and skills training courses affected? Are establishments able to provide consistent, stable regimes? What is the situation in relation to sentence planning, personal officer schemes and resettlement? These are some examples; there will doubtless be other issues that are also relevant. It would be most helpful to know how any problems have been dealt with and whether any solutions have emerged.

Alongside this request to you, PRT is exploring with officials whether the movement, or 'churn', of young prisoners is being monitored in any way and if quantitative information is available. During the summer we will be meeting groups of young offenders and staff in selected establishments. I shall also attend the working group meeting at Glen Parva convened by Sue Nicholas, National Council, whose help and encouragement we appreciate. I have discussed this project briefly with Paul Goggins, the Prisons Minister, in a meeting on 12th July and a more detailed discussion is scheduled with Phil Wheatley, the Director General. PRT is grateful to Community Care and the Monument Trust for supporting our work in this area.

We look forward to hearing from you at PRT offices if at all possible by the end of August. We will then collate the information received and produce a briefing which will be shared with Boards and the Prison Service and submitted to Parliament, Government and the media. We would hope this will prompt a strategy to improve provision for young offenders.

Juliet Lyon

Director

APPENDIX THREE

Independent Monitoring Boards who responded to the study.

HMP Altcourse

HMP Askham Grange

HMYOI & RC Brinsford

HMP & YOI Bullwood Hall

HMYOI Deerbolt

HMP Dorchester

HMP & YOI Drake Hall

HMP & YOI Eastwood Park

HMP Edmunds Hill

HMP Elmley

HMP Exeter

HMP & YOI Feltham

HMP & YOI Forest Bank

HMYOI Glen Parva

HMP & YOI Guys Marsh

HMP High Down

HMP Holloway

HMP & YOI Hollesley Bay Colony

HMP Hull

HMYOI Lancaster Farms

HMP & YOI Moorland

HMP & YOI New Hall

HMRC Northallerton

HMP Norwich

HMP & YOI Parc

HMYOI Onley

HMRC Reading

HMP Rochester

HMYOI Stoke Heath

HMYOI Thorn Cross

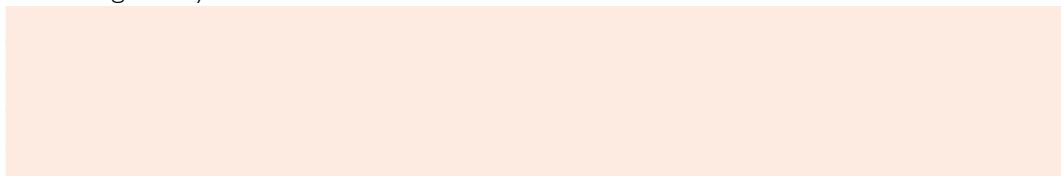
HMP Woodhill

APPENDIX FOUR

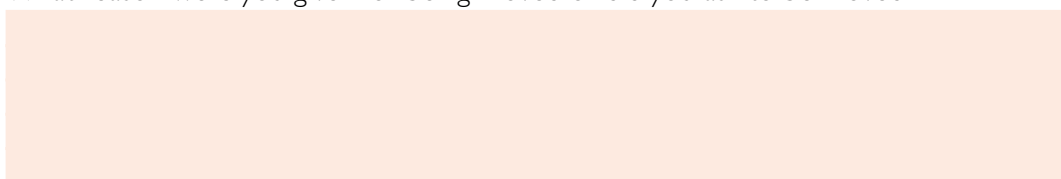
Interview schedule for focus groups with young offenders.

