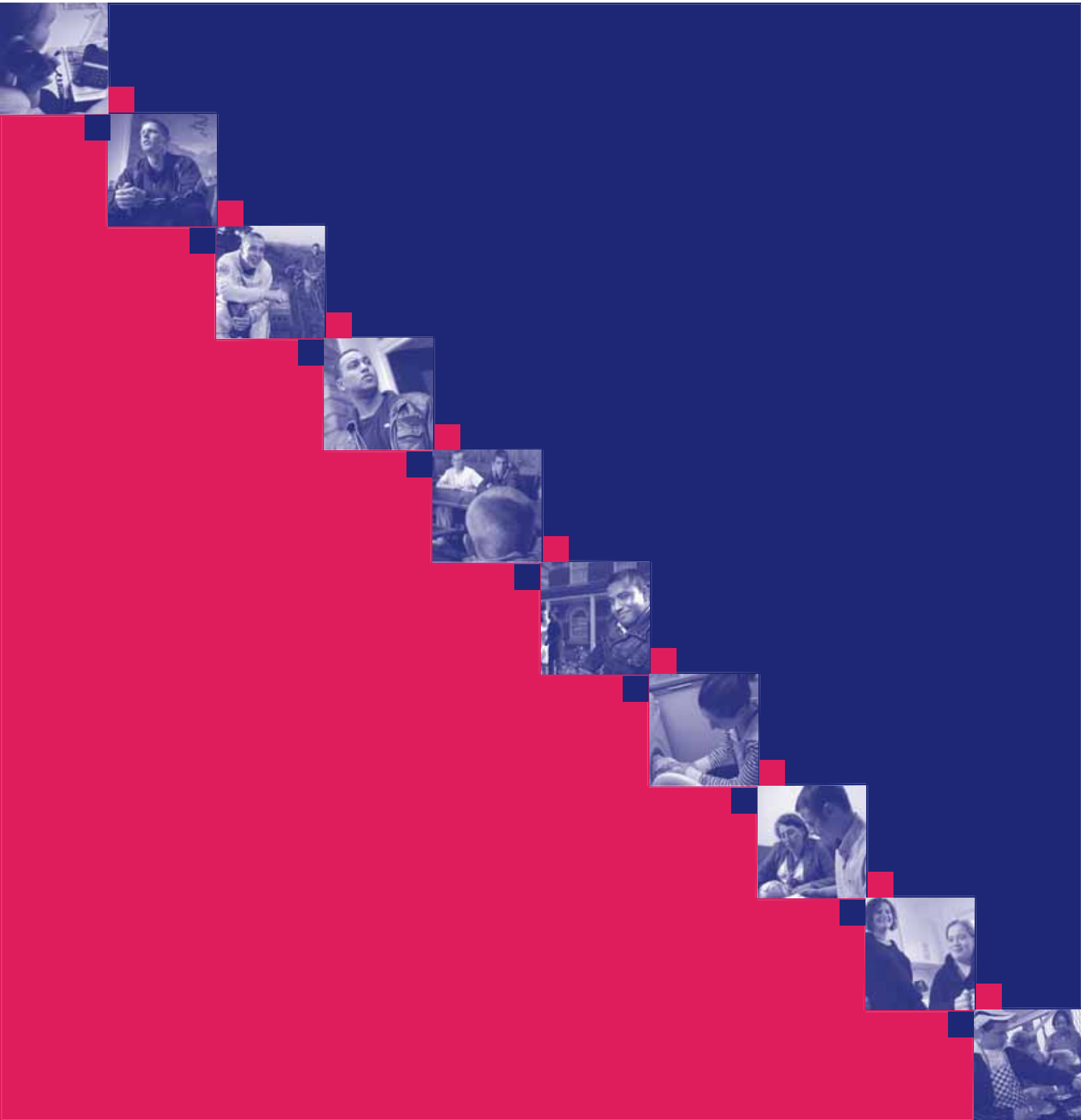




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Custody and young people's living arrangements



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Introduction

As part of its work programme with the Welsh Assembly Government, Nacro Cymru has examined a number of issues in respect of the housing needs of young people who offend to assist the Welsh Assembly Government to meet the strategic targets identified in the All Wales Youth Offending Strategy:

- To evaluate the extent to which the needs of young offenders have been addressed within the local homelessness strategies (March 2005)
- To assess the extent to which the needs of young people are addressed in the Supporting People Operational Plans (March 2005)
- To advise the Youth Justice Board and Yots on the setting of appropriate targets for all young offenders released from custody into arranged and suitable accommodation (March 2005)
- To ensure through the Youth Justice Board and local authorities that all Yots are working to identify the housing needs of young offenders in their areas and to ensure that this informs the contribution and involvement with local homelessness and supporting people planning processes (March 2005)

This is the second of two reports that analyses housing and accommodation issues for young people involved in the criminal justice system. The first report entitled *Youth Offending Teams, Young People and Accommodation* examined housing and accommodation issues from the perspective of Yots.

This report provides a summary of the relationship between homelessness, crime and custody. It examines the living arrangements of a group of young people from the Asset assessments completed by youth offending teams (Yots) at various points in relation to their custodial sentence (prior to, on release and at the end of the licence period). The report also some of the issues that research has identified can affect successful resettlement.

Executive summary

Introduction

- Being in a homeless state or having unsettled accommodation can have an impact on what happens to an individual once they become involved in the criminal justice system. Uncertain and impermanent living arrangements can contribute to the reason for a custodial remand or sentence, an individual can lose their accommodation as a result of being remanded or sentenced to custody and having nowhere to live on release, can affect the ability to be released. Stable accommodation can also reduce the likelihood of re-conviction.

The findings

- The study aimed to examine the impact of custody on young people's living arrangements prior to sentence, on release and at the end of their sentence or order. It examined the Assets of 452 young people who had been sentenced to custody in Wales in 2004. 95% of the group was male, with 16 year olds representing 22% of the population and 17 year olds 45%. 95% of young people were ethnically classified as white.
- Of the cases examined, the Asset assessments indicated that 45%: of young people had an insignificant association between their living arrangements and offending behaviour, 23%: a moderate association and 32%: a significant association.
- Prior to custody 69% of young people were living with a parent, mainly their mother (94%) and just over a third (36%) were living with both parents. 7% were living alone/independently in various types of accommodation (hostels, bed and breakfast, supported lodgings and council tenancies) and 2% were recorded as being of no fixed abode or homeless.
- On release 69% of young people returned to the same type of living arrangement they had prior to custody. 81% went back to the parental home. There was a greater likelihood of returning to the family home for those who had previously been living there, than for those who had not. The findings indicated that a family bond increases the likelihood of returning home and remaining there, that some parents go to extreme lengths to support their family by moving away from negative influences and custody can prove to be a cooling off period and allow for a repair in relationships, if there have been tensions.
- There were also indications that some young people live with significant difficulties at home (for example lacking care and support) and that not everyone that returns home wants to. Some young people who were using the family address were not substantially residing there. It was also evident that when there are problematic relationships at home there will be a degree of moving in and out, which for some may be the start of the transition to independent living
- It was also noted that the ability to return home can be hampered by parents not being prepared to put up with continued offending or other problematic behaviour, the family facing eviction, being evicted because of anti social behaviour or to avoid harassment and it not being safe for the young person to return home, meaning that other alternatives had to be considered.
- 19% (n=55) of young people, who had been living with a parent prior to custody, did not return to live with them on release; the majority (31%) went to live with a member of the extended family, 25% with a non-family person and 25% to live independently. These young people experienced a degree of uncertainty about where they would live prior to release. A number returned to the family home at a later date.
- 60% (n=83) of young people, who had not been living with a parent prior to custody, went to live at a different address to the one they had at the point of sentence. 25% went to the family home on release, but only a third of these were still there at the end of the licence.

Of the remainder, 25% were living independently and 24% with a non-family member such as a girl or boyfriend.

