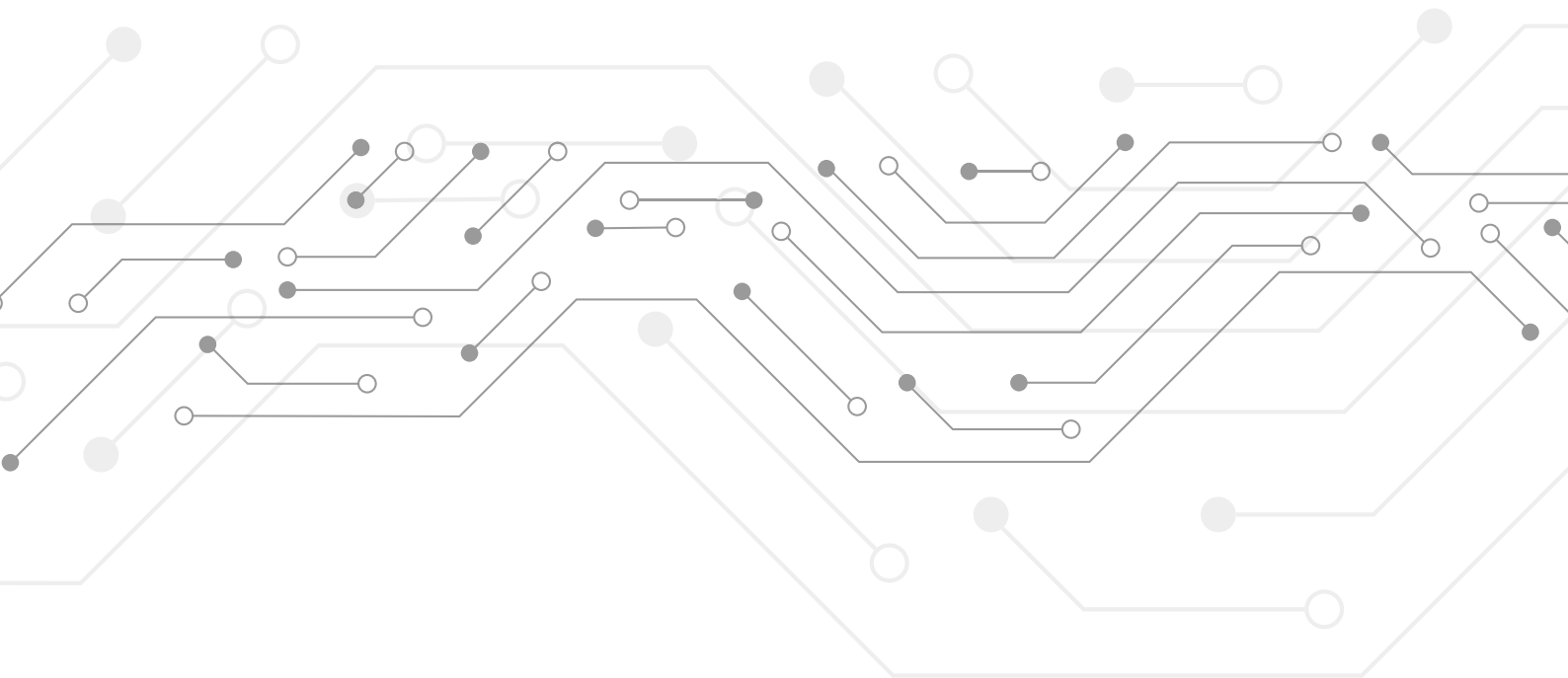


Working with young adults

Community Rehabilitation
Company Evaluation Series



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Introduction

Ingeus commissioned an independent, external consultant, Russell Webster, to undertake a series of evaluations on a range of interventions which Ingeus delivered as the lead organisation in the Reducing Reoffending Partnership (RRP), alongside Change, Grow, Live, and the St Giles Trust, which operated the Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire & Rutland (DLNR) and Staffordshire & West Midlands (SWM) Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC) between 2015 and 2021. This evaluation focuses on the approach Ingeus developed for working with young adults (defined as 18 to 25 year olds).

