



Written evidence submitted by Revolving Doors Agency to the Justice Committee's Young Adult Offenders inquiry

September 2015

About Revolving Doors

1. Revolving Doors Agency is a charity working across England to change systems and improve services for people who face multiple and complex needs, including poor mental health, and come into repeated contact with the police and criminal justice system. We work with policymakers, commissioners, local decision-makers, and frontline professionals to share evidence, demonstrate effective solutions, and change policy, while involving people with direct experience of the problem in all our work through our National Service User Forum. Revolving Doors is a member of the Transition to Adulthood Alliance (T2A).

Summary

2. Revolving Doors welcomes the Committee's inquiry into young adult offenders. Young adults (18-25) are the most likely age group to come into contact with the criminal justice system, representing just 10% of the population but accounting for around one-third of the probation service's caseload and one-third of those sentenced to prison. They are also likely to 'grow out of crime' with the right approach, but too often face a system that fails to take account of their varying levels of maturity, and creates obstacles to desistance.ⁱ
3. Many young adults who come into contact with the criminal justice system also face multiple needs, including poor mental health, substance misuse problems, and histories of family breakdown and trauma. This leads to numerous difficult transitions between a range of youth and adult services, with people too often falling through gaps in support at a crucial time. It is therefore important to note that while the inquiry focuses specifically on young adults in prison and probation settings, a 'whole system' view is required when considering solutions.
4. We support the submission to this inquiry made by the Transition to Adulthood Alliance (T2A), and join calls for a distinct national strategy to improve responses for young adult (18-25) offenders (see section 4 of T2A response). While we acknowledge the importance of changes in national policy and strategy to improve responses for young adults, this submission aims to complement the recommendations from T2A by drawing on examples of promising practice underway in local areas and highlighting some key lessons from these for government policy.

Inquiry section 1: The nature and effectiveness of the Ministry of Justice's strategy and governance structures for dealing with young adult offenders.

5. There is currently little specific policy or legislation from central government focusing on young adult offenders, and no consistency over which age range is considered 'young adult'. This is despite strong evidence supporting a distinct approach for 18-25 year olds from a criminological, neurological, and psychological perspective.ⁱⁱ
6. While the Youth Justice Board has provided a welcome focus on youth triage; diversion; restorative approaches; and coordinating multi-agency support for under-18s through the youth offending team model, there is no national equivalent for young adults aged 18-25. **A number of reports have called for an extension of the remit of the youth justice board to include young adults, and the inclusion of young adults within youth offending team provision.**ⁱⁱⁱ
Acknowledging the government review of youth justice currently underway, we suggest that the government revisit this recommendation and consider extending many of the principles informing youth justice policy to the young adult age group.
7. In the absence of national leadership on this agenda, a number of local areas have nevertheless sought to improve responses for young adult offenders through local partnership strategies or through building on existing youth provision. This has included some police and crime commissioners responding to the high demand that young adult offending places on police resources by using their broader partnership remit to champion an improved approach, as highlighted in our recent 'PCC Spotlight' briefing.^{iv}
8. **We support calls by the Transition to Adulthood Alliance for an immediate cross-departmental 18-25 young adult strategy, with appropriate accountability measures and oversight from a ministers in the Ministry of Justice and Home Office, and suggest that this strategy should learn from local innovation on this agenda.** Our review of promising practice found a number of themes in local strategies and approaches that should be included as a focus in a national strategy:^v
 - **Triage approaches and diversion**, with local areas reviewed often exploring opportunities to tailor out of court disposals more effectively for young adults; adapting existing youth triage approaches to extend to young adults; and ensuring mental health liaison and diversion services respond to the specific needs of this age group.
 - **Restorative approaches**, which have been used extensively in the youth sector and could be successfully used with young adults.
 - **Targeted support through the transition to adulthood**, with some areas introducing a dedicated young adults teams to work with young adult offenders and commissioning young-adult specific support services to act as a diversionary pathway for young adults.
 - **Extending existing youth services**, including exploring how principles of the youth offending team model can be applied to young adults, and developing opportunities to link some young adults back into these teams where they have been involved previously and relapse to commit a further offence.

- **Investing in alternatives to custody**, and encouraging greater use of intensive community sanction for young adult offenders where this is appropriate.
- **Expanding employment opportunities**, promoting employment projects for young adults, particularly former offenders.
- **Engaging with young adults**, many local areas have to engage with young adults with direct experience in developing their strategies, including those with experience of offending.
- **Encouraging a ‘whole system’ approach**, the most promising local approaches take an ambitious ‘whole system’ view, acknowledging that many of the solution lie outside of criminal justice system and bringing partners together and to drive a multi-agency focus on this issue.

Example 1: Leicestershire Young Adults Project (YAP!)

Leicestershire PCC Sir Clive Loader identified young adults as a priority group in his police and crime plan, and funded the initial phase of the multi-agency Young Adults Project (YAP!). Reporting to the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Reducing Reoffending Board, the project began with an initial analysis phase, identifying that in 2011-2013 40% of offenders and 21% of victims in Leicestershire and Rutland were between 16-24 years old.