The churn and movement

1. How long have you been in this establishment?

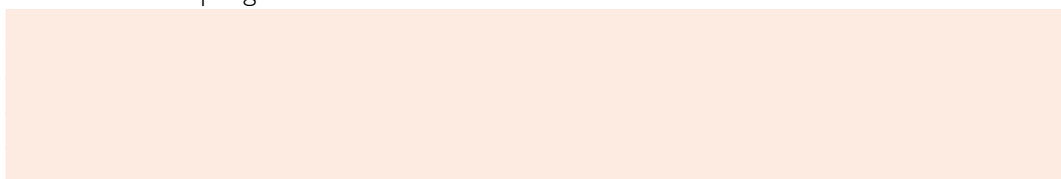


2. What reason were you given for being moved or did you ask to be moved?

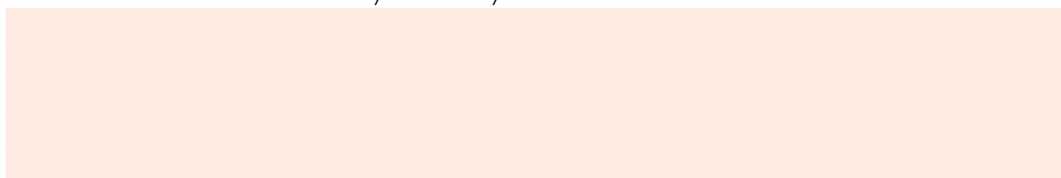


3. What was the impact of being moved...

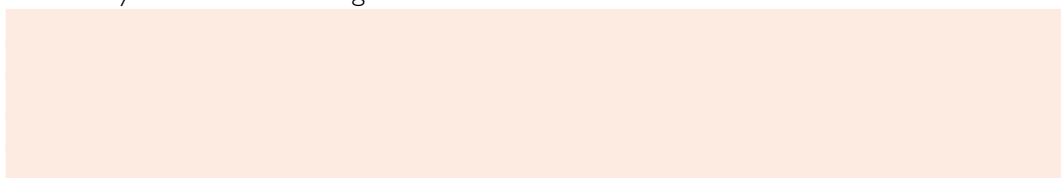
- a) Did it disrupt education/training/offending behaviour/ health/ resettlement/ drug or alcohol courses/programmes?



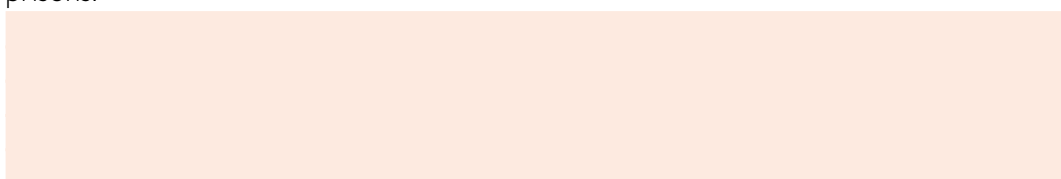
- b) How did it affect contact with your family?



- c) How did you feel about being moved?



4. How many other prisons have you been in – what was the length of stay in those prisons?



Regimes

1. Are you/have you been sharing a cell, designed for one or a dormitory?

2. What are the conditions like in your cell – sanitation, ventilation, space?

3. How much time do you spend on a week day out of your cell in activities?

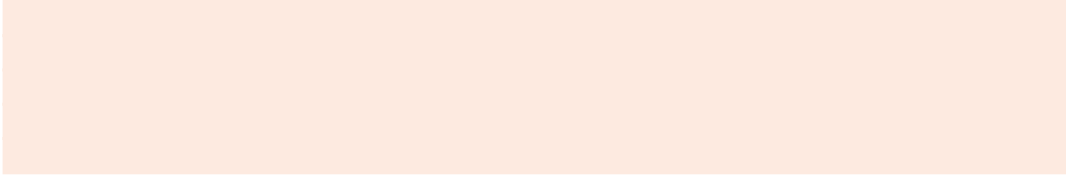
4. How much time do you spend on at the weekend out of your cell in activities?

5. What activities do you participate in – are there lots of opportunities for participation or are you unable to participate in programmes that you would like to take part in?

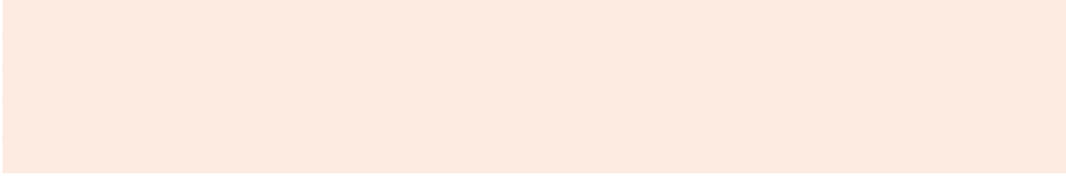
6. What type of education or training are you involved in?