Chapter 1 summarises the research evidence on the need for a young adult specific approach. Chapter 2 describes the strategy developed by Ingeus to provide a bespoke approach to working with young adult offenders and describes the work undertaken as the result of that strategy. Chapter 3 presents the impact of that work and details how Ingeus will take forward the principles of its work with young adults in its work delivering Commissioned Rehabilitation Services and other services.

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Executive Summary

The evidence base

Substantial research over the last twenty years has revealed that young adult offenders are unintentionally discriminated against across the criminal justice system with services generally not attuned to their needs as they and their brains mature. There is a consensus across the research that this process of maturation varies considerably and that any effective service needs to be based on individual assessment. Issues of neurodiversity and difficulties transitioning from youth services have long been highlighted as problem areas.

Ingeus' work

Ingeus developed its young adult strategy in 2015 with the objective of ensuring that the needs of this most prolific cohort of offenders were met. The strategy acknowledged that a step-change from previous practice was required and was explicitly developed to be an organisation-wide approach. The core elements of the strategy were an evidence-based approach with tailored interventions co-produced with young adults, with the whole work force to receive training and young adult specialists appointed in every team apart from in Birmingham where a nineteen strong specialist service was developed.

In addition to mainstream practice with young adults, Ingeus invested in two young adult specific interventions (the Senior Attendance Centre and the EngAge early intervention project) which are described below, in addition to ensuring that a particularly vulnerable group of young adults, those with experience of being in care, received an improved service.

Outcomes

This wide range of dedicated young adult services was recognised by specialist partner agencies to have significantly improved the quality of service delivered to this age group who commit between 30-40% of the nation's crime. The completion rate for both community sentences and post-release supervision improved following the introduction of such a wide range of services with interventions both co-created with young adults and delivered by a workforce who had all received specialist training. Local sentencers considered the Senior Attendance Centre to be an important option within their range of sentencing alternatives and were reported to have a good understanding of the Fast Forward programme following a presentation by young adults who had graduated the programme. EngAge worked successfully with more than one thousand young adults, most of whom were referred by Leicestershire police to divert them from the criminal justice system.

Going forward

The specialist skills that Ingeus has established in its work with young adults is amplified by other areas of expertise developed by the organisation including its commitment to valuing lived experience and extensive volunteering and mentoring programmes, its organisation-wide dedication to trauma-informed practice and its specialism in developing arts-based approaches to engaging and enabling young people.

Ingeus was helped in developing this expertise in working with young adults by its collaboration with Ingeus' Youth division which currently runs the National Citizen Service (NCS), working with more than 28,000 15-17 year olds for the last five years. In addition to understanding how to engage and motivate young people and personalise services to make them relevant, the organisation's work with both young adult offenders and those participating in the NCS shared a focus on building self-esteem and confidence and prioritised a strengths-based approach.

The comprehensive skills and experience developed by Ingeus has equipped them to develop a high-quality service to young adults involved in the criminal justice system who receive support around accommodation, employment and health and wellbeing via a wide range of Commissioned Resettlement Services and other contracts.

Chapter 1: Working with young adult offenders

Overview

Over the last decade there has been a steady accumulation of evidence across a range of disciplines which strongly supports the view that young adults are a distinct group with needs that are different both from children under 18 and adults older than 25, underpinned by the developmental maturation process that takes place in this age group. In the context of the criminal justice system this is particularly important as adults aged under 25 years old represent 10% of the general population, but account for 30-40% of the overall criminal caseload, including policing time, those supervised by probation, and prison entrants. They also have the highest reconviction rate, with 75% reconvicted within two years of release. Young adults serving community sentences have equally poor outcomes: they have the highest breach rates of all ages¹.

Those who decide no longer to commit crime can have their efforts to achieve this frustrated both by their previous involvement in the criminal justice system due to the consequences of having criminal records, and limitations in achieving financial independence due to lack of access to affordable accommodation or well-paid employment as wages and benefits are typically lower for this age group.

The case for a distinctive approach to young adult offenders has been repeatedly made by a number of bodies, both official and sector experts such as the Transition to Adulthood Alliance (T2A)², a coalition of 12 criminal justice, health and youth organisations. These organisations identify a raft of challenges discussed in more detail below:

- Failure to account for the higher prevalence of neuro-diversity among young adults.
- Difficulties in managing the transition from the youth to adult justice systems.
- The lack of a coherent approach to young adults in prison.
- The need for a specific set of sentencing principles for young adults.

