



changing lives  
reducing crime

# **Nacro's written evidence submitted to the Commons Select Committee Inquiry on Young Adult Offenders**

**30 September 2015**

## About Nacro

As a champion of social justice, Nacro's mission is to positively change lives, strengthen communities, enhance social inclusion, reduce crime, and prevent offending behaviour. We deliver high quality, evidence based and outcome focused interventions throughout England and Wales, helping the most vulnerable in the community to change their lives and reach their full potential.

Our services include:

**Substance misuse:** Our services combine a dual focus on the individual and the community, offering people interventions, information, advice and guidance programmes so they can not only recover from drug or alcohol dependence but also start to contribute actively and positively to the community.

**Education:** We provide young people with the skills they need to get back into education, training or employment through specialised courses such as pre-vocational and vocational programmes, problem-solving and employment preparation programmes that are designed for people who are stuck and can't see a way forward.

**Housing:** We help people, often with complex needs, including young people, to find somewhere to live and to give them the stability and support they need to acquire new skills and patterns of behaviour to turn their lives around.

**Offender management:** We work with offenders in the courts, in prisons and in the community, managing the offender journey in a way designed to minimise the risk of reoffending. We also work at the heart of communities to give people the best possible chance of reintegrating into society successfully.

**Resettlement Advice Service:** Our dedicated national phone and online service provides advice and support on resettlement matters to offenders, their families and practitioners such as finding somewhere to live, getting a job and dealing with the disclosure of a criminal record.

**Working in partnership to develop policy:** We use our knowledge of "what works" to reduce crime to help inform policy and shape practice. In line with this, we work closely with government and public and private sector partners, using our experience on the ground to establish and pilot the best ways of reducing crime in local neighbourhoods. Nacro is also a regular contributor to government consultations and important debates on key subjects in the criminal justice sector.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of our response further, please contact: Sarah Wilkinson, Policy Programme Officer [sarah.wilkinson@nacro.org.uk](mailto:sarah.wilkinson@nacro.org.uk)

## Introduction

Nacro welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Commons Justice Select Committee Inquiry into the Treatment of Young Adult Offenders in the criminal justice system. Nacro has a wealth of experience delivering services across housing, education, justice and health to young adults with offending histories and multiple and complex needs. As well as delivering frontline services, we have been researching into the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged young people and advocating on their behalf for more than 50 years.

This submission is grounded in Nacro's experience and expertise, and also draws upon evidence from Nacro's research and evaluation programme Beyond Youth Custody (BYC)<sup>1</sup>, a Big Lottery Funded learning and awareness raising programme designed to challenge, advance, and promote better thinking in policy and practice for the effective resettlement of young people (up to the age of 25). Giving young people a voice is at the heart of the programme; we actively consult with, and encourage young people who've been in custody to voice their opinion about resettlement services, because nobody understands the challenges better.

We strongly support the submission by the Transition to Adulthood (T2A) Alliance, of which Nacro is a member organisation. In order not to repeat the case made by T2A we have referenced relevant parts of their submission where appropriate. Nacro particularly endorses T2A's evidence based recommendations for how the criminal justice system could operate a distinct approach for young adults. We have focused on the questions that are most pertinent to our areas of work.

## Executive Summary

- Young adults, aged 18-25, require a distinct approach that is tailored to meet their unique needs and vulnerabilities. In order for this to happen, there first needs to be widespread recognition of the need for this approach from the criminal justice system. The current strategy for dealing with young adult offenders is ineffective.
- Nacro encourages the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to consider implementing a strategy for the management of young adults (18-25) through the criminal justice system that makes legislative provision where appropriate, puts governance structures in place for accountability and enables monitoring of ongoing effectiveness.
- There is currently no system-wide specific provision for young adults. The suitability of provision for young adults with distinct needs such as young women and black and minority ethnic (BAME) young adults is even more questionable. To be effective, provision both in custody and in the community need to be culturally sensitive and tailored to young adult individual needs and end goals – taking into account maturity, previous experiences, complex needs and vulnerabilities.
- Nacro strongly supports The Harris Review's conclusion that all young adults in prison are vulnerable. Custody should be used as a last resort, particularly for children and vulnerable young adults. Custodial sentences result in higher reconviction rates than any other criminal justice disposal. The experience of incarceration represents an interruption to the important developmental processes associated with adolescence that naturally foster desistance. It also exacerbates problems, severing positive ties with the family and wider community and bringing additional trauma. Wherever possible, young adults should

