

THE EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN IN CUSTODY: A STORY OF SURVIVAL

Abstract

This paper explores children's experiences during their time in custody in England and Wales. Forty-eight children were interviewed, as part of a wider study on children's pathways into, through and out of custody. The focus of this paper is on children's experiences in Young Offender Institutions.

The findings from the study suggest that children's behaviour during incarceration can be understood largely as strategies for surviving the hostile environment in which they find themselves.

The paper seeks to highlight specific elements of this environment and offers an insight into how they may impact upon a child's sense of self and place in the world.

Keywords

Youth justice

Child

Secure estate

Young Offender Institutions

Child custody

Identity

Sense of self

Institutional identity

Introduction

Concerns about the incarceration of children in trouble with the law are both long-standing and recognised internationally (e.g. Willow, 2015). The United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of their Liberty (2019) notes that there are around 410,000 such children around the globe

at any one time (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2006). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states, in Article 37, that the imprisonment of children should only ever be applied as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period (UNCRC, 1989).

Within England and Wales, the Youth Custody Service's Safeguarding Review (2019) found that many features of the adult custodial estate are also to be found in the juvenile estate such as adult uniforms, and the use of the Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme which can lead to isolation in cells for prolonged periods. The treatment of children in custody has troubled policy makers for several decades, raising the question of whether the juvenile custodial estate, in its current form, is fit for purpose (Willow, 2015). This creates a tension between 'the practical realities of child imprisonment (globally) on the one hand and the provisions of international rights standards on the other hand' (Goldson, 2013: 347). The calls for the abolition of child imprisonment have been growing (see for example, Goldson, 2005; Willow, 2015; Standing Committee for Youth Justice, 2020). Indeed, in 2017, the Chief Inspector of Prisons stated that he did not believe that any Young Offenders Institute or Secure Training Centre could be deemed safe enough to hold children (HMIP, 2017). The complex needs of children in custody mean that they are 'often ill-equipped for life inside' (Gooch, 2018: 278).

Given the ongoing concerns about the current 'State of Youth Custody' (Bateman, 2020), it is important that we gain an insight, from the children themselves, of their experiences of custody and how these impact on how they think about themselves and their place in the world (their identities). The aims of this paper are to understand how children in custody's experiences have impacted upon the development of their identities. To set the context, the paper will firstly consider recurring themes within the literature about children in custody both internationally and in the UK. The literature on identity development within institutions will then be considered. The paper will then outline the methods for the empirical study, before presenting the findings. The findings and discussion explore features of incarceration that the children must survive. Considering a child's

period of incarceration through an ‘identity lens’ (Hazel et al, 2020), this paper argues that being in a Young Offender Institution amounts to an ‘assault on the self’ (Goffman, 1961) through the imposition of an institutional identity. The children survive this process by either accepting the institutional identity and ‘keeping their heads down’ or choosing to fight the ‘assault on the self’ (Goffman, 1961). Both ‘keeping their heads down’ and ‘fighting’ have been conceptualised in the findings as survival strategies to manage their period of incarceration and attack on their identities. The paper concludes by using the findings drawn from the experiences of children in prison to provide recommendations for change.

Setting the Scene: Fewer Kids, More Problems

Background

It is important to set out some current details about youth incarceration in England and Wales to provide some context to the experiences reported by the children we interviewed. When sentenced to custody, children are placed in one of three establishments: a Secure Children’s Home (for boys and girls aged 10 – 17); a Secure Training Centre (for boys and girls aged 12 – 17) or a Young Offender Institution (for boys aged 15 – 18). Secure Children’s Homes are characterised by a welfare, rather than punishment ethos, and have a higher ratio of staff as they tend to be reserved for the most vulnerable children. Secure Training Centres are smaller than Young Offender Institutions (YOIs) and have a focus on education and training. YOIs bear many similarities to an adult prison; adopting broadly the same operating model as its adult counterpart. The vast majority of children are sentenced to custody in England and Wales are placed in Young Offender Institutions. The focus of this paper will be on the experiences of children in Young Offender Institutions.