¹ House of Commons Justice Committee (2016) The treatment of young adults in the criminal justice system. HMSO

² <https://t2a.org.uk/>

Neurodiversity

A 2016 report by the House of Commons Justice Committee³ into the treatment of young adults in the criminal justice system relied heavily on expert evidence from T2A and argued that there is a strong case for a distinct approach to the treatment of young adults in the criminal justice system:

“Young adults are still developing neurologically up to the age of 25. They have a high prevalence of atypical brain development. Rates of learning disability, communication impairment and autistic spectrum disorder are ten times as high as they are among young people in the general population, and there is a high level of Acquired Brain Injury – which, according to estimates by the Centre for Mental Health, can increase the likelihood of crime by 50%.

These factors impact on criminal behaviour and have implications for the appropriate treatment of young adults by the criminal justice system as they are more challenging to manage, harder to engage, and tend to have poorer outcomes.

For young adults with neuro-disabilities maturity may be significantly hindered or delayed. Flawed interventions that do not recognise young adults’ maturity can slow desistance and extend the period of involvement in the system.”

Transitions

There has been considerable attention paid to the difficulties facing young people when they turn 18 years old and the responsibility for supervising and supporting them moves from the youth justice system to the adult criminal justice system. Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation published a very critical report⁴ in 2016, itself a follow up to a thematic inspection on the issue of transition four years earlier. The conclusion of the report was particularly revealing of the inspectorate’s frustration at the lack of progress on this issue:

“The transfer from the youth to adult world is a challenging time for any individual, including those involved in the criminal justice system. Failure to plan a smooth and effective transfer places a barrier to compliance and rehabilitation in young people’s lives.

We found some examples of effective practice. However, the majority of cases had not been identified as possible transfer cases. There was no consistency across the areas we inspected. In many cases there was little or no preparation, a failure to use existing information and a lack of planning. Young people entered the adult service

³ Ibid.

⁴ HM Inspectorate of Probation (2016) Transition Arrangements: a follow-up inspection. London.

unprepared and uninformed of the expectations they faced. We believe that young people are less likely to reoffend if they receive well-planned, uninterrupted supervision moving from Youth Offending Teams to adult probation providers.”

Recent research⁵ by Agenda and the Alliance for Youth Justice identified the same issues for girls in the criminal justice system, saying they “face a cliff-edge as they turn 18 as many services change or drop off all at once and leave young women vulnerable at a critical time in their lives”. The report aligns with the findings from other recent research arguing that there is increasing evidence for taking a distinct approach to 18–25-year-olds in the criminal justice system with transitions based on individual need, rather than age.

Work in prisons with young adults

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons has been extremely critical of the work of the Prison Service with young adult offenders. A report⁶ from earlier this year said that the service has failed for more than a decade to deal effectively with young adult prisoners, missing opportunities to help them rehabilitate and putting communities at risk from reoffending. The Chief Inspector warned that outcomes would remain poor for young adults under 25 and for society unless HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) urgently addressed the current “haphazard” approach to more than 15,000 young adult prisoners.

The report outlines a number of disappointing findings:

“Young adults have worse relationships with staff, are less likely to be motivated by the behaviour management schemes and are far more likely to be involved in violent incidents. They are also more likely to face adjudications, to be placed on the basic regime and to self-harm. They report more negatively on day-to-day life, including relationships with staff, the quality of the food and the cleanliness of their wing. In addition, young adults have worse attendance at education and work. Black and minority ethnic prisoners are significantly over-represented in the young adult prison population, and the perceptions of treatment among this group are particularly poor.”

Inspectors complained that HMPPS places most young adults in adult prisons without any coherent strategy and with little understanding of the way young men in their early 20s mature. Their overall conclusion was that:

“There is no difference between how they and adult prisoners are treated in custody, and that no additional thought is put into the type of establishment in which they are held.”

⁵ Agenda and the Alliance for Youth Justice (2021) Falling through the gaps: young women transitioning to the adult justice system

⁶ HM Inspectorate of Prisons (2021) Outcomes for young adults in custody.