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<sup>1</sup> Beyond Youth Custody (BYC) is one of three England-wide learning and awareness projects funded under the Big Lottery Fund's Youth in Focus (YIF) programme, which aims to support vulnerable young people through changes in their lives. BYC has been designed to challenge, advance, and promote better thinking in policy and practice for the effective resettlement of young people. BYC brings together Nacro, with three research and evaluation partners, ARCS (UK), and Salford and Bedfordshire universities. BYC has published extensive research into effective resettlement practice with young people aged up to 25, so its findings are extremely relevant to this inquiry. Please see <http://www.beyondyouthcustody.net/>

be diverted away from the criminal justice system and receive appropriate support based on their individual needs.

- Changes in policy and practice are required to ensure that those young adults who do find themselves in contact with the criminal justice system receive the support they require to move away from crime and towards a more positive future.

## Response to the Inquiry's questions

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

1. There is an emerging need for a separate and distinct strategy for dealing with young adult offenders in the criminal justice system. A growing body of evidence makes the case for why young adults, aged 18-25, require a distinct approach that is tailored to meet their unique needs and vulnerabilities. This is based on developmental stage and maturity as well as the social, economic and structural factors that specifically impact this group.
2. The current strategy for dealing with young adult offenders is ineffective. Young adults are some of the most challenging people in the criminal justice system, responsible for a disproportionate level of crime, serious and violent offences with high rates of reoffending. Many young adults involved in the criminal justice system have a wide range of vulnerabilities and complex needs, with high levels of mental ill health, personality disorder, and experience of trauma, abuse and loss<sup>2</sup>. Their experiences of incarceration often include high levels of violence, self-harm, extended lockdown and limited purposeful activity<sup>3</sup>.
3. The reduction in the number of young adults in custody over recent years is welcome and provides an opportunity to deliver a tailored and distinct approach for those remaining. However, it also presents a challenge due to the likelihood of entrenched patterns of offending behaviour, the nature of offences committed and higher concentration of problems.
4. Nacro encourages the MoJ to consider implementing a strategy for the management of young adults through the criminal justice system that makes legislative provision where appropriate, puts governance structures in place for accountability and enables monitoring of ongoing effectiveness. Consideration should also be given to what lessons can be learned and applied from the youth justice system, including its successes in the reduction of first time entrants and those receiving sentences in and out of court<sup>4</sup>.

### **Question 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, and addressing the following questions:**

5. There first needs to be widespread recognition that young adults need to be identified as a distinct group in order to provide for suitable interventions and support for young adult offenders. There is currently no system-wide specific provision for this group. In evidence to the Justice Committee, Michael Spurr, Head of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), said 'at the moment we have a mixture of different arrangements for young adults'<sup>5</sup>. This can be evidenced by looking at custodial arrangements for young adults. At present, young adults are held across a wide range of establishments, including young offender institutions (YOIs) that hold young adults only, adult prisons where young adults are held in separate young adult wings, and those where all prisoners over the age of 18 are totally integrated. The move towards integrating young adults is worrying given the findings of the most recent Her Majesty's Inspectorate of

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<sup>2</sup> Beyond Youth Custody (2015) *Effective resettlement of young people: lessons from Beyond Youth Custody*, London: Beyond Youth Custody

<sup>3</sup> HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2015) *Annual Report 2014-15*, London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons (Accessible at [https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprison/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2015/07/HMIPAR\\_2014-15\\_TSO\\_Final1.pdf](https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprison/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2015/07/HMIPAR_2014-15_TSO_Final1.pdf))

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Justice (2015) *Youth Justice Statistics 2013-14 England and Wales London*: Ministry of Justice (Accessible at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/399379/youth-justice-annual-stats-13-14.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/399379/youth-justice-annual-stats-13-14.pdf))

<sup>5</sup> Spurr M (2014) *Oral evidence to the Justice Committee: Prisons: planning and policies*, Tuesday 2 December 2014 London: House of Commons

Prison (HMIP) report 2014/15 that notes 'in prisons that had integrated adults and young adults, outcomes for the young adults were generally worse'<sup>6</sup>. The current approach is piecemeal and cannot be seen as distinct provision.

