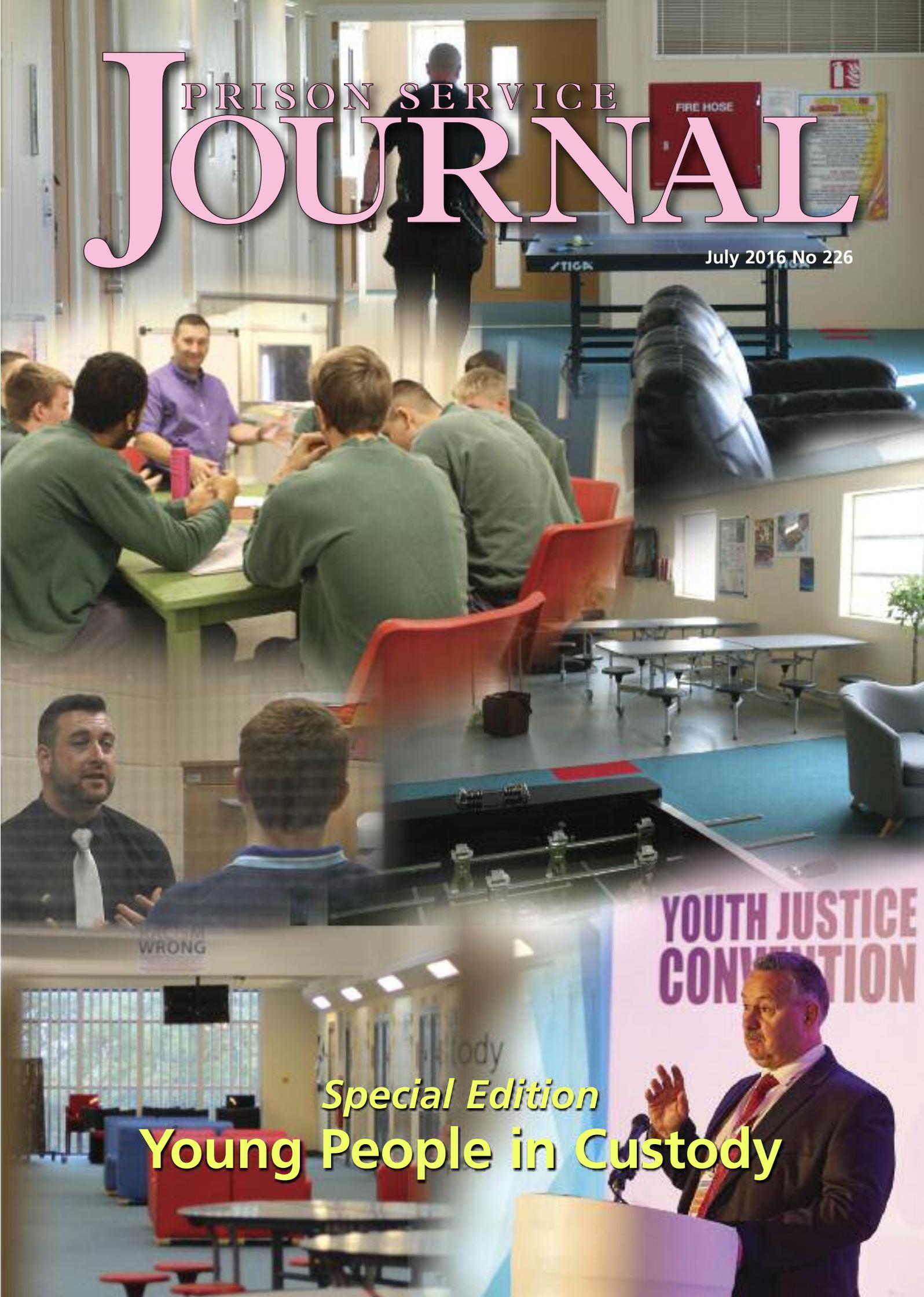


# PRISON SERVICE JOURNAL

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WRONG

YOUTH JUSTICE  
CONVENTION

*Special Edition*  
**Young People in Custody**

# Editorial Comment

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A special edition of the Prison Service Journal on young people in custody was only published five years ago<sup>1</sup> but much has changed. In the last seven years the number of young people in custody has reduced by two thirds,<sup>2</sup> resulting in a decommissioning of over 1250 youth secure estate places.<sup>3,4</sup> Plans for a secure college were discontinued and a new focus was placed on education, redemption and radical reform. A full review of youth custody was commissioned, chaired by Charlie Taylor, whose final report is due later this year.<sup>5</sup>