Sentencing

There has also been a consensus around the need for new sentencing principles for young adults. A 2018 report⁷ from the Howard League and T2A argued that formal sentencing principles for young adults aged 18 to 25, similar to the Sentencing Council guidelines that are in place for children, would assist the courts and improve sentencing outcomes. The report recommended that the principles should consider the relationship between immaturity and blameworthiness, capacity to change, and the impact of race and histories of care.

It considered how the welfare principle – the principle that, when a court is dealing with proceedings relating to a child, its primary consideration shall lie with the welfare of the child – might be extended to apply to young adults, in recognition that full maturity and all the attributes of adulthood are not magically conferred on young people on their 18th birthday.

A clear sign that this is becoming the mainstream viewpoint came earlier this year when the Magistrates Association published a report⁸ on how the issue of maturity is currently handled within magistrates' courts which argued that all young adult defendants' maturity should be assessed before they come to court and magistrates should receive training on the issue of maturity.

Conclusion

It is clear from this short summary of the evidence base that young adult offenders are unintentionally discriminated against across the criminal justice system with services generally not attuned to their needs as they and their brains mature. There is a consensus across the research that this process of maturation varies considerably and that any effective service needs to be based on individual assessment. The next chapter sets out the main components of the strategy for young adult offenders developed by Ingeus and its partners and describes the different ways in which practice was implemented as a result.

⁷ Howard League and Transition to Adulthood Alliance (2018) *Sentencing Young Adults: Making the case for sentencing principles for young adults*.

⁸ George Moody (2021) *Maturity in the magistrates' court: Magistrates, young adults and maturity considerations in decision-making and sentencing*. The Magistrates Association.

Chapter 2: Strategy & Service delivery

Overview

Ingeus developed its young adult strategy in 2015 with the objective of ensuring that the needs of this most prolific cohort of offenders were met. The strategy acknowledged that a step-change from previous practice was required and that, with the exception of some small-scale examples of specialist provision, overall services had adopted an “all adult” approach which did not tailor services to the needs and experiences of young adult service users. The strategy was explicitly developed to be an organisation-wide approach, with the recognition that small-scale or isolated changes would have limited impact on improving outcomes for young adults.

The core elements of the strategy are set out in the graphic reproduced below with the main components described in the following sections.



Evidence-based practice

The strategy committed Ingeus to design jointly with young adults a series of evidence-based interventions and approaches built on six key principles:

1. Young adulthood is a developmental stage in life. Becoming an adult is a process and not an event. The developmental and social milestones are met at different points depending on the individual. The Ingeus approach will support the achievement of these milestones and fully take into account developing maturity.
2. Develop supportive and effective working relationships. The role of the 'trusted adult' is key, and workers and mentors should offer emotional and practical support whilst also simultaneously fostering the development of responsibility.
3. Simultaneously target the multiple needs experienced by young adults. Many needs, including those relating to social and living skills, arise during the transition to adulthood. Where possible interventions should be designed in a way that address multiple needs simultaneously.
4. Involve young adults in the design and delivery of services. All services and interventions should have built-in feedback loops and opportunities for co-delivery.
5. Recognise individual need. Whilst young adults share some similarities linked to this developmental stage in life, they are by no means a homogenous group. Levels of maturity will vary within this age group. Women young adults, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic young adults, young adults with disabilities and young adults who are also care leavers may have different or additional needs.
6. All activity should support engagement. Young adults have lower rates of engagement than older adults. Continuous attention needs to be paid to engaging young adults. Higher levels of support may be needed in terms of reminders for appointments and out-reach services.

Specialist case management

The strategy specifically highlighted the particular importance of quality of relationship and the specific skills required to work effectively with young adults, ensuring that young adults are allocated a semi-specialist case manager.

Tailored interventions

Ingeus committed its CRCs to develop bespoke interventions for young adults in line with the evidence of need and effectiveness, including the Pathway to Independence programme and a new approach for Senior Attendance Centres.

Transitions

The strategy included the commitment to pro-actively plan for and manage all transitions which young adults experience between systems and services, promoting continuity and minimising disruption in both community and custodial settings.