6. The suitability of provision for young adults with distinct needs, such as young women and black and minority ethnic (BAME) young adults is even more questionable. Indeed, BYC research<sup>7</sup> shows that the specific needs of young women (who make up 3% of young adults in custody) have received little attention in policy and practice. This group is held in 'designated accommodation' within adult female prisons. In practice, the extent to which this accommodation is distinct is questionable, with reports by HMIP finding little evidence of any differential provision and approach for young adult women<sup>8</sup>.
7. To be effective, provision both in custody and in the community need to be culturally sensitive and tailored to young adult individual needs and end goals – taking into account maturity, previous experiences, complex needs and vulnerabilities. For example, education, training and employment is a particularly important pathway for young adults and provision should be tailored to individual experience and level of attainment in order to improve the prospects of access to opportunities on release, and to equip young people without previous experience of the work place with the soft skills and confidence needed to successfully engage.
8. There are many examples of good practice where voluntary sector organisations make specific provision for young adults. Not limited to responding to the chronological age of 18 that dictates other statutory services in the criminal justice system, services can take into account maturity and other factors dependent on a young adult's needs. For example, Nacro's delivery of services to young adults affected by substance misuse is tailored specifically to consider maturity. The project gives advice and support to young people, up to the age of 18 affected by substance misuse. However, a specially trained Transitions Worker placed within the team has the discretion to take referrals of young adults up to the age of 25 that fit criteria regarding their vulnerability and/or potential unsuitability for adult services, meaning that they can access the service.

**Question 2a: What is the evidence on how outcomes across a range of measures for young adult offenders compare with other offenders?**

9. Currently, official statistics published by the MoJ and NOMS do not disaggregate data for young adults aged between 18 and 25. Instead, under current data collection methods and definitions, the following categories apply: young people (10-17 years), young adults (where available, which covers 18-20 years) and adults (21 years and over) in the Criminal Justice System.
10. While it is possible to access a limited range of data that distinguishes further between young adults over 18 and older adults, evidence on outcome measures for young adult offenders compared to other offenders are not readily available. By combining data for young adults with the rest of the older prison population (21+ category), nuances and differences in outcomes unique to young adults are lost. Nacro would encourage the Committee to consider what data could usefully be captured by age so that more could be understood about what interventions work best with this group and how outcomes compare. This evidence would greatly inform the design of a distinct approach for young adults and is crucial to ensuring an evidence based approach.

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<sup>6</sup> HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2015) *Annual Report 2014–15*, London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons (Accessible at [https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprison/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2015/07/HMIPAR\\_2014-15\\_TSO\\_Final1.pdf](https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmiprison/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2015/07/HMIPAR_2014-15_TSO_Final1.pdf))

<sup>7</sup> Bateman T and Hazel N (2014) *Resettlement of girls and young women: research report*, London: Beyond Youth Custody

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

11. Reoffending rates among young adults are high, with 19 being the peak age of offending behaviour (for males). The age range 20-25 is the period of fastest deceleration in offending among recidivist offenders. Criminal justice policy and practice therefore needs to recognise more fully the unique characteristics and needs of this age group.<sup>9</sup>

**Question 2b: Taking into account the findings of the Harris Review, what measures should be prioritised in addressing levels of suicide, self-harm, and violence amongst young adult offenders currently held in custody?**

12. In Nacro's experience as lead partner of the Offender Health Collaborative<sup>10</sup>, we have seen the life changing – and at its most extreme, live saving – benefits of diverting vulnerable people away from the criminal justice system. Where diversion from custody is not possible, measures can be adopted to moderate the risks of young people's vulnerability, supporting them in custody. For example, proper support and planning for release in custody can reduce young people's anxieties and support them through the rehabilitative process.
13. Young adults have high levels of need but because of factors such as stigma, fear of retribution and distrust of authority, are perhaps least likely to ask for help. BYC research shows that effective engagement and high quality, trusted relationships are crucial to enhancing a young person's motivation to make positive choices, stay in support programmes and build resilience to negative influencing factors. Our experience from listening to service users via the Liaison and Diversion 'Lived Experience Team' chimes with the finding of the Harris Review; one of their key asks is in relation to peer support<sup>11</sup>. Acknowledging the importance of service user experience on designing effective services, Nacro encourages the Committee to explore how young adults themselves can be involved in the development and implementation of distinct measures to help them feel safe in custody.
14. When considering measures to address violence and self-harm in custody among young adults, it is important to understand the likely relatedness to gangs. Consistent Inspectorate reports note increasing levels of violence, and particularly gang violence, reported in young offender institutions (YOI) and Her Majesty's Prisons (HMPs). Young adults are more likely to have been involved with gang crime than older adults. The centrality of serious violence within gangs means that many gang-involved young adults are likely to have experienced, perpetrated or witnessed serious violence. In addition, gang-involved girls and young women are at heightened risk of sexual violence and exploitation. Exposure to violence puts gang-involved young people at increase likelihood of mental illness and trauma. Please see 'Custody and Beyond: resettlement of gang-involved young people' for details of specific measures that can be taken when working with gang-involved young people<sup>12</sup>.
15. Custodial establishments should undertake appropriate screening of young people in order to ensure that the necessary support is available as part of prison violence and self-harm reduction strategies as well as aiding the resettlement process. Work with young adults should be anchored in an awareness of possible trauma in their backgrounds and in an understanding of the way in which such trauma can affect