- The living arrangements for those living with parent(s) prior to custody and those not, were broadly similar in that a quarter of young people needed to be found accommodation whether in a hostel or bed and breakfast accommodation on release. Those who had been living with a parent prior to custody were much more likely to live with an extended family member on release, than those that had not. Young people not living with their parents prior to the custodial sentence were also more likely to become homeless during the community element of the order, than those who had been living at home.
- It was also evident that those with housing needs prior to custody tended to continue to have them irrespective of the number of custodial episodes.
- Of the young people that came out of custody to a different address, 73% moved again within the licence period, this represented 13% of the population as a whole. This indicates that a significant minority of young people move their place of residence at least twice whilst on licence; a number were described as having various addresses, indicating that two addresses were the minimum rather than the maximum.
- Two main strands of movement were evident, one between parents and various members of the extended family such as grandparents or siblings. The other pattern of movement included a wider circle of acquaintances such as friends and various forms of temporary accommodation.
- There was a high degree of itinerant living amongst those living alone or independently and the indications were that once this pattern of living is established, it is difficult to break. There also appears to be a professional contribution to itinerant living in that young people in housing need tend to be located in temporary accommodation before something more permanent is found. Additionally young people exercise choice, preferring in some instances to live with associates than in a hostel and as a result may refuse to accept bed and breakfast accommodation. A number were also refused accommodation because of past behaviour; both factors also contribute to mobility.

In housing need

- On average at each of the stages examined eight young people (2%) were found to be homeless or have no fixed abode. These were not the same young people and this suggests that leading an itinerant and a stable lifestyle can both be transient stages. All of these young people appeared to have problematic living arrangements, with the indication being that any attempts to resolve the situation more permanently had not yet been achieved.
- There was also a wider group of young people that appeared to be in housing need: 38 (8%) had been living alone prior to custody and a further 30 (7%) on release. These had at various points been described as being of no fixed abode, having experienced an episode of homelessness, had unsettled living arrangements or had been unable to return to the family home. 29 (6%) young people living at home had at some point been described as homeless due in the main to their families inability to cope with them, suggesting that being allowed home was conditional on good behaviour.

Conclusion

- The numbers of young people with severe accommodation difficulties are relatively few in number, when taken across Wales as a whole, however it is a significant issue for the individuals it is affecting. The evidence suggests that those who had problematic living arrangements prior to custody continued to do so afterwards. Young people have different needs and could benefit from assistance that includes family mediation, advocacy and support, tenancy support and assistance with living independently.
- The Youth Justice Board's key performance target for accommodation is a snapshot measure at a particular point in time, notably the end of an order or sentence. The true

picture of real housing difficulties appears to be best measured over time, as the examination of a number of Assets for each individual has indicated.

- The process of successful resettlement is likely to have a number of different elements:
 - The accommodation needs of all young people should be assessed on reception in custody to identify what their current accommodation status is and whether there are likely to be any problems on release.
 - The assessment process should take into account any specific requirements such as the likelihood of electronic tagging, the conditions of an anti social behaviour order and the nature and type of offence that may make a young person difficult to find accommodation for.
 - Visits from family members should be encouraged and facilitated so that contact is maintained as this can help to facilitate a return home.
 - Young people who are unable to return home should be given practical assistance in looking for and applying for somewhere to live.
 - Social Services and homelessness/housing departments should start the process of assessment (of someone who may be homeless) whilst they are in custody and not at the point of release.
- The successful resettlement of young people relies on the availability of suitable and stable accommodation for them. Yots have identified that emergency accommodation is specifically required for those coming out of custody and accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds is generally required.
- The provision of floating and tenancy support should be prioritised for 16 and 17 year olds living independently.
- Significant policy changes are required in respect of housing benefit and the single room rent allowance to ensure that better quality accommodation is available for young people.

1: The relationship between homelessness and crime

Research has shown that there is an association between being homeless and offending behaviour, either because criminal activity can be a factor that contributes to homelessness or because crime results from homelessness. Young homeless people can also be victims of crime. Homelessness appears to vary inversely with age, a study by Burrows (1997)¹, showed that homelessness was most prevalent in the age group 16 to 29 years. The Mental Health Foundation² have identified that the young homeless population is predominantly male, by a ratio of two to one.

There is common consensus regarding the risk factors that make young people vulnerable to homelessness. These include:

- Family disruption and relationship breakdowns resulting in being asked to leave or choosing to leave the family home - the former is more likely than the latter (*Trouble at Home 2001 and Social Exclusion Unit 1998*)
- Family breakdown and separation from a parent (*Taking Risks 1999*)
- Running Away from home (*Social Exclusion Unit 2001*), also described as absconding within the care system
- Having been in local authority care (*Centrepoin 2002*)
- Lacking in educational attainment and leaving school with no qualifications (*Foyer Federation 2001*)
- Experiencing poverty (*Taking Risks 1999*)
- Having problems with drugs and alcohol (*Home Office 2003*); these may also link to the reasons for problems at home
- Mental health issues (*Mental Health Foundation 2000*)
- Involvement in the criminal justice system (*various*)
- Reliance on insecure living arrangements such as staying with friends or relatives (*Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2005*)

Crisis³ observe that it is generally socially excluded young people who become homeless and that in a study of young people and homelessness found that 46% had experienced at least one type of institution, a third had been in local authority care and a fifth in a young offender institution or both.

Living arrangements and family and personal relationships

The University of Oxford has conducted research⁴ into information provided on 3395 Assets⁵ of young people involved in the criminal justice system. One section of Asset requests information on the living arrangements of young people and another on the nature of family and personal relationships. The research identified that the majority of young people were living with their mother and father (30%) or their mother but not their father (43%). A further 18% were living with a parent (and step parent) and 3% were noted to be of no fixed abode.

Research undertaken by Nacro Cymru⁶ into the Asset information relating to 380 custodial episodes in Wales in 2002 found that similarly to the Oxford research the majority of young people (two thirds) were living with a parent, most commonly their mother (60%). It was also identified that at the point of assessment one third of young people were not living with their parents. Of these 40% were living independently without the presence of an adult, 37% were residing with other adults, relatives or friends (for example grandparents, extended family or friends) and 23% were in a residential home, institution or secure accommodation.

In addition 17% of young people appeared to have experienced more than one form of living arrangement in the six months prior to the assessment. 14% of the overall population led an

¹ cited in Single Homeless an overview of research in Britain (2000) Fitzpatrick S, Kemp P and Klinker The Policy Press. Bristol

² Mental Health Foundation (2002) The Mental Health Needs of Homeless Children and Young People.

³ Randall G and Brown S (2001) Trouble at home: family conflict, young people and homelessness. London. Crisis

⁴ Validity and reliability of ASSET. Findings from the first two years of the use of ASSET. Final Report to the Youth Justice Board. Youth Justice Board. London

⁵ This is the assessment tool used by youth offending teams to identify risk and protective factors in a young person's life.

⁶ Nacro Cymru (April 2004a) Reducing Custody: Risk Factors Living Arrangements and Neighbourhood. Nacro Cymru. Swansea

itinerant lifestyle, moving from one form of accommodation to another, for example between relatives, extended family and friends. 3% of young people were described as being of no fixed abode. Of the young people who were recorded with more than one living arrangement in the preceding six months 36% had been in a home, institution or secure accommodation within the period.

Although the majority of young people live at home, there are also indications that for a significant number home life can be problematic. Asset asks practitioners to identify what risk factors apply to the young person's living arrangements. The Oxford study found that living in a deprived household (21%), or with known offenders (16%) were prevalent issues and that young people not living with their biological father were more likely to be experiencing these issues. The Nacro Cymru study found that living in a deprived household (25%), living in a disorganised and chaotic household with different people coming and going (19%) and living with known offenders (15%) were common issues.