Workforce development

Ingeus was fully aware that the only way to operationalise this strategy was to invest substantially in learning and development for the whole workforce. A three-level training programme was developed based on the young adult evidence base:

- Level 1 – Foundation. For all operational staff. A short briefing to raise awareness of the needs of young adults and how to engage more effectively
- Level 2 – Practitioners in case management and intervention teams. Up to 1 day of training understanding the specific needs of young adults, including those relating to maturity and vulnerability, and how to tailor practice accordingly.
- Level 3 – Semi-specialist case managers. A series of best practice forums and seminars exploring specialist topics, for example Acquired Brain Injury and Trauma-informed practice.

The next section of this report describes how Ingeus put this strategy into practice.

Practice with young adults

Every team within the two CRCs had a nominated young adult specialist. The Ingeus Justice Young Adult Strategy Group ran through the entire lifespan of the CRCs and co-opted the involvement of key stakeholders with specialist knowledge from partner agencies. The strategy group drove the training programme and the development of practice approaches tailored to the needs of young adults. In Birmingham, Ingeus developed a dedicated Young Adults team. With a staff team of nineteen, this was the largest probation team in the city and provided a comprehensive service to this client group. Allocation processes were modified to divert every 18-25 year old into this team. Critically, two operational managers managed all transitions from the youth justice system into the adult one, starting three months before an individual's eighteen birthday. Four members of the team were affiliated with Women's Provision to ensure the young women got the "best of both worlds" – specialist young adult provision and gender-informed services – within an over-arching recognition of their individual maturation stage as the key determinant. Additionally, a screening exercise was undertaken on every young person allocated to the team to ensure that those who had been in care or who had links with the youth justice system, could receive a co-ordinated service which addressed their needs on a bespoke basis.

In addition to mainstream practice with young adults, Ingeus invested in two young adult specific interventions (the Senior Attendance Centre and EngAge) which are described below, in addition to ensuring that a particularly vulnerable group of young adults, those with experience of being in care, received an improved service.

The Senior Attendance Centre

Ingeus designed a young adult friendly programme based on the principles in the strategy for service users aged between 18 and 24 years who were made subject to a Senior Attendance Centre requirement as part of their community order. These young adults were required to attend the programme (typically on Saturday mornings from 10am – 1pm) for between 12 and 36 hours, depending on the court order. The programme, known as Fast Forward, was targeted at lower risk young adults, typically those committing offences involving peers, where they had mishandled social situations and/or exhibited poor emotional control. Typical offences included Public Order crimes, criminal damage, common assault, driving offences, possession of drugs or offensive weapons and non-payment of fines.

Fast Forward was designed to support young adults to make a successful transition into adulthood and away from crime. Sessions were designed to be engaging and interactive – to meet the needs of the limited attention spans of many young adults – and had five core goals, which were to:

1. Punish a young adult through restriction of their liberty.
2. Develop their maturity and sense of individual and social responsibility through reparative and team activities.
3. Inform a young adult about key issues relating to Health and wellbeing, citizenship and employment.
4. Support and guide a young adult to set and achieve positive goals.
5. Connect a young adult to resources and opportunities within their local community.

Fast Forward had a repertoire of 16 sessions delivered on a rolling basis specifically to enable young adults to join at any time, following an initial assessment by their probation officer. Again, this rapid access was a strategic decision so that young adults were able to experience the close link between the requirement to attend the programme and their offending behaviour. The programme also had a strong emphasis on restorative justice with every fourth session requiring participants to help local charities. The full programme is reproduced in the graphic on the next page. Many interventions were delivered by external agencies, and all had a focus on being engaging and interactive including the Street Doctors (junior doctors giving information about the realities of being stabbed), the West Midlands Fire Service (virtual reality experience of being in a car crash) and the Prince's Trust – for young adults interested in setting up their own business. The quality of engagement was enhanced by the participation of Ingeus peer mentors at every session, who were also instrumental in shaping the overall service design – providing frank and

constructive criticism when they thought improvements were needed.