All children in Young Offender Institutions are managed through the ‘Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme’. This behaviour management scheme seeks to reward ‘good’ behaviour by giving children ‘Enhanced’ status. This means they are given extra time out of their cells, increased family

visits, and other privileges including eligibility for Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL). If children do not comply with the regime, their 'bad' behaviour is punished with 'Basic' status, which typically involves a loss of privileges, reduced visits, and increased time spent alone in a cell.

The numbers of children in the English and Welsh youth justice system have reduced sharply in the last 10-15 years, which has been mirrored across the secure estate. The number of children in custody fell from 3006 in May 2008 (YJB, 2018) to 773 in February 2020 (Ministry of Justice, 2020). The latter outcome is, to a certain degree, expected, given the reductions in numbers coming through the youth justice system (Bateman, 2012). However, despite this, there has been a concerning rise in the proportion of children in custody who are of BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) origin (Bateman, Day and Pitts, 2018). In May 2005, BAME children accounted for 25% of those in custody (Bateman, 2012), but by February 2020 the proportion had risen to 54% (Ministry of Justice, 2020). A consideration at the pre-court stage is data demonstrating that black children are three times more likely to be arrested and once arrested, almost ten per cent more likely to be charged, than their white peers (Uhrig, 2016). An equivalent dynamic is likely to operate in the court arena, where BAME children are one fifth more likely to receive a custodial sentence in the youth court and 72 per cent more likely to be tried in the crown court where long-term custodial sentences, in excess of two years duration, become available (Uhrig, 2016).

There are several indicators of vulnerability among the incarcerated population of children: almost one third of boys and almost two thirds of girls admitted to the secure estate between 2014 and 2016 were assessed as presenting concerns in relation to suicide or self-harm (Youth Justice Board, 2017). Children who had experienced trauma prior to entering custody, often received little or no help to resolve these experiences; resulting in a reaction within custody of violent destructive behaviour, or self-destructive behaviour (Gray, 2015). Mental health concerns were noted for one third of boys and 41 per cent of girls (Youth Justice Board, 2017), with 23% having a diagnosed mental illness, and 47% of children supervised by youth justice agencies being referred for mental

health support (Gyateng, 2013). Jacobson et al (2010) found that 40% of children in custody had been on the child protection register and experienced abuse or neglect.

Conditions and outcomes of children within the custodial estate

At the same time, data suggest that the treatment of children detained has, as numbers of children in custody have fallen in number, worsened considerably (Bateman, Day and Pitts, 2018). In the year ending March 2019, levels of physical restraint, isolation from peers and self-harm episodes were all significantly higher than in 2013 (Youth Justice Board / Ministry of Justice, 2018). Such concerns are well-established in the literature. Features such as the use of physical restraint (Carlile, 2006; Gooch, 2015; Hart, 2008; Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2008; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2011), the loss of liberty (Sykes, 1958) and solitary confinement (Gooch, 2016), and bullying and violence (Butler, 2008; Gooch, 2019; Ministry of Justice, 2016) have led several scholars to conclude that children's experiences in custody amount to institutionalised abuse (Goldson 2009; Gooch, 2015), and a violation of children's rights (Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2019). This has been amplified by the impact of Covid 19, during which concern was expressed that children were only let out of their cell for one hour per day (HMIP, 2020). Furthermore, concerns about the use of pain-inducing restraint led the Ministry of Justice to review its continued use. The review, led by Charlie Taylor, recommended that the use of pain-inducing restraint should be banned, unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as acting in self-defence or in an emergency (Taylor, 2020).

The recent HMIP inspection on behaviour management (HMIP, 2018) found that developing strong relationships with staff was key to achieving good behaviour. They found that staff shortages, high staff turnover, and lack of time outside of their cell prevented the formation of strong relationships, and all had a negative impact on the children's behaviours (HMIP, 2018).