The most significant factor in young people becoming homeless relates to the quality of family life and relationships within the family.⁷ The Nacro Cymru research examined what evidence was provided on the Assets of those recorded as being of no fixed abode. This indicated that young people were homeless or sleeping rough mainly because their parents had refused to let them live at home.⁸ This could be as a result of a custodial remand or sentence; being asked to leave the family home or not being allowed back because of it or other reasons related to their behaviour (difficult or offending).

Other factors that were evident in those with unstable living arrangements included:

- Problems with addictions
- Mental health difficulties
- The likelihood of having experienced a number of placements, which broke down mainly because of behavioural issues
- Rejecting offers of help and support
- Failed attempts at independent living, often in poor quality housing such as bed and breakfast accommodation
- Electing to move from one form of accommodation to another or moving between friends and associates and leading an itinerant and unsettled lifestyle because of this

Custody and homelessness

Being in a homeless state or having unsettled accommodation can have an impact on what happens to an individual once they become involved in the criminal justice system. There is a significant relationship between experiences of custody and homelessness because:

- Having uncertain and impermanent living arrangements may have contributed to the reason for a custodial remand or sentence
- Losing accommodation as a result of being remanded or sentenced to custody
- Having nowhere to live on release, can affect the ability to be released and what happens subsequently

This suggests a circular relationship between housing and crime. Research has identified that stable accommodation can have a significant impact on the likelihood of re-conviction.⁹

It is well established that a significant number of young people entering young offender institutions have insecure living arrangements and that situation rarely improves with a period of incarceration. In a study of forty-three 15 to 17 year olds in three YOIs, Nacro¹⁰ found that 26 young people (60%) had unstable living arrangements. This was defined as "fairly regular" changes in living arrangements over the long term. This appeared with the same frequency as those who had experienced family conflict. Unjust Deserts¹¹ which was a study of un-sentenced

⁷ Crisis (2001) Trouble at home: Family conflict, young people and homelessness. London. Crisis

⁸ There were also indications of tense and strained relationships for these reasons indicating that other young people could be on the threshold of losing their place in the family home.

⁹ Social Exclusion Unit (2002) Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners. ODPM. London

¹⁰ (Nacro (1998) Wasted Lives. Nacro. London

¹¹ HMIP (December 2000) Unjust Deserts A thematic review by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons on the treatment and conditions of unsentenced prisoners in England and Wales. London. HMIP

prisoners in England and Wales found that more young women (43%) than men (30%) had lost their accommodation as a result of custody and were more likely to be living in a hostel (21%) than young men (10%).

Another study of 590 young prisoners¹² identified that half the young people reported the most stressful event in their lives had been running away from home (and being expelled from school). Young males on remand were most likely to have suffered a significantly stressful event in the six months prior to the remand episode, with 61% reporting running away from home and 46% of having been homeless. 53% of sentenced males reported running away from home and 35% of having been homeless and 67% of females reported running away from home and 42% of having been homeless.

Nacro was also involved in providing a resettlement service to young people at HMYOI Portland¹³. A study of the service found that of the young people the project came into contact with, 50% had problems in finding accommodation combined in many instances with problems such as exclusion from school, poor employment prospects, and problematic substance misuse.

Not surprisingly experiences of homelessness and uncertainty in term of living arrangements will mean that many of those in custody will need assistance in securing somewhere to live on release. A thematic review of young prisoners in 1997¹⁴ found that one in five young people had lived independently prior to custody and that one in five had no idea where they would live in release.

A resettlement study¹⁵ found that of 503 young men surveyed, 68% of remand prisoners and 53% of sentenced prisoners needed assistance with short or long-term housing and this was a major area of concern for young people. The main types of assistance provided to young people included:

- Providing information about housing options
- Making referrals to housing associations and accommodation providers
- Offering assistance with the application and interview process to obtain accommodation

¹² Lader et al cited in Single Homeless an overview of research in Britain (2000) Fitzpatrick S, Kemp P and Klinker The Policy Press. Bristol

¹³ Nacro (2003) *the On-side project. Summary of findings from the evaluation.* Nacro. London

¹⁴ Home Office (1997) *The Chief Inspector of Prisons thematic report on young prisoners.* Home Office. London

¹⁵ Nacro (1996) *Outside In: A report on the Nacro Advice and resettlement Project at Feltham.* Nacro. London

2: Housing circumstances of those released from custody

With this background in mind Nacro Cymru undertook this study to find out more about the living arrangements of young people prior to receiving a custodial sentence and on release. Yots are required to provide performance data to the Youth Justice Board with regard to the number of young people that are placed in suitable accommodation at the end of a community or custodial sentence. The target is currently 100%.¹⁶ This figure is however a snapshot at that point in time and does not provide any detail or wider information about the housing situation of young people prior to custody and whether there were significant changes in circumstances (for better or worse) on release. The analysis aims to provide further information in this respect.

The majority of young people that are sentenced to custody will receive a detention and training order (DTO). This can be between four months and two years duration. Figures for Wales for the period 2003/4¹⁷ indicate there were 468 DTOs and 15 young people sentenced to long-term detention under section 90 and 91 of the Powers of the Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000. This indicates that the majority of young people (97%) that were sentenced to custody received a DTO.

Methodology

The research sought to track the progress of all young people who had been sentenced to a DTO, been released or had come to the end of their licence period during 2004. The aim being to identify where they were living with immediately prior to the start of the DTO, where they went to live when they were released from custody and whether they were still at the same address at the end of the DTO. Within the sample were a small number of young people who had been sentenced to long-term detention, who were also included.

In terms of the way in which the sample was drawn, a wizard was developed for those Yots using the electronic monitoring system YOIS. For those that use Careworks an enquiry was run to provide the relevant data and for a small number of Yots where there had not been a significant number of young people in custody during 2004, the details were recalled from memory.

Having drawn the sample, the living arrangements section of Asset was examined for every young person, irrespective of the Asset score that had been awarded¹⁸. This was at the point they received the custodial sentence, when they were released and at the end of the Order or sentence. This meant that in all instances three Assets were examined and additionally where there was evidently an issue with accommodation at the start of the sentence, planning screens were also examined to identify if they provided any further information. The samples relates to individuals, although account was taken of the number of custodial episodes and whether repeat experiences of custody were likely to have a significant impact on living arrangements. On the whole it was not found to be the case as those with housing needs prior to custody tended to continue to have them irrespective of the number of custodial episodes, suggesting that breaking them is a significant challenge in respect of resettlement.

In terms of reporting findings, the information has not been broken down on an individual Yot basis, but has been aggregated to give a Wales wide picture and an overview of the issues identified for this group of young people.

Quality of data

One factor worth commenting on before providing the analysis relates to the quality of the data examined. As explained three Assets were examined for each young person and the accuracy and reliability of the study clearly relies on the data examined being comprehensive and detailed.

¹⁶ Youth Justice Board (2005) Youth Justice Plan 2005 to 2006 guidance (Wales). London. Youth Justice Board.

¹⁷ The 2004/5 figures published by the Youth Justice Board do not provide a specific breakdown in the number of sentences for Wales as has previously been the case.

¹⁸ This ranges from 0 (no association to offending) to 4 (a very strong association)

The electronic monitoring systems allow for Asset to be “*cloned*”, which means that sections can be copied.¹⁹ This often happens when Assets are being prepared in close succession to one another. In these instances it is possible that some but not necessarily all of the previous assessment needs to be updated. However, when Assets appear to be copied it does raise the question of whether they have been updated and whether the information they contain is out of date and no longer relevant or whether it has simply not been updated because there is no change in the young person’s situation and circumstances. From the information examined this latter reason has been assumed in the majority of cases where this occurred, however there were instances where it was evident the data recorded was out of date and in these instances the living arrangements of the young person were clearly inaccurate.

It was also apparent from examining the Assets that in some cases where accommodation and living arrangements were clearly an issue, there was no evidence on the planning screens of what action would be taken to try and address them. In these cases information was examined from Assets completed well after the end of the sentence to try and establish what had occurred and in particular whether the evidence provided was reliable.