7. How often do you go on association each day?

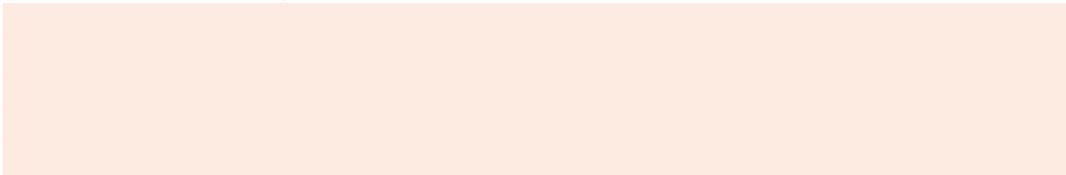
8. How often do you go outside for exercise each day?



9. Talk me through your average day.

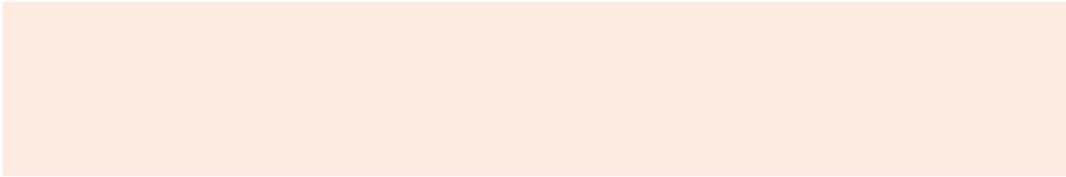


10. Are classes/courses (education, work, offending behaviour; drugs and alcohol) ever cancelled, and if so, why and how often?

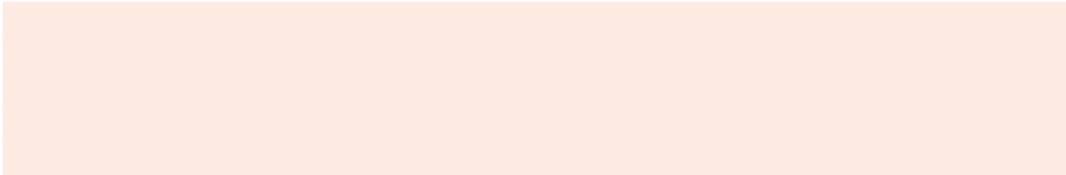


Resettlement

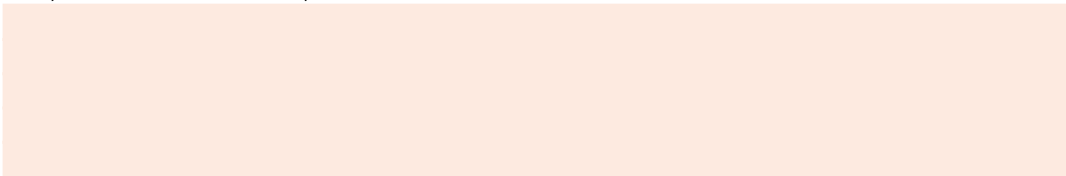
1. Do you/have you had a personal officer assigned to you?



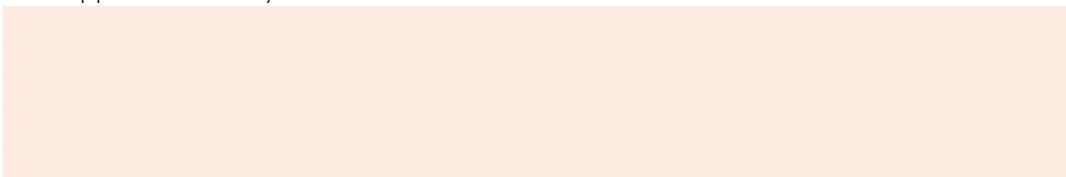
2. Do you think your personal officer is helpful/very helpful?



3. Do you have a sentence plan?



4. Were you involved/very involved in the development of your sentence plan – how did this happen, what did you discuss?



5. Has the plan been followed?

6. Have you been involved in resettlement programmes of any kind? What have they involved?

7. Do you know who to contact in the prison to get help with finding a job, finding accommodation, sorting out finances/benefits on release?

8. Are there issues/concerns you have about what will happen when you are released that are not being dealt with?

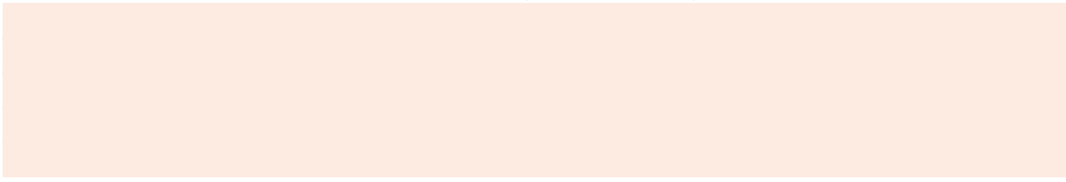
9. Have you done anything, or has anything happened to you whilst in custody that you think will make you less likely to offend in the future.