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<sup>9</sup> Prison Reform Trust (2014) *Bromley Briefings Prison Factfile*. Accessible at:

<http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Factfile%20Autumn%202014.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Nacro leads the Offender Health Collaborative, a consortium of charities and academic organisations, who developed the liaison and diversion (L&D) operating model for NHS England. Please see: <https://www.nacro.org.uk/about-us/policy-partnerships/offender-health-collaborative/>

<sup>11</sup> For more information about how L&D programmes incorporate lived experience in the planning, development and delivery of their services, please see the most recent L&D bulletin <http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/ld-bulletin-august-2015.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Factor F, Pitts J and Bateman T (2015) *Gang-involved young people: Custody and Beyond*, London: Beyond Youth Custody

behaviour and engagement. In practice, this may involve awareness raising and training of staff, the provision of safe environments, reducing the scope for re-traumatisation and the coordination of provision designed to increase resilience and support<sup>13</sup>.

**Question 2c: What impact have the Transforming Rehabilitation reforms had on the transition between youth offending teams and probation services?**

16. The reforms brought about by Transforming Rehabilitation (TR) – designed to give offenders continuous support by one provider from custody into the community – present an opportunity to ease the transition for people leaving custody, ensuring joined up support. However, the new arrangements are still in the early stages of implementation and it is therefore too early to reliably assess the impact the reforms have had on the transition between youth offending teams and probation services. Changes to statutory requirements made under TR in relation to mandatory post-custody supervision will have significant implications for young adults turning 18 and above. However, it will be important that the impact of these changes on young adults is monitored given the tension between enhanced support and implications of non-compliance leading to the potential increase of breach<sup>14</sup>.
17. Beyond Youth Custody research highlights the importance of smooth transitions and enhanced support at times of change for young people. The transition period from custody to community offers a ‘window of opportunity’ in which young people can be open to intervention that aims to promote desistance. But it also represents a time of substantial risk during which young people may be under pressure to resume previous forms of behaviour and associate with offending peers. Research has consistently found that reoffending or breach are both more likely in the critical period immediately after release<sup>15</sup>. For young adults aged 18, the transition can be even more problematic as people move from the highly supported youth system to the adult system where the approach, support entitlements and licence conditions are very different. If the transition is poorly managed, a young adult can quickly become disengaged and reoffend.
18. Good practice identified by Beyond Youth Custody, which is applicable to transitions of this type, suggests that it is important to prepare young people for difficult changes, with significant effort placed on forming relationships with the new workers in the weeks leading up to changes. The young person should be given clear information about what arrangements have been made, what is required of them, and where possible should be involved in decisions about their own resettlement planning<sup>16</sup>. Nacro encourages the Committee to consider what protocols and systems should be in place for the sharing of information and communication between Community Rehabilitation Companies, National Probation Service and Youth Offending Teams. This kind of information sharing is important for the transition of all young adults, but can be particularly important for gang-involved young adults in terms of safety and risk management<sup>17</sup>.

**Question 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? Please also address the following questions:**

19. Nacro endorses the Harris Review’s recommendations for a distinct approach to young adult offenders. We support the approach as set out in the T2A’s submission. Please see T2A submission.