Findings

Age and gender

The study comprises 452 young people, of whom 430 were males and 22 females (5% of them sample group). Their ages are broken down in the table below, with 17 year olds making up just under half of the total.

13 Years	14 Years	15 Years	16 Years	17 Years	18 Years	19 Years	Total
0.2%	6%	13%	22%	45%	13%	1%	100%

Of the females, three were aged 15 years old, three were 16, eleven were 17 years and five were 18 years. The distribution of age ranges for females was broadly the same as for the group as a whole. 96% of young people were classified as white, with the next biggest ethnic grouping being black or black British at 2%.

Living arrangements prior to custody

Asset rating

The Asset scores of the sample group have also been examined to identify the correlation between the living arrangements and offending behaviour. Practitioners are asked to rate the extent to which identified problems are associated with a risk of re-offending. The rating scale ranges from 0 where there is no associated at all to 4 which is a very strong association. The Asset ratings given to young people prior to custody was examined and this indicated that for just under half of the sample (45%) there was an insignificant association between their living arrangements and their offending behaviour, for a quarter (24%) there was a moderate association and for the remaining third (32%) a significant association. Due to the fact that a number of Assets were cloned or copied this analysis was not repeated at the later stages; post release and at the end of the licence/order.

Person living with

The following table indicates with whom the young people were living with prior to custody. It identifies the majority (69%) were living with a parent, mainly with their mother (94%) as opposed to their father (6%) and just over a third (36%) were living with both parents.

Table 1: Living arrangements prior to custody

¹⁹ Updates to the system may make this more difficult in the future

Living Arrangements Prior to Custody	Number	Percentage
Mother and Father	114	25%
Mother	180	40%
Father (without mother)	19	4%
Sibling (without parents)	9	2%
Grandparent	18	4%
Other Relative	4	1%
Family Friend	2	0.5%
Other	1	0.2%
Girl/Boyfriend	11	3%
Friends	10	2%
Foster Care	22	5%
Residential	18	4%
Independently	24	5%
Hostel	8	2%
Bed and Breakfast	4	1%
No Fixed Abode/Homeless	8	2%
TOTAL	452	100%

Of the others 9% were being looked after by the local authority and just under 8% were living alone/independently in various types of accommodation (hostels, bed and breakfast, supported lodgings or council tenancies), 7% of young people were living with a family member other than a parent and the remaining 6% with a non-family member. A small percentage (2%) were recorded as being of no fixed abode or homeless at the point they were sentenced to custody.

Living arrangements on release from custody

Each of these groups has been examined further to identify whether the living arrangements the young person returned to on release was the same as where they had been residing prior to custody. The living arrangements prior and post release are fully described for those not living with their parents in appendix one. Table 2 summarises this information and the extent to which young people returned to the same accommodation they had been living in prior to custody, on release. It should be noted this could mean returning to exactly the same address they were originally in. However for those living alone, it could mean they did not return to exactly the same address/accommodation, for example not all of those that went to live in bed and breakfast accommodation, had been in it prior to custody. However, it indicates the status of living alone/independently still applied, whereas two young people retained the tenancies they had prior to custody, which was the same residence.

Table 2: Living arrangements on release from custody

Living Arrangement	Prior to Custody	Returning to the same address or type of living arrangement on release	%
Parent(s)	313	254	81%
Other family member	31	22	71%
Non Family Member	24	7	29%
Local Authority Accommodation	40	16	40%
Living Alone	36	10	28%
Homeless/NFA	8	1	13%
TOTAL	452	310	69%

The table indicates that overall two thirds (69%) of young people returned to the same type of living arrangement or address they had been in prior to custody. It also indicates that for those living with a parent or close family member there is a significantly greater likelihood of this occurring than for those who were not. Those who had moved out of the family environment were noticeably less likely to be able to return home and in instances where they did, did not necessarily remain there. Not all of those who were recorded as living at home with a parent, necessarily did so on a permanent full time basis, there was some evidence of young people

living in other locations with other people such as friends, which potentially distorts the true picture. Those with family relationship problems also seemed to move in and out, backwards and forwards.

In terms of identifying and summarising what happened to those that did not return to the same type of living arrangement (31%), they have been divided into two groups, those that had been living with their parents and those that had not, this is commented on later in the report.

Returning to live with a parent

In terms of providing comment and feedback it had originally been intended to separate those living with both parents from those living with their mother as the principle family member, however when the information was examined the findings for this group of young people was very similar, as a result those living with both parents and those living with their mother, but not their father (and vice versa) have been combined. Any variation in the findings between the groups has been noted in the comments below.

81% of young people who had been living with a parent prior to custody returned there at the point they were released. The Policy Research Bureau in its study of Detention and Training Orders (2002) identified that 72% of young people moved in with one or both of their parents post custody.

The fact the young person lived at home and returned there did not mean that it was a problem free environment. The evidence from Assets indicated that many young people live with difficulties, such as with poor quality care, lack of parental guidance, in overcrowded accommodation and with parents who have significant difficulties of their own. It was also evident that some young people return home even though they do not want to because of the problems that exist there. For example one seventeen-year-old male did not want to live with his parents because of their alcohol abuse.

Despite there being tensions in family relationships, where there were indications of a family bond and tolerance of difficulties it was more likely the young person would be able to return to the family home on release. This tended to be the case even in instances where they had been sentenced to custody on more than one occasion. In a number of instances there was evidence of families going to extreme lengths to support their child and taking radical action by moving home to help them avoid negative influences and to distance them from anti-social peers.

Young people, who returned to the parental home on release, were likely to remain there during the licence period and still be there at the end of the sentence. There was less evidence of moving between addresses for this group than some of the others. However, it was apparent that a number of young people used the parental address for the duration of the Order but were not substantially residing there, possibly spending more time with friends or other individuals. It was also apparent that when the obligation to reside at a given address was no longer required for example on completion of the licence period, that in some instances young people moved out.

In a number of cases, where young people had been living at home prior to custody, their parent(s) had indicated at the point of sentence they would not be able to return home. In the majority of these cases this situation resolved itself at the point of release, which suggests the "cooling off" period that custody may present, can result in a repair in relationships and a willingness to re-engage. In these instances it was also evident that once this had occurred young people were more likely to remain in the family home, than not. In some cases the ability to remain at home was conditional on good behaviour and the situation could become tenuous if the young person re-engaged with anti social or criminal pursuits. It is also evident that where there are problematic relationships with parents there is likely to be a degree of moving in and out of the family home.

The ability to return home was in some instances impeded by the family facing eviction or being evicted because of anti social behaviour or to avoid harassment. There were also examples of it being recorded that it was not safe for the young person to return to the place they had previously been living.

Not returning to live with a parent

Fifty-nine (19%) young people, who had been living with a parent prior to custody, did not return to live with them on release. In terms of what happened to them:

- 31% went to live with a member of the extended family, such as a grandparent, sibling or aunt
- 25% went to live with a non family person for example boy or girlfriend or friends
- 25% went on to live alone (for example in a hostel, bed and breakfast accommodation or other forms of independent living)
- 3% were in local authority accommodation; in these instances there was evidence of having lived between the family home and some form of care prior to custody
- 2% (n=1) of this group were recorded as being of no fixed abode
- For 14% young people there was no information on the Asset prepared at the point of release that indicated where they would be living

Young people who started in but did not return to the parental home, were likely to experience a period of uncertainty in their living arrangements, most commonly prior to release when they would not know where they were going to live. It was also evident from examining case records that parents could go through a phase of changing their minds, which in some instances heightened anxiety and created uncertainty.

