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Dear Ms Woodgate,

**MoJ Consultation: Strategy for the Secure Estate for Children and Young People in England and Wales**

The Transition to Adulthood Alliance (T2A) is pleased that the Ministry of Justice has decided to seek the views of the various parties on this issue and welcomes the opportunity to respond to its consultation. We have responded to those questions that directly affect our work.

**1. About the Transition to Adulthood Alliance<sup>1</sup>**

T2A is a broad coalition of organisations and individuals which identifies and promotes more effective ways of working with young adults, aged 18-24, in the criminal justice system. Convened by the Barrow Cadbury Trust, its membership encompasses leading criminal justice, youth and health organisations Addaction, Catch22, the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, Clinks, the Criminal Justice Alliance, the Howard League for Penal Reform, Nacro, the Prince's Trust, the Prison Reform Trust, the Revolving Doors Agency, the Young Foundation, and YoungMinds.<sup>2</sup>

T2A has developed and promoted a series of policy proposals that would create a more effective and fairer criminal justice system for the young adult age-group; an approach that is proportionate to their maturity and responsive to their specific needs.

The Barrow Cadbury Trust has established three pilot projects, running since 2009, which are testing different approaches to improving services for young adults in the criminal justice system. The T2A pilots enable community interventions to be tailored to the needs of the individual, with the aim of reducing both the risk of reoffending and social exclusion. The three pilots are in Birmingham, Worcester and London, and are delivered by Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust, YSS and the St Giles Trust respectively.<sup>3</sup> The pilots are subject to a formative evaluation by the

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the T2A Alliance, see <http://www.t2a.org.uk/alliance>

<sup>2</sup> Although the work of the T2A Alliance reflects the views of its membership, this submission should not be seen to represent the policy positions of each individual member organisation.

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the pilot projects, see <http://www.t2a.org.uk/pilots>

Oxford Centre for Criminology, an outcome-based evaluation by Catch22, and a cost-benefit analysis by Matrix Evidence. A formative evaluation by the University of Oxford's Centre for Criminology already points to promising early results and highlights the pilots' success in engaging young adults in actions which will help them towards better lives.

## **2. Our response:**

### **TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD**

T2A is pleased that the Ministry of Justice recognises that children and young adults require a distinct approach in the commissioning of services in the secure estate because they are continuing to develop and their offending behaviour is different to that of adults. We also agree that sentence planning processes and interventions are most effective when they recognise the developmental needs of young people.

However, we are disappointed that the proposed Strategy does not go further to recognise the distinctive needs of young adults aged 18-24. T2A strongly believes that the arbitrary cut-off age of 18 between the youth and the adult systems is not based on the current evidence. By reforming the system to reflect the distinct needs of this group, a significant impact would be felt in reducing current levels of reoffending, overall spend and, importantly, reducing the numbers of crime victims.

The T2A Alliance strongly supports developing a tailored approach to working with young adults that is flexible and sensitive to their developmental maturity. There is extensive evidence, both demographic and developmental, for recognising 'young adulthood' as a particular stage in life.<sup>4</sup> As such, T2A would like to see all young people up to the age of 21 held in the youth estate as this would support the natural process of desistance. In our experience, young adults often feel extremely intimidated in adult prisons, where they are often seen as easy targets for intimidation and bullying by older inmates. Furthermore, the rules that govern Young Offender Institutions have a much stronger emphasis on education.

T2A has concerns that the proposed Strategy, in seeking to enhance the differences between the children's secure estate and the secure estate for adults, risks exacerbating further the current problems and gaps experienced by young adults transitioning between the two systems. At present, as young adults move from the youth to the adult criminal justice system, the level of support typically drops dramatically, the type of support given changes, and the suitability of services may be reduced. The effects of these processes are exacerbated by poor communication between youth and adult services.