There is also substantial evidence of the poor outcomes associated with child imprisonment. A review of the evidence in England and Wales for instance found less than one third of children in

custody have suitable accommodation and employment or training arrangements in place at the point of release (Bateman et al, 2013). A more recent thematic inspection found that outcomes for children leaving custody, in terms of accommodation, education, training or employment, substance misuse, physical or mental health and rates of reoffending were for the most part 'poor' and 'shocking' (HM Inspectorate of Probation, 2015: 4). The dual status of children with a history of care and being subject to youth justice supervision will inevitably exacerbate the difficulties associated with release from custody for that group, and these difficulties frequently persist into adulthood leading to substantially higher rates of involvement with the adult criminal justice and the benefits systems, and a higher likelihood of accessing health, mental health and substance misuse services (Herz et al, 2012).

The impact of custody on identity

As this paper seeks to consider children's experiences of incarceration through an identity lens, it is important to consider the literature in this area. A child's identity refers to how they see themselves and their place in the world. This is developed through interactions with other people and their environment, which then impacts on how they interact and behave with others. Identity development can therefore be framed as a journey, and this can intensify during periods of transition (Hazel et al, 2020). Custody can be framed as a key transition point in a person's life. Interactions with others in this environment is therefore likely to have a significant impact on a child's sense of self and place in the world, or their identity. Goffman (1961) argued that entry to a 'total institution' amounted to an 'assault on the self' The construction of institutional identities within the context of custody is based on a wider perception of an individual's challenging or difficult behaviours that match the working logic of the intervention, institution or treatment system (Gulbriem and Holstein, 2001; Hacking, 1999; Loseke, 2001). For example, Jarvinen and Andersen (2009) found that treatment institutions 'make up' or construct distinct troubled identities by framing their clients' personal experiences of substance misuse to make sense within their

treatment system. This is achieved through the development of 'formula stories' (Loseke, 2001), a narrative about social troubles, in which a specific plot and main characters are identified. Troubled activities are understood and reconceptualised into workable categories that complement the organisation or field working with those clients. For children who are in trouble with the law, this could be about reframing children's activities as dangerous or delinquent and in need of risk management and control, rather than vulnerable and in need of support. This can then influence how a child is framed and managed in differing environments, such as custody.

It is from the formula story that the institutional identity is constructed. For professionals to work with you, you have to behave in a way that displays 'institutionally preferred personas'. Loseke (2007) points out that services have an image of their 'typical' client and have an 'idea' of what their client needs and what their problems are. Formula stories sort out troubled, complex, messy lives into 'manageable' categories that are consequential and ultimately seek to shape and construct an identity for an individual based on this conception.

However, as Jarvinen and Andersen (2009) state:

'There is never a perfect match between the institutional narratives and the concrete experiences and expectancies of individual clients. Some clients fit into the profiles set up by the formula story, while others challenge it. Hacking (1999) used the term 'looping effect' to describe the processes by which people either adapt their identity and behaviour in response to institutional definitions or challenge the categorisations' (Jarvinen and Andersen, 2009: 867).

Much of the literature on the impact of custody on identity has focused on adults. This paper seeks to address this gap by seeking to highlight what the experiences are of children in custody, how they manage this, and the impact that this has on their identity and sense of self. Stockholm (2009) found that the identity that the child constructs therefore depends on how they manage the figurative world in which they find themselves. For example, when considering how children

managed being in care, Thomas (2014) found that they constructed three different identities – a victim, a survivor, and a victor. Gooch (2016), when examining the pains of child custody, concluded that it was an environment that children *had to survive*.

It is clear from the literature that although the numbers of children in the custodial estate have significantly reduced, their interactions with the system bring about many challenges (Bateman, Day and Pitts, 2018). The population of children facing these challenges are increasingly vulnerable and complex (Baldry et al, 2018). This emphasises the need to understand what the experiences are of children in custody, how they are managing these experiences, and the impact that this is having on their sense of self and identity development.