There was also a degree of mobility in the living arrangements of this group of young people as by the end of the Order not all were in the address that had been secured for them on release. For example they were more likely to live in several different places in a short period of time, such as with extended family and friends. A number also experienced homelessness by sleeping rough or found it difficult to maintain accommodation. One young person was recorded as having moved twenty times within a twelve-month period. The reasons for moving around or changes of address were not routinely recorded on Assets so it is difficult to establish if there was any particular reason for this, but clearly the impact of losing access to the family home may be a significantly unsettling experience.

Of those that did not return to the family home on release from custody, a number did so at a later date and in these instances were more likely to have spent a period of time with another family member than anywhere else. Although only one young person was recorded as homeless on release, because he was sleeping rough in a tent, a further five young people were noted to be homeless or of no fixed abode shortly after release. There were clear indications in all these cases of unsettled existences and movement from one address to another. This occurred because:

- One female was refused housing assistance because of anti social behaviour
- Three young people went back to their families but a breakdown in relationships led to the loss of a place to live, almost immediately
- Another young person failed to live successfully in a hostel and became homeless
- One young person was unable to return home due to his offending and the local authority refused to accommodate him due to problems in the past.

Those recorded as being of no fixed abode or who experienced homelessness did so because they were not allowed to return to the family home or had been asked to leave or been thrown out because of their offending or other behaviour. There were also instances of young people refusing the help and assistance offered to them, preferring to fend for themselves and young people being refused assistance because of anti social behaviour or problems in the past. These cases proved the most difficult to resolve and there was not always an indication of what occurred in all instances.

Not living with a parent prior to custody

Eighty-three (60%) of young people, who had not been living with a parent prior to custody, experienced a change of address on release. Of these, although twenty-five (25%) had not been with their parents at the point they went into custody, they went to live with them on release, however only nine (36%) were still there at the end of the licence period. Of the remainder:

- 25% were recorded as living in independent accommodation (including hostels and bed and breakfast accommodation)
- 24% went to live with a non family member for example boy/girlfriend or friends

- 10% (n=8) were recorded as being of no fixed abode on release
- 7% went to live with another family member
- 6% of young people were in local authority accommodation
- For 2% young people there was no information on the Asset prepared at the point of release that indicated where they would be living

This indicates there is likely to be a degree of mobility and different changes of address for those living away from their families as they may lose their accommodation because it can not be kept vacant for them whilst in custody, which means finding a new place to live on release. This may in the first instance mean being placed in temporary accommodation before something more permanent is found, which indicates at least two addresses before having the potential to become settled. The impact of being “moved around” has not been evaluated but it does raise the question of whether it encourages young people who are vulnerable and likely to be unsettled in themselves to perpetuate this sort of existence.

It is noticeable that when the living arrangements for those previously living with parents and those not, was compared, they were broadly similar in that a quarter of young people needed to be found accommodation whether in a hostel or bed and breakfast accommodation. Those who had been living with a parent prior to custody were much more likely to live with an extended family member on release, than those that had not. Additionally a quarter of both groups were living with non-family members on release. Young people not living with their parents prior to the custodial sentence were also more likely to become homeless during the community element of the order, than those who had been living at home.

Moving address in the community phase of the sentence

The study examined whether by the end of the community element of the sentence the young people in the sample had moved their place of residence or were at the same address. As has been established 34% of young people came out of custody to a different address. The study found that 73% (n=63) of this group had moved again within the licence period, this represented 13% of the population as a whole. This suggests that a significant minority of young people moved their place of residence at least twice whilst under licence. Seven young people were also noted to have been living at “*various addresses*” during the licence period, indicating that two addresses was the minimum as opposed to the maximum residence locations.

Research into detention and training orders ²⁰ found that 35% of young people moved residence during the community element of a DTO and the Youth Justice Board’s report, *Accommodation needs of young offenders*²¹ which examined the movements of 4491 individuals, both on community and custodial sentences found that on average young people in housing need moved three times within a year. The DTO research identified the majority of young people moved on to live with friends and the Youth Justice Board research found that aside from a period of time with their mother, young people who changed their living arrangements were most likely to live with friends; bed and breakfast accommodation appeared with the fourth highest frequency.

Two main strands of movement emerged, one between parents and various members of the extended family that predominantly included grandparents and siblings. This could mean moving in and out of accommodation with the same relative on several occasions. The other pattern of movement included a wider circle of acquaintances such as friends and various forms of temporary accommodation. 61% of young people living with family members other than their parents had moved within the licence period and 57% of young people living independently moved between different forms of living arrangement and 75% of those identified as being of no fixed abode.

Once a pattern of unsettled living is established, there is little evidence of young people moving successfully away from it. Young people not returning home were most likely to be placed in hostels with varying degrees of support or preferred to live with associates of their choice. It was also evident that some young people did not want to be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation and in a number of cases refused that option when it was presented to them.

²⁰ Youth Justice Board (October 2002) Detention and Training: Assessment of the Detention and Training Order and its impact on the secure estate in England and Wales. London. Youth Justice Board.

²¹ Patel N (2004) Accommodation needs of young offenders. London. Youth Justice Board.

This was likely to be the case if it was in an area they did not want to live in. This could cause problems because Housing Departments would indicate they had met their obligations to young people and would not be prepared to consider any other alternatives.

There was also a much higher degree of "itinerant living" amongst those living alone or independently than any of the other groups, with several young people being evicted from accommodation for unacceptable behaviour or being refused accommodation because of past behaviour. Nine young people were recorded as losing accommodation mainly for behaviour that was unacceptable; one was in a foster care placement and another lost the foster placement as a result of theft from the carers. Two young people were evicted from a hostel and five from bed and breakfast accommodation for behaviour that was not considered tolerable (one for substance misuse problems and another for alcohol abuse). It is likely the number of accommodation breakdowns for these reasons may be higher than reported particularly for those moving between various addresses, as the reasons for leaving the previous residence was not always stated on the Asset form. Accommodation breakdowns would in themselves necessitate a change of address, which contributes to instability and mobility.

In housing need

Assessing the numbers of young people in housing need is difficult. The study indicated that in terms of young people who were of no fixed abode or homeless, there were

- Eight prior to custody
- Nine on release (one had previously been living with his family, the others had not)
- Seven at the end of the sentence

None of the young people in the study appeared at each of the three stages, suggesting that being of no fixed abode or homeless is a transitory stage, which the young person moves in and out of. For example moving from the family home, to a relative to having nowhere to live and then possibly moving back to living within the family grouping. Alternatively there are those that have had extremely unsettled living arrangements that may have included being placed in local authority accommodation, failing to live independently, being placed in a hostel or bed and breakfast and ultimately fending for themselves by living with a series of acquaintances. What was also evident was that all the young people who had been identified as being of no fixed abode or homeless prior to custody continued to have problematic living arrangements on release and any attempts to resolve the situation had not yet been achieved.

There is also a much wider group of young people who were likely to be in housing need. Prior to custody there were *thirty-seven* young people living alone (this included hostels and bed and breakfast accommodation) or being of no fixed abode at a previous point in time. There were *thirty* young people not living at home (at the point of release) who had at some point been described as being of no fixed abode, having experienced an episode of homelessness amongst other residence arrangements or had very unsettled living arrangements that indicated potential homelessness at some stage. For these there was a clear lack of ability to be able to return to the family home. These young people had high degrees of mobility and were most likely to continue to change their living arrangements. Within this group there were those that had failed to live successfully independently, those that were moving between a series of addresses and those living in unsuitable accommodation.

In addition there were *twenty-nine* other young people who were living at home, who at some point had been described as being homeless or of no fixed abode due to in the main to their families inability to cope with them. It was noticeable with these that the majority were moving in and out of the family home, this appeared to relate to their families ability to deal with them at a given point in time and although they were often on the brink of homeless or were evicted for a short period were ultimately allowed to return home. For these young people the likelihood of remaining at home on a permanent basis in the long term was tenuous.

These findings suggests a difference in the type of services that young people may require to prevent homelessness; in the first instance the need for family support and mediation to prevent a breakdown in relationships and avoid a complete inability to return to the family home. For those unable to return home, considerable assistance is required to help those who have developed an itinerant and settled lifestyle, to assist them to lead more settled and stable lives and retain accommodation.