The T2A Alliance's work has shown that a poor transition can have a catastrophic impact on a young adult's life, especially for disadvantaged young adults who often have no family or community support available to them and live chaotic lives. The wrong interventions can hamper a young adult's ability to begin the process of rehabilitation, such as being able to access support services, take on opportunities

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Prior, D., Farrow, K., Hughes, N., Kelly, G., Manders, G., White, S. and Wilkinson, B. (2011) *Maturity, young adults and criminal justice: A literature review*, Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

for learning and improving the skills, and maintain relationships and family contact—both of which can play a central role in supporting desistance from crime.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Ministry of Justice and NOMS to share our experience in this area and help to manage more transition processes into the adult estate.

### **A DISTINCTIVE ESTATE**

It is important that links between custodial establishments holding young women under the age of 18 and the adult female prison estate are improved and that transition arrangements between youth offending teams and probation trusts take into account the needs of young adult women.

### **WHAT ROLE SHOULD THE YJB PLAY?**

While the T2A Alliance believes that a separate Youth Justice Board is beneficial, plans to bring the functions of the Youth Justice Board within the Ministry of Justice could present an opportunity to better co-ordinate work between the youth justice system and the adult system, and in particular between the youth and adult custodial estates. As we have stated previously in this response, there is a need for significant improvements in transitional arrangements and communication between agencies working with young adults, with particular focus on youth offending teams and probation trusts as well as youth and adult custodial establishments. In establishing new procedures and structures following this reorganisation, the Ministry of Justice should ensure that these transition issues are addressed

### **EFFECTIVE RESETTLEMENT**

The provision of effective resettlement services is vitally important to reducing reoffending and achieving positive outcomes for young adults who leave custody. The T2A Alliance has identified this issue as a priority and recommends that intensive support should be made available for every young adult (aged 18-24) leaving custody, regardless of the length of their sentence. Regular contact with prisoners needs to begin before release, and every young adult should be offered through-the-gate mentoring support upon release. We also recommend that education, work or training should become a key focus within custody, while young adults should be supported into work or education on their release from prison. While the introduction of payment by results (PbR) might help to deliver this, it will take time to scale it up to provide national coverage and worthwhile outcomes for this group may present challenges to PbR models (multiple causalities, providers, etc.). As was raised in the Ministry of Justice's Green paper in December 2010, a distinct approach may be required within PbR for the young adult age group.

In this vein, T2A would like to draw attention to T2A's pilots in more detail, in particular the model being used by St Giles which works with young adults in prison prior to their release.<sup>5</sup> The pilots are focused on diverting young adults away from the criminal justice system through one-on-one work to address the underlying reasons for their criminal behaviour. The pilots deliver effective support to reduce the risk of reoffending and social exclusion by:

- coaching, motivating and empowering young adults;

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<sup>5</sup> T2A parliamentary briefing on Maturity, July 2011, <http://www.t2a.org.uk/publications>

- supporting young adults and encouraging them to take responsibility for their own lives;
- improving their lifestyle choices and opportunities (such as through training and employment).

While each of the three pilots works with different cohorts of young adults and at different points within the criminal justice system, each pilot draws upon the T2A approach. All of the pilots have established multi-agency systems with statutory and voluntary services in the local area. This allows the T2A worker to deal with the issues arising from the transition between the Youth Offending Service and the Probation Service, ensuring transfer of information and the maintaining of a constant level of support. Multi-agency working also allows the pilots to provide effective help with housing, and access to training, education and employment opportunities.

#### *About the T2A pilots*

The pilots are in London, Birmingham, and Worcestershire. Two are led by voluntary sector services; the St Giles Trust runs one in South London as part of its SOS project, and YSS runs one in Worcestershire. The third, in Birmingham, is delivered by the Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust.

The London T2A Pilot, run by St Giles Trust, is based in Southwark and Croydon. It works with young adults in prison prior to, during, and after their release into the community. It provides intensive support to divert young adults—principally young men—away from offending and enables them to build a new life for themselves. Support offered includes help with housing, accessing training and employment, as well as emotional support with issues such as relationships, behaviour, self-esteem and self perception. The service is delivered by staff who are all ex-offenders, which helps to provide a level of trust and credibility with the young adults. The London T2A teams have been welcomed by the Youth Offending Teams and Croydon Probation Service. Croydon Probation makes direct referrals to the service, and the local Youth Offending Team has invited the T2A teams to work alongside their key workers on some cases. The T2A teams have also built up good relationships with the local police, who also refer young adults directly to the T2A teams.