Methods

The study from which this particular paper is drawn adopted a mixed methods approach using 1:1 semi-structured interviews with children and professionals involved with the Youth Justice System, case file analysis of the children interviewed and analysis of quantitative data contained in the South and West Yorkshire Consortium Tracker. This paper is focused solely on the findings from the children's interviews on their experiences in Young Offender Institutions. Interviews were conducted with 48 children from South and West Yorkshire who were either in custody or had been released in the preceding 12 months. The study was funded by the Nuffield Foundation, and conducted by the University of Bedfordshire, in partnership with the South and West Yorkshire Resettlement Consortium.

Prior to conducting the research, ethical clearance was secured from the University of Bedfordshire, and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service. The role of the South and West Yorkshire Resettlement Consortium was invaluable in enabling us to conduct the research and played an important role in identifying and recruiting potential interviewees. For example, the Consortium employed a link worker based at the local young offender institution, who played an

important role in recruiting children for interview. The link worker had access to a list of all children in custody from the South and West Yorkshire areas. He then approached each young person individually, verbally ran through the information sheet and asked them if they would like to be interviewed. Forty-nine children were approached about the research, and just one declined, who was in custody at the time. The general feeling amongst potential participants was that they welcomed the opportunity to speak about their experiences. Where consent was given, names and other details were passed to the researcher, who arranged a visit in order to conduct the interview.

Children living in the community were initially approached through a Youth Offending Team Officer (usually the case manager), who explained the study to them, verbally ran through the information sheet with them and sought their agreement to be contacted by the research team where they expressed an initial interest in participating. The research team discussed potential issues that might impact upon the interviewee with their YOT Officer. This included issues the individual children might have in terms of any learning, behavioural or emotional difficulties, such as whether they had specific literacy/ numeracy difficulties which would need to be considered in the interview.

Immediately prior to commencing the interview for children both in custody and in the community, the researcher checked that the participant still consented, and made it clear that the process was entirely voluntary and was not part of a 'requirement' of a sentence plan. An interview schedule containing 'prompts' and 'probes' was used to facilitate a conversation, the pace and direction of which was largely determined by the interviewee. The topics covered in the interview schedule included the children's stories about, and experiences of, their pathways into custody, their pathways through and experiences of custody, and their hopes for, and experiences of, resettlement. The aim in the interviews was for the exchange to feel like a 'conversation with a purpose' (Burgess, 1984) and less like a structured question and answer session. All interviews were audio-recorded, and the appropriate security clearance was gained to audio-record in custody. The

recordings were subsequently transcribed for purposes of analysis, and all interviews were anonymised at the point of transcription. Pseudonyms have been used for all the children.

It was critical to be clear with participants about the limits to confidentiality. It was made clear that where a risk of harm to self or others was disclosed, this would have to be reported to the child's case manager.

As stated above, 48 children were interviewed. Of the 48:

- All were boys.
- 41 were in YOIs either at the time of interview or immediately prior to release.
- 7 were in STCs or SCHs.
- 16 were BAME (Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background).
- 22 were 'looked after' at the point of entry into custody.
- 8 were aged 18, 26 were aged 17, with the remaining 14 aged 15 and 16.

This paper is based on the children who were either in YOIs at the time of interview, or had been in a YOI immediately prior to release. The group of children in this study reflect a growing national trend towards older children with complex needs being sentenced to custody (YJB, 2019).

Adopting inductive reasoning, data analysis of the interviews highlighted several recurring themes. The approach recognises that data is produced as a result of the interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Charmaz, 2007). It is therefore recognised that the nature of the interview, the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, and the setting can all impact on the data. A number of themes were identified, which are outlined below.