3: Issues affecting successful resettlement

There are a number of other factors that can affect successful resettlement:

Loosing accommodation at the point of sentence

Those entering custody can lose their accommodation because their parents are unwilling to let them return home on release, however the fact that parents will sometimes change their minds means that mediation and advocacy could be important in this respect. Home Office research²² noted that nine out of ten young people who received visits from their partner or family, whilst in custody were more likely to have accommodation to go to on release than those that did not.

Although very few young people in this study had their own accommodation, it can be lost because notice has not been given to landlords. Rent arrears can accumulate because local authorities require four weeks notice of termination of a tenancy, which it is not always possible to give, as it may be difficult to anticipate the period of imprisonment or because of a failure to claim housing costs on arrival in prison. If rent arrears have been built up they may have to be cleared before an individual can be considered for re-housing. Advocacy and assistance for those entering custody could assist to avoid the unnecessary loss of accommodation.

Extra assistance

The loss of accommodation prior to custody will mean that there is a need to find somewhere to live on release. Young people may need extra assistance with the process of applying for and securing a home, as they are likely to lack knowledge and understanding of the process this entails or have the skills to be able to find suitable accommodation on their own.²³ In addition it is apparent that many young people fail to live effectively live on their own and may need assistance with independent living skills to help them to maintain accommodation and tenancies particularly.

Shortage of suitable accommodation

There is generally a paucity of suitable accommodation for young people.²⁴ This means that it is often difficult to access somewhere to live, not because of a criminal record, but because appropriate accommodation is generally lacking. The availability of social housing varies considerably across authorities in Wales, which also means local authority tenancies are not readily available and potential applications have to be assessed as being in priority need under housing legislation criteria.

Also of relevance is the fact that hostels and supported accommodation have high levels of occupancy, which makes it difficult to plan for placements as the demand for somewhere to live outweighs the supply of places.²⁵ This has contributed to the increase in the use of unsuitable accommodation such as bed and breakfast, because there are not enough alternative options available.

Housing providers can also be reluctant to take ex-offenders and young people face additional difficulty in that providers will not always consider 16 and 17 year olds, even in instances where additional support can be made available by the Yot or other agencies.²⁶

Home detention curfew

The ability to be released from custody onto the community element of a custodial sentence can also be problematic for those that do not have an address to go to. Those eligible for release on a

²² Home Office research findings 248 (2005). Resettlement outcomes on release from prison in 2003. Home Office. London

²³ Anderson I and Thompson S (2005) More priority needed. Shelter. London

²⁴ Nacro Cymru (2005) Youth offending teams, young people and accommodation. Swansea. Nacro Cymru

²⁵ Nacro (2000) The forgotten majority – the resettlement of short term prisoners. Nacro. London

²⁶ Occupancy agreements for 16 and 17 year olds visit www.homeless.org.uk

home detention curfew need a viable address, which either entails the agreement of family members or an offer of accommodation from a housing provider who is prepared to accept electronic tagging as part of the residence arrangements. Despite the fact that release dates are automatic and predictable, those without accommodation, who are eligible for release, can be discriminated against under these arrangements.²⁷

Housing benefit

There are restrictions in the level of income support and housing benefit available to 16 and 17 year olds. Accessing housing benefits can be a significant problem for young single homeless people, as existing legislation does not encourage dependency on benefits for this age group.²⁸ The benefits system works on the premise that young people can call on the support and assistance of their parents, which is clearly problematic for those estranged from their families. Many young people lack the funds to pay a substantial deposit or rent in advance and landlords may not let accommodation to those on housing benefit²⁹.

Single room rent allowance

A particular problem for those aged 25 years and under is the single room rent allowance, which places a lower limit on the Housing Benefit payable to this age group.³⁰ This restricts the options available and access to decent quality accommodation as it discourages landlords from renting to young people and young people from considering private sector accommodation, as there may be a significant gap between the benefit payable and the rent required. This contributes to the fact that young people often live in poor quality accommodation.

Payment of housing benefit whilst in custody

Housing benefit is only paid for a maximum of thirteen weeks for those sentenced to custody. This substantially diminishes the prospect of retaining accommodation for those serving sentences of six months or more, half of which would be spent in custody. Youth Justice Board statistics indicate that in 2003/4, 301 young people in Wales received a Detention and Training Order of four months or more, of which 77% were 16 and 17 year olds. Those on remand can claim housing benefit for up to 52 weeks.

Applying for accommodation on release

Additional problems can relate to local authority housing policy and interpretation of housing legislation. Most local authorities require anyone who has been in custody to apply for accommodation as a homeless person on release, rather than prior to it. This is despite the fact that local authorities are required to consider all those who may be at risk of homelessness within 28 days of an application being made. An individual can only be registered as being in housing need within four weeks of release, and as a result are likely to be placed in temporary accommodation while the process of assessment and investigation takes place. Housing legislation also indicates there is a requirement to show a local connection, which can be problematic to those that wish to live in another area and move away from criminal associates. Additionally some local authorities will assess young people who have offended as making themselves intentionally homeless because of their criminal activity.

There appear to be no mechanisms for housing officers to visit a young person in custody prior to release to start the assessment process and to speed up the process of determining homelessness status. The fact that sentenced young people may be held more than 50 miles away from their home area also contributes to making this more difficult to achieve.

²⁷ Nacro Briefing (2005) Housing and accommodation issues for young people in the criminal justice system. Nacro. London

²⁸ Thomas S (2005) Youth offending teams, young people and accommodation. Swansea. Nacro Cymru

²⁹ Nacro (2000) The forgotten majority – the resettlement of short term prisoners. Nacro. London

³⁰ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1998) The impact of housing benefit restrictions on young people living in privately rented accommodation. Joseph Rowntree Foundation. York

Antisocial behaviour

Young people who have been evicted from accommodation for anti social behaviour may be excluded from social housing. Additionally the imposition of exclusion zones on those subject to Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO) can also present problems in that by excluding young people from certain areas may also rule out the housing options available in those areas³¹. This can be a problem for those who are subject to ASBOs, post conviction.

Young people whom it is difficult to find accommodation for

There are some young people for whom it is acknowledged it is difficult to find accommodation, for example for those whose behaviour is considered risky to others such as young people who have been remanded or convicted for arson, violent or sexual offences; those that have multiple needs and interconnected problems such as mental health difficulties or problems with substance use and young people who have a history of causing difficulties in accommodation, either damage or disturbance, those who have become “blacklisted “ by housing providers and the application of housing policy housing legislation to offenders generally.³²

³¹ Skelton D (2005) Anti Social Behaviour Orders (unpublished)

³² Thomas S (2005) Youth offending teams, young people and accommodation. Swansea. Nacro Cymru

4: Conclusions

Nature of the problem

The research has identified that the numbers of young people with severe accommodation difficulties are relatively few in number, when taken across Wales as a whole, however it is a significant issue for the individuals it is affecting. The fact that numbers are low exacerbates the problem in finding an effective response as the young people who had severe difficulties were widely spread and not significantly concentrated in any one given area.

The evidence suggests that those who had problematic living arrangements prior to custody continue to do so afterwards and these young people require assistance in dealing with this problem. Young people may need different services to prevent homelessness. For example there are those for whom family mediation and support could help to prevent a breakdown in relationships and the loss of somewhere to live. For those unable or not wanting to return home, considerable assistance is required to help them to lead more settled and stable lives; this requires the provision of suitable accommodation and additional support to be able to maintain tenancies and to successfully live on an independent basis.

