



Independent Reviewer on Social Mobility and Child Poverty  
c/o Sarah Hickey  
Cabinet Office  
70 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2AS

### **Social Mobility and Child Poverty review – call for evidence**

The Transition to Adulthood Alliance (T2A) is pleased that the Cabinet Office has decided to seek the views of the various parties on this issue and welcomes the opportunity to respond to its consultation.

#### **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. As part of this work the Alliance calls for a greater focus on improving young adults transitions to adulthood.

In demographic terms, young people face a range of transitions as they move towards adulthood. These include: the move from education to employment; the move into a long-term relationship, perhaps becoming a parent; and the move from the parental home to their own 'household'. In recent decades, there has been a significant shift in the age at which these milestones are reached.

The T2A Alliance's work has shown that the abrupt termination of services when a young person reaches the legal age of 18 based on the arbitrary notion of chronological age rather than need can have a catastrophic impact on their lives, especially for disadvantaged young adults who often have no family or community support available to them and are often living chaotic lives. Furthermore, adult

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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.

services are often not appropriate for young adults aged 18-24 and these people are often at risk of 'falling through the gap' between child and adult services. Many young adults therefore have experiences of being let down by services, despite the fact that we know that they are among those most likely to have poor outcomes if left without external help or support.

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 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.

### **Addressing social mobility and child poverty**

Young adults aged 18-24, who constitute less than 10% of the population, are disproportionately involved in the criminal justice system, making up more than one-third of those commencing a community order or suspended sentence order, one-third of the probation service's caseload and almost one-third of those sentenced to prison each year.

Young adults in trouble with the law often have particularly high levels of complex need and are from backgrounds of great disadvantage, frequently with few or no educational qualifications and no experience of work. Vulnerable young adults often lack positive adult role models and also suffer from high levels of mental ill-health and alcohol and drug misuse problems. As a member of staff, describing the young adults using their specialist service, put it: "They're very needy. They're very vulnerable. They haven't had good role models. They often have chaotic lives, and lead very hand to mouth existences. And some of them, despite their age, are amazingly unskilled at coping with adult responsibilities."<sup>4</sup>

Within this cohort, a quarter of men in Young Offender Institutions are, or are shortly to become, fathers and some 60% of women in custody are mothers, with 45% of those having parental responsibility at the time of the imprisonment. T2A would like to see greater recognition within the government's social mobility and child poverty strategy of the importance of getting interventions with this group right. Our experience has found that poor transitions to adulthood impact on the next generation, as the wrong interventions with young adults within the criminal justice system can hamper their ability to maintain relationships and family contact, which perpetuates crime, social exclusion and poverty. Getting interventions with this group

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

<sup>4</sup> p.34: Devitt, K. and Lowe, K. (2010) *Made to Measure: Bespoke services for young adults: Examples of promising practice*, Brighton: Young People in Focus.

right can help young people move away from crime and improve their life chances and those of their children.

*About the T2A pilots*

The pilots are in London, Birmingham, and Worcestershire. Two are led by voluntary sector services: the St Giles Trust runs the one in South London as part of its SOS project, and YSS runs the one in Worcestershire. The third one, 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 their release and during and after 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 potential 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, and the T2A pilot encourages regular discourse between the West Mercia Probation Trust and the Youth Offending Team, and 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, to influence their choices and to move them away from crime, reduce worklessness and 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 displaying 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, 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>5</sup>

4.9 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 "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."

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)

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<sup>5</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.*