Surviving Custody – Fight or Keep Your Head Down

Children's experiences of incarceration in YOIs were discussed almost exclusively in relation to how their behaviour was managed. As stated above, the main method of behaviour management within a YOI is the Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) Scheme. If you behave, and comply with the scheme, you are rewarded with 'Enhanced' status and given extra privileges such as increased visits from friends and family and time out of your cell. If you do not comply with the scheme, your status changes to 'Basic', meaning that you are punished with reduced visits, and long periods of isolation in your cell. Considering this through an identity lens, the IEP Scheme can be conceptualised as a system that labels and interacts with children based upon an institutionally constructed identity of a child who is dangerous and delinquent, and thus in need of behaviour management and control. Acceptance of the institutional identity has been conceptualised as a child surviving custody by 'keeping their head down' and complying with the IEP Scheme. Children who do not accept the institutional identity can be understood as 'fighting' and not complying with the IEP Scheme.

These two alternative – and non-exclusive – strategies for surviving YOIs are reminiscent of those previously highlighted by Wilson (2004) in his study of the experiences of imprisoned young black men. The children in this study discussed either fighting or keeping their head down as a way of surviving their imprisonment. 'Keeping your head down' involved the avoidance of difficult situations by remaining quiet so that people do not notice you. An example of 'keeping your head down' was given by Will:

'Only mix with people if people approach you and they're alright with you, that's who you talk to, but people that try saying stuff, just ignore them.'

For other children, 'keeping your head down' was not an option:

Luke: Yeah, mad, everyone had a problem innit so I had to be like more dangerous there than I was on out, just there's a defensive mechanism.... You can go in 'cause you've made a mistake like me and you can come out wanting to commit more offences because of the stuff you've seen and because of the ... survival instinct that goes into you while you're in there.

Luke states that he 'had' to become 'more dangerous' in YOIs than he was in the community in order to survive this environment. He is not choosing to keep his head down, but to fight and be 'more dangerous' than everyone else. The Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children in this study generally described 'fighting for who they are' and 'relying on themselves' as the only way to survive being in custody. When children did not keep their heads down, and chose to fight, this invariably led to a vicious cycle in which they would be punished, which further compounded their frustrations, leading to more negative behaviours. One child described what being on 'basic' meant in a Young Offender's Institution:

Jamie: It was 21 days behind your cell door, and you're only coming out to go to the toilet, to go out on exercise, or to have connections, which is like education, for on the wing for people who are on bang up, and that's about it really. And, come out for a phone call and a shower.

It also had a negative impact on his mental health:

Jamie: I used to self-harm in my pad, because they'd never let me out of my pad for about three or four days in a row, I'd have an outburst, a giddiness and they used to keep me in my pad, so I used to self-harm.

Int: Had you ever self-harmed before?

Jamie: No.

Int: Have you self-harmed since?

Jamie: No, because I'm out, I can see my family, ring them, speak to them whenever I want.

Being locked up for prolonged periods of time had a negative impact on the children's mental health, with a number reporting that they had suicidal thoughts, and self-harmed for the first time.

Several of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children in this study stated that they perceived differential treatment when compared with white children, stating that they were 'bottom of the pile' and 'treated like dogs'. Some examples from the interviews of the differential treatment included disproportionate use of adjudications, being placed on basic, and negative responses from officers to basic requests.

There were a number of features of YOIs that the children had to survive:

Too Much Time Alone in Cells

Children in YOIs expressed frustration at the amount of time spent in their cells. Children repeatedly complained about having 'nothing to do' and feeling bored. Some would 'keep their head down' and described a range of different activities that they used to pass the time including cleaning their cell, exercising, reading, watching the television, and talking to other children through the cell windows. When the boredom became overwhelming and they could no longer keep their heads down, some of the children admitted to more challenging behaviours, such as verbally goading other children or staff, or repeatedly pressing their bell to gain the attention of officers. This would result in behavioural sanctions, such as being placed 'on basic' and alone in their cell for up to 23 hours per day:

Jack: It's long and it's boring as well. Like I don't even know how time used to go by, like I used to just sit down and just lay in my bed and just read books. I'd do anything, just you'd get to the point where I'd just start graffiti-ing on the doors and on the walls and shit. And then it just, when you get put on basic, I don't feel like they should do basic because it's just, "Well, you've put me on basic now so I'm definitely not going to behave like". People used to flood their cells because they was on basic, they used to try and kill themselves.