Youth Justice Board's performance measure

The Youth Justice Board's key performance target for accommodation is a snapshot measure, taken at a particular point in time, notably the end of an order or sentence. This study has found that the accommodation status of young people can alter significantly over a short period and that taking a single point in time as a measure of being in suitable accommodation does not necessarily reflect the real picture. This suggests that when analysing the true extent of accommodation need and the difficulties being experienced the picture needs to be examined over time to determine if any real impact is being made. It also seems to be important to factor in information about the quality of family and personal relationships as they have a distinct bearing on the availability of accommodation in the family home or not.

The current definition of suitability used by the Youth Justice Board, based on the Children Leaving Care Regulations 2001 and does not take into account the suitability of accommodation by type. It may be more helpful if a particular type of accommodation is considered unsuitable such as bed and breakfast accommodation that this is expressly stated and that young people's views about the suitability of their living arrangements are also recorded.

Resettlement services

The process of successful resettlement is likely to have a number of different elements, namely:

- The accommodation needs of all young people should be assessed on reception to identify what their current accommodation status is and whether there are likely to be any problems on release. This should include an assessment of home circumstances and the potential to return there, particularly if there have been prior difficulties. If young people have had their own accommodation prior to sentence the viability of maintaining this also needs to be considered. This is an area where assistance and advocacy to young people could be provided.
- Visits from family members should be encouraged and facilitated so that contact is maintained. The scope for family mediation and advocacy should be considered within this process.
- Young people who are unable to return home may need practical assistance in looking for and applying for somewhere to live, this includes information and advice about housing options, assisting with the process of referral and making applications to relevant agencies. The role of an advocate for those who have had previous difficulties or may be difficult to place may help to facilitate this process.
- Assessments should take into account any particular requirements such as the provision of electronic tagging (which is based on the presumption of facilitating early release), the conditions of an anti social behaviour order (the housing situation of the young person and

the impact of any exclusion zones on housing options may need to be considered) and the nature and type of offence that may make a young person difficult to place.

- There are clearly young people for whom Social Services have responsibility under the Children (Leaving Care) Act and Local Authority homelessness/housing departments are required to assess the needs of individuals who are vulnerable to homelessness. As release dates are automatic and predictable the assessment of need and preliminary views about likely place of residence should begin whilst the young person is in custody. This should ideally be at the point an initial homelessness application can be made and not the point of release. The scope to develop service level agreements to facilitate this process should be explored and whether other agencies can undertake such an assessment and provide homelessness/housing departments with the necessary information.

Other policy considerations

The successful resettlement of young people relies on the availability of suitable and stable accommodation for them. Yots have identified that emergency accommodation that can be directly accessed, that offers a high level of support could significantly assist those leaving custody, but have no-where to go. ³³ The Yot however is not a housing provider, but should seek to influence local housing priorities on behalf of young people.

The provision of floating and tenancy support appears to be crucial to assisting those who wish to or have to live independently; the availability of these services will vary from area to area and a consideration for policy makers is the prioritisation of these services for 16 and 17 year olds living independently.

The housing benefit system is not orientated to supporting and assisting young people who are not living at home and makes the task of any agency seeking to assist them all the more difficult. It has contributed to the over reliance on bed and breakfast. Significant policies changes are required in order to ensure that better quality accommodation is available and to provide young people with a firmer basis for successful independent living.

³³ Thomas S (2005) Youth offending teams, young people and accommodation. Swansea. Nacro Cymru

Appendix: Living arrangements prior and post custody

Living with another family member

Twenty-six young people were recorded as living with a family member other than a parent prior to going into custody. 58% were with a grandparent, 29% with a sibling and 13% with another family member (aunt or uncle).

Grandparents

Eighteen young people were recorded as living with their grandparents prior to the custodial sentence. Those not living with a parent were most likely to be living with a grandparent than any other close relative. Where information was recorded young people were living with grandparents because they were not wanted at home because of their behaviour or had little parental contact for other reasons. Two young people had a long history of being in care and four others had been uprooted several times, living with grandparents amongst others.

Eleven (61%) young people returned to their grandparent's home on release from custody, although at the end of the detention and training order, (DTO) one young person was recorded as being in a hostel. Of the *seven* (39%) that did not return to their grandparents:

- One young person went to live with his father, but later returned to his grandparents when this broke down
- One returned to his mother, but this was recorded as being unsuccessful
- Two young people went to live with their girl or boyfriend; by the end of the DTO one was recorded as moving between several addresses and the other as living with her boyfriend in a hostel
- Another young person was placed in a residential unit on release, but lost the placement due to his behaviour, however was noted to be successfully living independently at the end of the order
- Two young people were of no fixed abode or homeless on release although one did return to the grandparent's home.

In some instances accepting a troublesome teenage into the home, clearly placed a strain on grandparents and there were examples of them struggling to cope, which was also a contributory factor in these living arrangements breaking down in some circumstances.

Sibling

Nine young people were recorded as living with a sibling prior to custody; this tended to be a sister, rather than a brother. The reasons for living with a sibling were not always stated, but where provided were in one instance because the mother had been evicted from her home, but the intention was to return to live with her when she was settled. Another young person was with his brother as his mother was abroad. One young person had an extremely unstable background living in local authority accommodation, a hostel and caravan prior to living with his sister.

Eight young (67%) people returned to their sibling on release from custody, one of these was later asked to move out due to his aggressive behaviour and went to live with an aunt and another was living with a girlfriend by the end of the DTO. The young person that did not return to a sibling went to live with his mother, but the relationship had broken down by the end of the sentence.

Other relative

Four young people were recorded as living with an aunt or an uncle prior to custody. Three (75%) returned to this arrangement, however one of the young people who had a long history of placements was released from custody as homeless, with no final outcome recorded in respect of

his living arrangements. Another was recorded as living back with his mother at the end of the Order.

Living with a non family member

Prior to custody *twenty-four* young people had been living with a non-family member; 46% with a girl or boyfriend, 42% with friends, 8% with a family friend and 4% with another adult.

Girl or boy friend

Eleven young people were living with a girl or boyfriend at the point they were sentenced to custody. Of these *six* (55%) returned to this arrangement and remained there and *five* (45%) did not:

- On release, one young person separated from his girlfriend and went back to his mother, with whom he continued to live
- Another young person was unwilling to be separated from her boyfriend despite several episodes of homelessness and would not attend meetings with housing providers if it meant being parted. On release she went to live with her grandmother, but this did not work out and by the end of the DTO her whereabouts were not known by the Yot
- One young person had extensively moved around prior to custody, which included being in bed and breakfast accommodation as well as living with his girlfriend. He was placed in a hostel on release and was still there at the end of the DTO
- Another lost his accommodation with his girlfriend due to receiving a custodial sentence and went to live with his mother's boyfriend on release, remaining there for the duration of the licence.
- On release one young person went to live with his mother, but by the end of the order was living with a friend.

Friends

Ten young people were recorded as living with friends prior to custody. They were not living at home mainly because they had been asked to leave because of their behaviour or because they were estranged from the family for other reasons. None of these young people were recorded as homeless at the point they entered custody, but in all cases they were not able to live at home at that point. *Five* (50%) of these returned home on release and four remained there, although it was evident in some instances that home life was difficult and problematic. One young person who went to live with his father but was living with a girlfriend at a different address by the end of the Order. The others were in all probability technically homeless as there were indications of their living arrangements being unstable or insecure:

- One young person was placed in unsupported accommodation on release, however, the placement broke down due to his behaviour and he spent time in bed and breakfast accommodation before going back to his family
- One young person went to live with a girlfriend in what was described as a "fragile" relationship and moved between several addresses
- Another was recorded as having frequent changes of address
- The fourth was noted as likely to be homeless and was referred for housing advice, but no outcome was recorded
- The other young person was regarded as making himself intentionally homeless but there was no update on his position was provided

Family friend

Two young people had been living with family friends. One returned to this address for the licence period. The other had been in foster care and had experienced episodes of homelessness. This young person was electronically tagged to return to his mother's address, but she later withdrew her consent to the arrangement. He was recorded as successfully living independently at the end of the order.