Family Contact

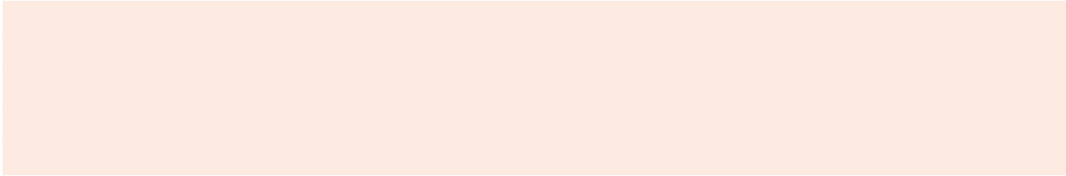
1. How far away are you being/have you been held from your home town?

2. Have your family or friends had difficulties visiting you?

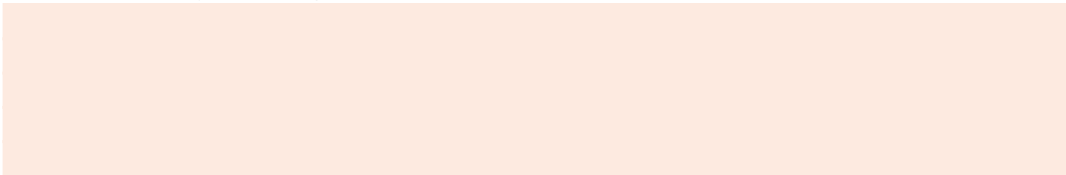
3. Have difficulties been linked to how far away from home you are?



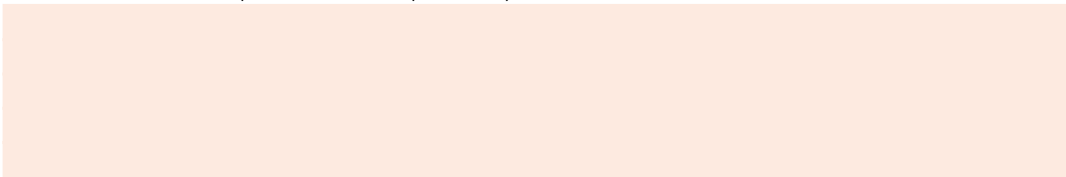
4. Did you have a visit in the first week you were in this jail?



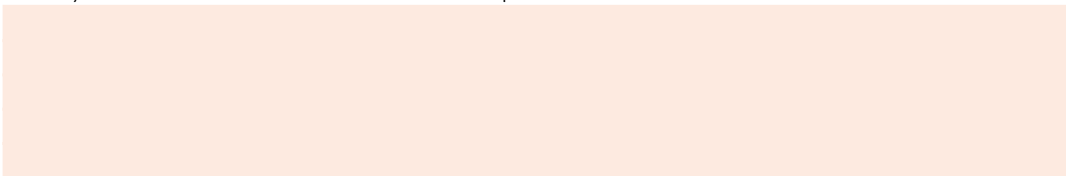
5. Does this prison give you the opportunity to have the visits you are entitled to?(e.g. number and length of visit)



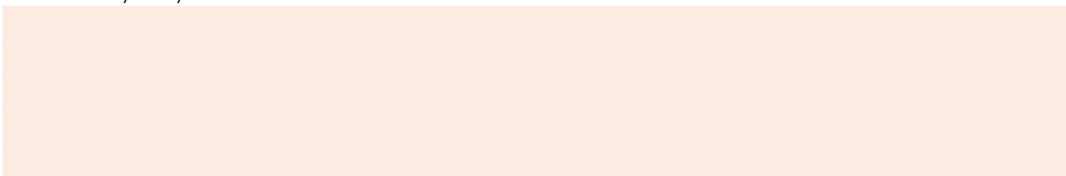
6. How does this compare to other prisons you have been in?



7. Have you asked to be moved to another prison in order to be closer to home?



8. How many of you have children?



9. Are there any special family day visits at this establishment?