Jack describes both keeping his head down and fighting in the above extract. He is attempting to survive the prolonged periods of loneliness and boredom by different means. He firstly attempts methods that are acceptable to the behaviour management regime such as laying down, sitting down and reading books (keeping his head down). However, when the boredom and frustration become overwhelming, Jack resorts to doing 'anything' including graffiti-ing his cell (fighting). He is aware that this will lead to him receiving 'basic' status, but the prolonged periods of isolation and boredom almost create an inevitability that his frustrations will eventually overcome him, resulting in him no longer keeping his head down, and displaying challenging behaviours.

Restraint

The children discussed the uses of restraint to manage their behaviours, and in particular the unnecessary uses of restraint, and excessive force. One child described being restrained after refusing to return to his cell. He stated that he had been unlocked to allow a telephone call to his mum but was then asked to return to his cell before he had made the call. The injuries as a result of this restraint were observed in interview, and included carpet burns to the child's hand. In interview, the child explained that if the officer had simply listened to him and allowed him to call his mother, he would have happily returned to his cell afterwards. Telephone contact with your mother, as indicated below, forms an important part of a child's identity development, and is crucial to a child surviving their period of incarceration. When he was not allowed to call his mum, his sense of self was challenged, and on this occasion, he responded by 'fighting' and refusing to return to his cell. The response of the institution was to reframe his refusal as a behaviour management issue, based on the institutional identity construction of a dangerous and delinquent child in need of management and control, leading to the restraint and being placed on 'basic'.

The concerns surrounding the restraint of children in custody are long-standing. There is evidence from the data that indicates that the construction of the institutional identity of a dangerous and delinquent child in need of management and control may also have a discriminatory

element to it as Black and Minority Ethnic Children spoke more frequently in interview of being restrained and felt that this was an example of differential treatment as a result of their ethnicity. They also stated that there was little point in complaining, as ‘nothing happens’:

Paul: So, when I was restrained, I had my head down, he just got the keys and on the sly he just flicked it in my eye and hit me in the face.

Int: Have you ever complained about things like this?

Paul: Yeah, I've done it twice in the past, and nothing happens so I can't be arsed.

This appears to support earlier findings that having robust complaints processes and structures of accountability is not sufficient if the children themselves have little faith in them (Goldson and Kilkelly, 2013).

Maintaining contact with the outside world

The difficulty surrounding contact with professionals, friends, and family in YOIs was a strong theme to emerge from the children’s interviews, who complained about the inaccessible location of secure establishments, the cost of telephone calls to family and friends, and that they were often unlocked from their cell to make calls at a time of day when family members and friends may be unavailable. Maintaining links with friends, family and home is inherent to the development of children’s identities (Hopkins, 2010). When this was restricted in some way, the children expressed frustration, often leading to challenging behaviours. The restriction of family contact therefore challenged children’s identities, and their responses to this often led to behaviours which put them in direct conflict with the prison regime, leading to further sanctions. As already stated, the behaviour management regime in custody is based upon the construction of an institutionalised

identity of dangerous and delinquent children in need of management and control. Callum expressed his frustration at the financial cost involved in ringing his family:

Callum: 'It's 10p for a minute or something like that. It's like £6 pounds for an hour or something like that'

Contact with family was viewed as critical to children, often helping them survive their time in custody and motivating them to make positive changes to their lives on release (Hazel et al, 2017)::

Matthew: Like if I were in here and my mum and dad didn't support me, wouldn't send me no money and that, I don't know how I'd cope to be honest...I just appreciate what they've done for me innit, and when I get out I'm going to change.