Other

One young person was recorded as living with an older woman prior to custody, but no update was provided on the position at the point of release.

Local authority accommodation

Forty young people were in the care of the local authority when sentenced to custody. 55% were in foster care and 45% in residential accommodation.

Foster care

Twenty-two young people were in foster care when they received a custodial sentence. On the whole the quality of information available for this group was generally poor, with case records not being updated. There was no information available about the outcomes for five (23%) of this group. In all cases they had very unsettled existences generally living between residential units, foster care and different family members for variable periods of time.

Ten (45%) of the group went back to living with carers. Where further information was available, one of these wanted to live independently but was not able to at the time, two returned to foster carers as their families did not want them at home, another went to new carers and then moved out to live with his girlfriend. One young person returned to foster care but lost the placement due to behavioural problems and was in a hostel by the end of the sentence. This young person had three previous episodes of homelessness. Three young people were alternating between the family home and foster care.

Three (14%) young people returned to live with a family member, on release. One returned to his mother and was still there at the end of the DTO and the other two went to live with other family members, one of whom later moved out to live with friends.

Four (18%) young people were recorded as living apart from their family. One of these was in bed and breakfast accommodation, one went to live in a YMCA, and another was living independently with assistance. One young person had experienced several moves, which included living back with his parents for a short period, with family friends and in a YMCA whilst on licence before ending up with friends of the family.

Residential unit

Eighteen young people were recorded as living in residential units prior to their custodial sentence. For five (28%) of these the position in terms of their accommodation on release was unclear, the need for a permanent residence was identified, but there was little clear evidence of the action that was being taken to secure this or the outcome.

On release, six (33%) of the young people had mixed experiences of being both in residential care and spending periods of time at home, the majority had been in care most of their lives. Of this group two young people were noted to be living between their mother and residential care. Another returned to a residential unit on release but was with his mother by the end of the DTO; this later broke down due to his offending. Two young people returned to their families, but both were back in local authority accommodation by the end of DTO. Another young person was placed with foster carers on release, but he stole from them and by the end of the Order was moving between various addresses

Of those that did not return to a residential unit, five (28%) young people returned to a family member, in one case their father. Another went to live with his brother having refused to attend appointments with the Housing Department, but the relationship broke down and by the end of the DTO was recorded as living with a friend. Two young people returned to their mothers; one of these was referred for housing advice, however his father would not confirm that he was homeless and he was therefore unable to get housing assistance

Two (11%) young people appeared to be living independently without any major issues being recorded, one was in supported accommodation, and the other was not.

Living alone

Thirty-six young people could be described as living on their own prior to custody. This included various forms of independent living (67%), being in a hostel (23%) or bed and breakfast accommodation (10%).

Independently

Twenty-four young people were recorded as living independently. The type of accommodation varied between supported and unsupported living arrangements. In *six* cases (25%) the Asset information did not indicate clearly where they would be living on release.

Of the others; *four* (17%) young people were placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. However three of these were evicted. In one instance this was because the young person had a chaotic background and substance misuse problem. He was advised he would not be considered for further housing assistance until this was addressed. The status of the other two was unclear, one was noted to have stolen from the family home and unable to return there, the other had been in bed and breakfast accommodation prior to custody, but his records indicated that this would not be an option on release. A young person who had been in supported accommodation prior to custody, but was unable to return there because of his behaviour was placed in bed and breakfast accommodation, but was noted to be at home at the end of the Order, however the situation was unstable and tenuous.

Two (8%) young people refused to be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation on release. One was living rough and on occasion in his parent's caravan. The other was initially living in a squat, but by the end of the Order the Yot did not know his whereabouts as he was refusing to say where he was living.

Six (25%) young people had their own flats and tenancies prior to being sentenced to custody. Two of these had tenancies in local authority properties:

- One young person was able to return to her flat, but was also required to pay off rent arrears
- Another had his own flat, and remained there but frequently had a group of friends around, which was causing concern
- One more lost his flat when sentenced to custody, was released as being of no fixed abode, but went to live with his sister and was still there at the end of the Order
- A different young person who also lost his flat went to live with his mother on release and was still there at the end of the sentence
- A young person whose mother refused to have him at home due to his offending had been in bed and breakfast accommodation and his own flat prior to custody, was placed in bed and breakfast accommodation on release, then moved in with extended family but this arrangement broke down due to his behaviour
- Another who had lost his own accommodation refused to be placed in a hostel and lived rough before gaining a local authority tenancy.

Three (13%) young people who had very unstable living arrangements prior to custody (for example several accommodation breakdowns and various addresses, one of which was noted to have moved in the region of fifty times). Of these, one went to live with family friends on release, but this was neither long term nor secure, as he would be required to present as homeless after a month. Another was accepted for supported lodgings on release but due to the fact that there were no places for him was able to return home. The third young person in this group had moved twenty-seven times in the past year, was found independent accommodation, but throughout the course of the Order lived at various addresses and also had a spell of homelessness.

Two (6%) young people lost the supported accommodation they had when sentenced to custody. One of these was provided with support and advice to find accommodation on release, but was then returned home, however this arrangement broke down and he was later noted to be staying with friends and also spent a period of time in a Travel Lodge. The other went to live with a friend on release, was found accommodation, but was not spending very much time there, and staying with the friend.

Hostel

Nine young people were recorded as living in a hostel prior to custody. Of these *two* (22%) returned to live with a parent, one of whom went back to live with his mother, but had moved out by the end of the licence period. The other went to live with his father, having refused to be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation; he had previously been evicted from hostel accommodation due to unacceptable behaviour prior to sentence. Of the other seven:

- One young person was living independently but the type of accommodation was not recorded
- Another was in supported accommodation, but was evicted and lived in a caravan and bed and breakfast before being remanded in custody
- Another person was leading an itinerant lifestyle, living between his parents, extended family and friends
- Two young people had made housing applications, which had been refused and it was unclear where both would be living. The position of one of these was described as "precarious"
- Another young person went to live with friends on release, but was noted to be moving between addresses and far from settled. She was also recorded as being of no fixed abode
- The future living arrangements of the seventh young person was unclear.

Bed and breakfast accommodation

Four young people were recorded as being in bed and breakfast accommodation prior to being in custody, of these:

- One was estranged from his family due to his behaviour. He had moved around a lot and experienced a number of episodes of homelessness. On release he went back to live with his mother, but was at a different address by the end of the DTO.
- Another young person was in bed and breakfast accommodation due to his behaviour being unacceptable at home, went back to his mother on release and was still there at the end of the DTO.
- One young person had an unstable accommodation history and had been living in a homeless shelter and bed and breakfast accommodation prior to custody, there was no specific information about where he would be living on release
- Another young person who had been in hostels and bed and breakfast accommodation for approximately four years prior to custody was recorded as living with his girlfriend in a supportive environment at the end of the DTO.

No fixed abode/homeless

Eight young people were recorded as being of no fixed abode or homeless prior to custody. *Three* (38%) of these went to live with a relative on release. Two went to their mothers; however both were no longer there by the end of the Order. One was homeless and there were indications that although the other had originally been able to return to his mother's address with an electronic tag, this was no longer the case at the end of the Order. The third young person went to live with an aunt, but by the end of the Order was living with other relatives at a different address.

Four (50%) young people were placed in hostels on release. One young person, who had been living in cars and empty houses prior to custody, was released into a hostel and remained there. Another two went to live in hostels on release, and in both cases were living with an aunt by the end of the DTO; one of these had been evicted from the hostel in which he was living. Another young person who had been homeless prior to custody as a result of losing the bed and breakfast accommodation he was in, was placed in a YMCA, but was evicted due to alcohol misuse and then placed in a hostel, but by the end of the Order was no longer there.

For *one* (13%) young person there was no specific information about what would happen to him on release. He had been living rough prior to custody. The need for assistance was noted in the planning arrangements, but no firm outcomes were identified and his subsequent Assets had not been updated.