The West Mercia T2A pilot is run by YSS and is based in Worcestershire. It has been receiving referrals since February 2009 and works with young adult offenders with high needs in the community. The pilot offers a flexible, community based, one-to-one support and mentoring service, using a mixture of paid staff and local volunteers. Each young adult on the T2A pilot determines what level of support they require, including support for family members. The key worker steers them through the available provision, overcoming any barriers (real or perceived) and provides feedback to agencies to influence service practice and policy development. Each young person develops their own action plan with smart objectives. Staff are responsive to need and flexible in their approach due to the potentially changing and chaotic lifestyles of the young adults involved. YSS has established a multi-agency T2A steering group with senior management representation from across the criminal justice system, whilst the T2A pilot encourages regular discourse between the West Mercia Probation Trust and the Youth Offending Team. Key workers are regular visitors at team meetings and will often meet up to discuss T2A referrals.

The Birmingham T2A pilot is delivered by the Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust and is aimed at young adults aged 17-24 years of age identified as posing a medium risk of reoffending. The pilot enables intervention to be tailored to the maturity and needs of the individual young adult and offers mentoring, as well as specific help with accommodation, employment, relationships and substance misuse, depending on their needs. It also aims to instil change in the young adults' lives to enhance their life opportunities and influence their choices in order to move them away from crime and worklessness and well as improve emotional well-being.

The pilots commenced operation during the period December 2008 to July 2009, although the two voluntary sector teams were able to embed this work within existing projects. Still with one year to run, the pilots are already demonstrating effective work with young adults at risk of reoffending and display the benefits of inter-agency policies that will bridge gaps between services and ensure joined up provision for young adults.

The practice ethos of the pilots is one of providing support. The important work to reduce reoffending is integral but contextualised in that supportive framework. The pilots have employed staff to work intensively with the young adults, with support from volunteers. While reducing reoffending by these service users is a core concern and prime objective, this is woven into the broader purpose of enabling them to 'get on' in their lives and to navigate the transitions they have to make (from post-adolescence to maturity, from the youth justice system to the adult justice system, and from custody to resettlement). It is therefore, in effect, welfare-based (in the interests of the service user) and, as such, is considerably removed from standard risk-based, offender management practice in the adult criminal justice system.

So far, the pilots have been successful in engaging young adults in taking up the offered service. The support given is a combination of mentoring and connecting them to services, training and the practical steps they need to take to make progress. All of the pilots are using a person-led, task-focused (or solution focused) model for working with the service users. Through the expression of genuine concern, interest and respect for the individual, the practitioners are able to form a working alliance in which they engage the young person in formulating and following an action plan to help them resolve difficulties, often linked to offending, and to reach their goals.<sup>6</sup>

The University of Oxford's evaluation of the pilots already demonstrates the considerable benefits of this approach, concluding that "the early results from the case studies, and the beliefs of the key players, suggest that the pilots are helping young adults to avoid involvement in offending and to make improvements in their lives", adding that "according to their self-reports, half of the young adults had not reoffended during the six to twelve month period following T2A support. The other half reported that their reoffending was less frequent and less serious, and they are more optimistic about their ability to desist in the future."

### ***Achieving an integrated approach to managing offenders***

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<sup>6</sup> This description is adapted from T2A literature and the report of the University of Oxford's evaluation of the pilots: Burnett, R. and Santos, G.H. (2011) *Found in Transition? Local Inter-Agency Systems for Guiding Young Adults into Better Lives: Final Report of the Formative Evaluation of the T2A Pilots.*

Improved links between departments and agencies are central to achieving an integrated approach to managing offenders, and the Government should explore the potential of pooled budgets to ensure more effective commissioning at the local level, in order to provide services that are better placed to engage with offenders with multiple and complex needs.

If you would like to discuss the contents of this submission further, please contact Sarah Thomas, Public Affairs Manager, on 020 7336 4818 or by emailing [sarah.thomas@catch-22.org.uk](mailto:sarah.thomas@catch-22.org.uk)