Specific features of the custodial environment challenged a child's sense of self and place in the world, such as the use of restraint, isolation and limited contact with the outside world. The institutional identity (Gulbrium and Holstein, 2001) in custody is developed from a formula story (Loseke, 2001) that views children as a risk that is in need of management and control, rather than vulnerable and in need of support and protection. The response of the institution to this is to control and manage children through the imposition of the behaviour management regime known as the 'Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme'. Where a child accepts this identity by complying with the rules of the regime and keeping their head down, they were rewarded with 'enhanced status' leading to additional rewards and privileges. However, when a child did not accept the institutional identity by fighting as a means of survival, punishment followed (being placed on 'basic'). The literature has established that once in an institution such as a YOI, a person's experience

amounts to 'assault on the self' (Goffman, 1961). This paper seeks to take this a step further by highlighting how the construction of an institutional identity whilst in custody challenges a child's sense of self. Many of the harmful features described by the children, above, are directly linked to this behaviour management scheme, including the long periods of isolation in their cells, the use of pain-inducing restraint, and the limited opportunities for contact with family and friends. The children described a range of strategies to survive these features that have been conceptualised as 'keeping their head down' or fighting. This is manifested in behaviours that can be framed as an 'assault on the self' (Goffman, 1961; Rowe, 2011). For example, a number of children described how the impact of being locked up for long periods, unable to see their family, caused them to self-harm, attempt suicide and destroy their immediate environment by flooding or smashing up their cell. Others spoke about becoming more dangerous as a method of surviving and defending themselves.

Recommendations and concluding thoughts...

Based on the findings, above, there are several recommendations for practitioners and policy makers. Firstly, the current behaviour management scheme in YOIs should be urgently reviewed, with a view to replacing it with a system that is more child friendly, and based upon a child's individual, complex support needs. This includes the prohibition of solitary confinement and segregation for children in custody. The findings have highlighted that the continued use of the Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme as a way to manage children in custody is both harmful and erodes their sense of self. The recommendations of the Taylor Review (2020) to effectively ban the use of pain-inducing restraint in custody should be immediately implemented. Removing the current behaviour management techniques will symbolise a move towards a system that is more child friendly, rather than reinforcing their identity as being in need of control and punishment.

It is also recommended that a full review takes place within YOIs of children's face to face and telephone contacts with family, friends, social workers, youth justice workers, and other

professionals. The provision of private rooms for children to meet with professionals should be available to all children for face-to-face visits. Free telephone calls should be made available from a child's cell to their family, youth justice worker, social worker, and other identified essential sources of community support. The children described how contact with friends, family and professionals helped them survive their time in custody, and maintain their sense of self. Any opportunity to improve the quality of contact with such essential sources of support should be urgently implemented.

Considering the impact of custody through an identity lens, the institutional identity construction of a dangerous child in need of behaviour management and control is harmful to children. By framing children in this way, management of behaviour is prioritised over a children's individual, complex needs. This justifies the continued use of a system that is primarily focused on behaviour management and control, rather than focusing on support and welfare. However, this paper has highlighted that the institutional identity construction not only allows their welfare needs to be ignored, but further harms children through the use of the IEP scheme, which places children in a vicious cycle over which they have no control. This is at odds with recent moves by the Youth Justice Board 'to develop a new vision for youth justice that sees children as children, treats them fairly and helps them to build on their own strengths' (Youth Justice Board, 2019: 3). The Ministry of Justice appear to have recognised this in their commitment in the longer term to replace YOIs with Secure Schools. However, the Secure School model of large establishments focusing on education as the pathway out of offending suggests that a new institutional identity, based on education, will be imposed on the children. If children are sent to custody, it is imperative that they are sent to smaller, welfare-led environments that interact with children as they see themselves and are not yet another environment that they have to survive.

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