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<sup>13</sup> Wright S and Liddle M (2014) *Developing a trauma-informed resettlement for young custody leavers, a practitioners guide*, London: Beyond Youth Custody

<sup>14</sup> Bateman T, Hazel N and Wright S (2013) *Resettlement of Young People Leaving Custody: Lessons from the literature* London: Beyond Youth Custody

<sup>15</sup> Beyond Youth Custody (2015) *Effective resettlement of young people: lessons from Beyond Youth Custody* London: Beyond Youth Custody

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Factor, F, Pitts J and Bateman, T (2015) *Gang-involved young people: Custody and Beyond*. London: Beyond Youth Custody

**Question 3a: Should sentence to detention in a young offender institution for 18-20 year old offenders be abolished? If so, what should replace it?**

20. The detention in a young offender institution (DYOI) sentence was originally conceived to offer extra protection and support to young adults because of their developing maturity<sup>18</sup>. Nacro agrees with the principle on which this was introduced, but there are questions over the extent to which it is fulfilling this original aim. Young adults require a distinct approach; therefore the DYOI should not be abolished unless it is replaced with an alternative that is more effectively tailored to the needs of young adults.

**Question 3b: The Harris Review concluded that all young adults in prison are vulnerable and that the experience of being in prison is particularly damaging to them as they are developing. Do you agree?**

21. Nacro strongly supports the Harris Review conclusion that all young adults in prison are vulnerable. Evidence shows the nature of vulnerability of young adults in prison: one quarter of 18-20 year olds in custody report having previously been in local authority care, 43% indicate that they have problems of mental ill health, one in five were homeless at the point of incarceration, 40% have no formal qualifications, one third are fathers, and the majority have family members who have been in prison<sup>19</sup>. Many women who find themselves in custody and in contact with probation have led chaotic lives, and have higher levels of needs and vulnerabilities than males. This includes higher levels of domestic violence, sexual abuse and exploitation, care history, poor educational attainment, mental health problems, and self-harm. Offending is often linked to victimisation and abuse and women offenders are much more likely to be the sole carer of a child<sup>20</sup>.
22. The experience of incarceration represents an interruption to the important developmental processes associated with adolescence that naturally foster desistance<sup>21</sup>. It also exacerbates problems, severing positive ties with the family and wider community and bringing additional trauma.
23. The damaging impacts that custody has on young adults can continue well beyond their release, for example causing difficulties re-establishing and re-negotiating relationships that have been interrupted by incarceration, as well as relearning communication skills. This can be even more difficult with peers of the opposite sex, making it harder to form healthy relationships.
24. Less frequently recognised is the traumatic impact of returning to the community. BYC research suggests that there is a stressful period of disorientation after release, which is both traumatic and increases the risk of reoffending. For effective resettlement, the young adult must go through a reorientation phase on release<sup>22</sup>. Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) can alleviate the anxieties associated with uncertainty on leaving custody, mitigate the worst effects of disorientation and trauma, and help maintain links with family<sup>23</sup>. We welcomed the Youth Justice Board's recent informal consultation on Temporary release in the youth estate and, as outlined in our response to the consultation, Nacro believes that ROTL should be an integral part of preparing for the

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Justice (2013) *Transforming Management of Young Adults in Custody* London: Ministry of Justice Accessible at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/264059/8733.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/264059/8733.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Farrant (2005), cited in Bateman T, Hazel N and Wright S (2013) *Resettlement of Young People Leaving Custody: Lessons from the literature* London: Beyond Youth Custody

<sup>20</sup> Bateman T and Hazel N (2014) *Resettlement of girls and young women: Research report*, London: Beyond Youth Custody

<sup>21</sup> Rutherford A (2002) *Growing Out of Crime – The new era: 3rd edition*, Hook: Waterside Press

<sup>22</sup> Bateman T and Hazel N (2015) *Custody to Community, how young people cope with release*, London: Beyond Youth Custody

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

transition back to the community. There should be a presumption of temporary release unless there are clear reasons for not allowing it. Similar arguments apply for young adults over 18. Nacro encourages the Committee to explore using ROTL more widely to aid the resettlement of young adults.

**Question 3c: The Harris Review recommended that more young adults should be diverted from custody and from the criminal justice system. Is it appropriate to seek to divert more young adults from custody and the criminal justice system, and if so, how would this best be achieved?**