Taking a ‘whole system’ view, the final report from this analysis made 18 recommendations which are now being taken forward. These include: **reviewing the use of out of court disposals** to improve diversion of young adults involved in less serious offending; **developing bespoke sentencing options for young adults**, based on local need and effectiveness in consultation with local sentencers; and **ensuring commissioning of restorative justice (RJ) and victims services promote development of RJ approaches for young adults** at all stages of the criminal justice process. With support from partners including the new probation provider, YAP! has entered the implementation phase and progress has been made in several areas, including:

- The development of a new transitions protocol between youth offending services and adult probation providers, with the local integrated offender management (IOM) scheme taking on a tracking and quality assurance role.
- The establishment of a Young Adults Team tasked with providing voluntary support and interventions to 18-24 year olds at risk of offending/reoffending. The purpose of the team is to prevent offending, or if reoffending occurs to support a smooth transition into the adult criminal justice system. It is also anticipated that the team will offer a bespoke conditional caution for young adults.

The project has strong strategic governance and cross-sector support, with oversight from the local Strategic Partnership Board.

For further information see: *Leicestershire and Rutland YAP! Young Adults Project end of Phase One report May 2014*. Available here: <http://dlncrc.co.uk/working-inpartnership/young-adults-project/>

Section 2: The suitability of current provision for young adult offenders i) in the community and ii) in custody, including the extent to which there is distinct provision currently

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Section 3: The Harris Review advocated a distinct approach to young adult offenders. Is this desirable? If so, what would this entail i) in the community and ii) in custody? If not, why not?

9. As noted above, a number of areas have recognised that young adults in contact with the criminal justice system would benefit from a distinct approach and are beginning to develop more effective responses at various points in the criminal justice pathway. However, with no national strategy or focus on this group, there are significant gaps where this is not taking place and where criminal justice interventions aimed at older adults are failing to prevent further offending among young adults – as demonstrated by the fact that three-quarters of young adults leaving prison are reconvicted within two years.
10. This highlights the need for a more effective approach to young adults that takes account of their distinct needs and varying levels of maturity. The Transition to Adulthood Alliance has piloted an approach which builds on the principle that *“young people in the transition to adulthood require specific, tailored support through this process of change, and not an arbitrary cut-off from services at the time of greatest need”*.^{vi} The T2A pilots translated this concept into practice by working intensively with young adults to provide personalized, welfare-based interventions, aiming to enable young adults to ‘get on with their lives’ and desist from offending behaviour. An evaluation of the pilots published in 2012 found that:
 - **There was a 9% reconviction rate (all non-violent offences);**
 - **There was a 9% breach rate of community sentences or licences;**
 - **The number in employment trebled; and**
 - **The number classified as NEET halved.**^{vii}
11. A break-even analysis by Matrix Evidence^{viii} showed that the T2A approach is cost-effective in reducing re-offending. T2A are currently testing 6 further models throughout the criminal justice pathway through the T2A pathway projects.^{ix}
12. **We support the recommendation in the Harris review that this distinct approach should seek to divert young adults from custody and the criminal justice system where possible and appropriate, and suggest that for low-level offences and where individuals are identified with mental health and other needs, diversion into support at the earliest opportunity should have the same priority as it does in the youth justice system.** With NHS England currently rolling out all-age liaison and diversion services, there is much to be learned from the many wave 1 and wave 2 sites that have developed specific young adult pathways and protocols. As noted above, a number of areas have also extended broader ‘triage’ services for young adults (see practice box 2 below), while the T2A pathways projects provide examples of innovation in diverting young adults into support.

Example 2: South Wales - Extending the principles of youth offending services to young adults

South Wales PCC Alun Michael targeted an improved response to young adults, with a particular focus on extending “youth offending team principles to young adults”. This has involved working closely in partnership with local authorities, youth offending services (YOS), probation, and the voluntary sector to develop an initial pilot in Bridgend which included a focus on:

- **“Relapse prevention” and out of court disposals** - A triage scheme has been developed whereby young adults (aged 18-21) previously involved with YOS are identified if they come into police custody and linked back into the YOS team for further targeted support. There are also plans to expand targeted out of court disposals to the 18-25 age groups.
- **Employment, apprenticeships and training** - The PCC is supported a scheme to take the financial risk of employing a young adult with a criminal record away from small local businesses, supporting costs for training and wages for a trial period with a guaranteed job for the young person on successful completion.

Building on the pilot, Bridgend have employed a crime reduction officer seconded to the Youth Offending Service who is focused specifically on addressing the complex needs of offenders in the 18-25 age group. Further pilots have also commenced across South Wales, including:

- **An 18-21 Triage pilot scheme operating in Cardiff Bay.** The scheme aims to divert 18-21 year olds away from police custody (those arrested for low level, non-violent offences, first time entrants), and uses a restorative justice approach that builds upon the triage already in place for 10-17s.
- **A Voluntary Bail Support Scheme for 18-25s in Merthyr and Bridgend.** This scheme is an extension of the Appropriate Adult Scheme and is aimed at 18-25s who have been identified as vulnerable during police detention and questioning, linking in with them at point of charge and bail to court, and working with them in the community to address needs and aggravating factors towards their offending behaviour.