Unsurprisingly, education is where this edition begins. 88 per cent of boys in custody have been excluded from school,<sup>6</sup> and since March 2015 new education contracts were let across Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) with the aim of increasing education provision.<sup>7</sup> Charlie Taylor's interim report suggests that a 'secure school' approach in place of YOIs may provide the future strategic direction of the government.<sup>8</sup> Caroline Lansky's article in this edition delves more deeply into the education currently received by young people in custody. Her article explores how the 'hidden curriculum' of informal education helps young people to understand how they are regarded, and what allegiance they have, to wider society. Young people in custody are no strangers to institutions by the time they arrive. 33 per cent of boys in custody are 'looked after' by the local authority<sup>9</sup> and children in care are five times more likely to be sanctioned for an offence than children in the general population.<sup>10</sup> Claire Fitzpatrick, Patrick Williams and Darren Coyne explore the particular difficulties faced by looked after children and care leavers in custody. In particular they discuss how incompatible responding to the needs of this group and risk management is in a custodial setting.

The next two articles consider the mental and physical challenges that can create additional issues for young people in custody. Almost a quarter of boys admitted to prison inspectors that they had an emotional or mental health problem.<sup>11</sup> Nathan Hughes and Kate Perise O'Bryne explore the significant numbers of young people in custody with some form of neurodevelopmental impairment. Not only does this increase the likelihood of entering the justice system, it is likely to prevent young people following rules and interacting well in a custodial setting. In a practical application, Alexandra Lewis and colleagues describe a collaboration between HMYOI Feltham

and the National Autistic Society (NAS), aiming to develop standards and a framework of good practice to assist young people in custody with autistic spectrum disorder. This has since led to HMYOI Feltham being granted Autism Accreditation status by NAS, the first prison of any sort in the world to achieve such an accreditation.

The next group of articles focus on large scale reviews and the transition that young people make to young adulthood. Lord Carlile reflects on the progress made since his review of strip searching, segregation and restraint ten years earlier. Friedrich Lösel and Doris Bender complete a review from a European perspective of the treatment of young offenders. Finally, Lord Harris and Deborah Browne extend this with a discussion paper related to the review of self-inflicted deaths in custody of young adults aged 18-24. Their paper reflects on the abrupt end to support for young people transitioning to this new population at 18 and they call for further support for this vulnerable group. Three interviews subsequently provide an insight into the perspective of those accountable for young people in custody. Paul Foweather, the first Deputy Director of Custody for Young People, Kate Morris, Director of Operations at the Youth Justice Board, and Pete Gormley, Governor of HMYOI Werrington, answer questions on the changes, successes and challenges that they face.

A young person's custodial journey concludes with resettlement. However, despite wide ranging developments including, and possibly because of, the reduction in the population of young people in custody, over two thirds of young people in custody go on to reoffend within a year.<sup>12</sup> Tim Bateman considers the role of resettlement in shifting a young person's identity away from that of an offender, but also highlights the concerns of delivering effective resettlement on the ground. In addition, with education at the heart of attempts to rehabilitate young people, Dame Sally Coates is interviewed in this edition to coincide with the publication of her review. She discusses her own background working with young people outside of custody, as well as the approach and themes of her review. Taken together, this special edition seeks to consider the way in which the young people's estate has changed, the opportunities and challenges that remain and the possibilities for reform.

1. Prison Service Journal (2011:197) Special Edition: Young People in Custody. HMP Leyhill: Ministry of Justice.
2. Youth Justice Board (2015) Monthly youth custody report: August 2015. London: Ministry of Justice.
3. Youth Justice Board (2014) Annual Report and accounts 2013/14. London: Youth Justice Board.
4. Youth Justice Board (2015) Annual Report and accounts 2014/15. London: Youth Justice Board.
5. Taylor, C. (2016) Review of the Youth Justice System: An interim report of emerging findings. London: Ministry of Justice.
6. Prime, R. (2014) Children in Custody 2013-14. London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons and Youth Justice Board.
7. See 4.
8. See 5.
9. Kennedy, E. (2013) Children and Young People in Custody 2012-13. London: HM Inspectorate of Prisons and Youth Justice Board.
10. Department for Education (2015) Outcomes for children looked after by local authorities, as at 31 March 2014. London: DfE.
11. See 6.
12. Ministry of Justice (2013) Proven re-offending quarterly: October 2011 to September 2012. London: Ministry of Justice.