25. Custody should be used as a last resort, particularly for children and vulnerable young adults. Custodial sentences result in higher reconviction rates than any other criminal justice disposal. This reflects, in part, the vulnerable nature of the custodial population and the entrenched nature of their offending. The life chances of young adults who have been in contact with the criminal justice system can be adversely affected. This severity increases following incarceration<sup>24</sup>. Nacro's Resettlement Advice Service deals with thousands of cases each year. Young adults encounter numerous barriers to moving on following disclosure of their conviction including, but not limited to, applications to Further Education colleges, university, training, employment, housing, or applying for bank accounts. Nacro agrees that, wherever possible, young adults should be diverted away from the criminal justice system and receive appropriate support. Where the offence requires a criminal justice disposal non-custodial disposals should be the norm. These should include restorative justice orders, community resolution orders, civil penalties or sanctions. Crucially, this allows young adults to maintain family ties, engage in education or employment and contribute to society – benefiting the young adult, their community and reducing the cost of crime.
26. Please see T2A's 'Pathways from Crime'<sup>25</sup> report that sets out in detail 10 points in the criminal justice process where young adults could be diverted from the system. In particular, the Harris Review found that 29 out of the 83 young adults who died from self-inflicted deaths were on remand. Consideration should be given to appropriateness of the use of remand, increased use of diversion and specialist support given to young adults who are remanded in custody. Given what is known about the heightened vulnerability and highly stressful nature of being on remand, and the fact that many young people remanded to custody by the courts but do not subsequently get a prison sentence<sup>26</sup>, this is an area for exploration for diversion. This is particularly pertinent due to the fact that those released from remand are not entitled to statutory support and the consequential impact of incarceration on their life chances.

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

27. The overarching barrier to more appropriate practice is the lack of a clear central strategy. The first step is to recognise young adults aged 18-25 as a distinct group. While notable progress has been made, the absence of a specific legislative and operational framework acts as a significant barrier to implementing evidence based practice for commissioners and providers. The end result is patchy, uncoordinated experience for service users.
28. In addition there are important complicating factors impacting young women who make up a very small proportion of those in custody. While the small numbers are welcome

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<sup>24</sup> Bateman T, Hazel N and Wright S (2013) *Resettlement of Young People Leaving Custody: Lessons from the literature*, London: Beyond Youth Custody

<sup>25</sup> Transition to Adulthood Alliance (2012) *Pathways from Crime: 10 Steps to a more effective approach for young adults throughout the criminal justice process* London: T2A

<sup>26</sup> The Harris Review (2015) *Changing Prisons, Saving Lives Report of the Independent Review into Self-inflicted Deaths in Custody of 18-24 year olds* [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/439859/moj-harris-review-web-accessible.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/439859/moj-harris-review-web-accessible.pdf)

they also provide a challenge in terms of viability of local commissioning and delivery of services at a local level. With this in mind and the nature of young women's offending every effort should be made to divert young women away from custody.

29. In addition, continued austerity measures and proposed changes to housing benefit entitlement for 18-21 year olds<sup>27</sup> will hamper young adults' chances of living independently and securing accommodation when they are released from custody.
30. At a local level there are significant variations in the type of support available for young adults. In some areas local commissioners and practitioners have led change, using evidence based approaches to implement responsive approaches to young people. In other areas, funding and eligibility for enhanced support is limited to chronological age of 18 and therefore ceased at critical points of need. As a result a centrally designed strategy for 18-25 year olds, which sets out commissioning and service delivery requirements, is crucial to overcoming the challenges faced by young adults in the criminal justice system.
31. Please refer to T2A's submission that sets out in detail what operational and legislative changes would be needed<sup>28</sup>.

**Question 7: How could a criminal justice system which would treat young adults on the basis of maturity rather than age operate in practice?**

32. Nacro is in support of T2A's recommended approach. Please see T2A submission<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> In the Summer Budget, the Chancellor announced that under Universal Credit there will be no automatic entitlement to support for housing costs for 18 to 21 year olds. The government have been clear that vulnerable groups will be exempt, but have not yet confirmed if custody leavers will be included in these exemptions. If young adults leaving custody are not exempt, there is a high risk of street homelessness and/or returning to negative influences and or dangerous housing options (returning to gang areas etc.). Nacro urgently presses Ministers to include custody leavers as an exempt category and enable access to housing support as a fundamental key to reducing reoffending and enabling effective resettlement for young people.

<sup>28</sup> Nacro wishes to raise a point of clarification in relation to T2As call for Liaison and Diversion services to be designed to include within their provision a distinct approach to young adults. Liaison and diversion services have been designed as an all-vulnerability model, to ensure a complete multi-faceted response to complex needs. It is imperative that in the delivery of this model, providers effectively identify and respond to the range of vulnerabilities prevalent among this age group (e.g. brain injury and emerging mental health issues).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.