13. **A distinct approach to young adults should also seek to boost community disposals available to young adult offenders as part of a community sentence, and aim to reduce the unnecessary use of prison through investment in intensive community-based alternatives.** This approach should learn from the principles of the T2A approach, as well as areas such as London and Manchester where new probation providers are designing young adult specific services as part of their operating model. Further examples are highlighted in a recent report by T2A and Clinks *Effective Approaches with Young Adults: A Guide for Probation Services.*^x

Example 3 – Cheshire and Greater Manchester intensive community order

Cheshire & Greater Manchester Community Rehabilitation Company (CGM CRC) runs an Intensive Community Order (ICO) in Greater Manchester that is specifically targeted at young adult offenders aged between 18 and 25. Commissioned by the Greater Manchester Justice and Rehabilitation Executive chaired by the police and crime commissioner Tony Lloyd, the aim of the ICO is to tackle the ‘revolving door’ of short custodial sentences by providing an alternative to custody that supports and challenges young adults to change their behaviour, addressing the reasons for their criminality and giving them the tools to turn their lives around.

Since the programme started, reoffending rates have dropped with 80 per cent completing the Order and over a quarter of unemployed offenders on the ICO orders finding full-time work. The ICO involves an intensive curriculum of activities, offering rehabilitation, punishment and reparation through partnerships between probation and other statutory, voluntary and private sector organisations.

For further information, see T2A and Clinks (2015) *Effective Approaches with Young Adults: A guide for probation services*, p. 30. Available here: http://www.t2a.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Probation-guide_Ver4_sml.pdf

Section 4: What legislative or other barriers are there to more appropriate practices for young adult offenders and how could these be overcome?

14. While there are significant opportunities to improve responses for young adults within the current legislative framework, we support all of the legislative and national policy changes laid out in the T2A response to this section – including calls for a national strategy for young adults (18-25) as set out above.
15. Further barriers to developing appropriate practices for young adults lie in the availability of support pathways and challenges in coordinating effective support from a range of agencies. Many young adults in the criminal justice system face multiple and complex needs, including poor mental health; low educational attainment; trauma; and substance misuse issues.^{xi} While community-based support is likely to be appropriate in many cases for people in this situation, it can be challenging to link people into the support that they need, with local services too often operating in silos and facing significant funding challenges.
16. As noted above, a number of areas have sought to overcome these challenges by bringing local partners together and pooling funding around shared issues such as young adult offending. **The government should consider how the devolution agenda could support improved responses to young adults, and should include a focus the ‘transition’ age group in discussions around local devolution deals.** Such a focus could help enable local areas to redesign services to work together in a more efficient, effective, and preventative way, and overcome some of the structural challenges that prevent more effective partnership working around young adults facing multiple needs.^{xii}

Endnotes

ⁱ See T2A (2012) *Pathways from crime: 10 steps to a more effective approach to young adults in the criminal justice process*. Available here: <http://www.t2a.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/T2A-Pathways-from-Crime.pdf>

ⁱⁱ This evidence is set out in further detail in the T2A submission to this inquiry, and on the T2A website: www.t2a.org.uk

ⁱⁱⁱ See for example recommendations in IPPR (2014) *Everyday justice: Mobilising the power of victims, communities and public services to reduce crime*, pp. 32-36.

^{iv} See T2A & Revolving Doors (2015) *PCC spotlight 1: young adults (18-24) in contact with police and criminal justice services*. Available here: <http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/pcc-spotlight-young-adults/>

^v Ibid, p. 6

^{vi} See Sturrock R. (2012) *Supporting Transitions: A summative evaluation of the Transition to Adulthood Pilots* London. Catch 22. Available here: <http://www.t2a.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/T2A-Summative-Evaluation-Catch22-2012.pdf>

^{vii} Based on a random sample of 34 young adults from across the three T2A pilots tracked over a 6 month period

^{viii} Formative, cost-benefit and outcomes evaluations were carried out by Oxford University, Matrix Evidence and Catch 22 respectively. The full evaluation reports results are available at www.T2A.org.uk/publications

^{ix} See <http://www.t2a.org.uk/pathway/>

^x Available online here: http://www.t2a.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Probation-guide_Ver4_sml.pdf

^{xi} Further information on the prevalence of health and social care needs among young adult offenders is in T2A & Clinks (2015) *Effective Approaches with Young Adults: A Guide for Probation Services*, pp. 9-13.

^{xii} See also Revolving Doors Agency response to the Communities and Local Government Committees enquiry into the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, available here: <http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/documents/submission-clg-committee-inquiry-devolution/>

For further information, please contact:

Shane Britton, policy manager, Revolving Doors Agency

Email: shane.britton@revolving-doors.org.uk **Tel:** 020 7407 0747