Ingeus operated the programme for small groups of approximately one dozen young adults to ensure that all participants had the opportunity to engage fully in the activities provided. A version of the programme for small numbers of people addressed the needs of young adult women and vulnerable men via a more individualised approach. Local sentencers considered the Senior Attendance Centre to be an important option within their range of sentencing alternatives and were reported to have a good understanding of the Fast Forward programme following a presentation by young adults who had graduated the programme.

EngAge

“EngAge” was a small multi-agency team of probation and police staff jointly funded by the Leicestershire Police and Crime Commissioner and Ingeus. EngAge was essentially an early intervention project working with any young adult men between the ages of 18 and 24 who were considered to be at risk of offending or anti-social behaviour and consented to make positive changes to their lives.

Most young adults were referred to the project by Leicestershire Police either as a condition of a caution or as part of a community resolution. The teams also worked with young adults (both men and women) referred from Leaving Care Teams, Transition Teams, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Youth Offending Services and many other voluntary and statutory agencies on a voluntary basis.

The staff team had specialist training in working with young adults and possessed a wealth of knowledge and experience in the issues many young adults face including: childhood trauma, brain development, training and employment, substance misuse, leaving care, mental health, physical health, sexual health, peer pressure, money and finance, accommodation, gangs and knife crime and emotional management.

EngAge provided an initial comprehensive assessment that looks at both criminogenic and broader areas of need and resulted in the development (with the young adult themselves) of an individual action plan focused on what needs to change to assist them in leading positive lifestyles and refraining from offending.

Young adults referred as part of their community resolution were required to attend three sessions within a six week period and those referred as a condition of their caution had to attend six sessions within twelve weeks. However, for individuals with complex needs, EngAge continued to provide an ongoing service until they were fully engaged with appropriate helping services.

For these young adults with more significant needs, EngAge provided an intensive service designed to stabilise and support them. Much work was focused on helping people build their self-confidence by achieving small goals, alongside a lot of practical work to help them access benefits, housing, job opportunities and other support services – often from mental health and/or substance misuse agencies.

In addition to individualised support work, EngAge also had a strong focus on engaging young adults in mainstream activities in their communities including partnerships with local organisations providing arts and music and sporting activities. The anonymised case studies below give two examples of the team's approach.

Errol – A comprehensive Service

Errol was given a Conditional Caution for domestic violence against a member of his family and was referred to the Engage team. He had a volatile relationship with his mother and spent some time in the Care System and later sofa surfing with friends and his grandfather. He wasn't in receipt of any state benefits and appeared to be suffering with his mental health.

He was seen on many occasions by the EngAge team who also offered support and joint visits to the Job Centre and to Charnwood Borough Council to complete a homeless declaration. He was also referred to ADHAR project for mental health support and has completed various courses and is currently still receiving counselling support.

Two months later, Errol is now in a supportive flat in Loughborough, in full receipt of benefits and is managing his money well. A referral to the UP Project was completed and he now hopes to start an electrician course in September. During the pandemic, the UP project has been able to support and provide Errol with a laptop and a mobile. He has also been researching motivation courses with the Prince's Trust which he is planning to enrol on.

He continues to work with the team on a voluntary basis and is very appreciative of all the work the EngAge Team have been able to offer him.

James – A long term service

James had worked with the EngAge Team after getting a Conditional Caution. At that time, he had a cocaine habit which was impacting on all areas of his life. He managed to get 'clean' and rebuilt his relationship with his family. A year later his mother contacted the EngAge worker informing her he had relapsed and had ended up in hospital. The EngAge worker got back in touch with James and supported his recovery (some of this work was done during the pandemic and involved the EngAge worker meeting James in his garden to maintain social distancing) and helped him to address the reasons for the relapse.

The EngAge team has worked with approximately one thousand young adults since its inception in 2015.

In addition to Fast Forward and EngAge, Ingeus also developed specialist provision for young people involved in gangs.

Supporting people with care experiences in custody

Another way in which the young adult strategy was implemented was in Ingeus' work to ensure that people in custody with experiences of being in care got the help they needed, especially on release. The work undertaken by Simon Bland, the Ingeus resettlement worker in HMP/HMYOI Glen Parva, was typical. Through his work planning for the resettlement of young adults, Mr Bland came to realise that specialist workers in the community working with care leavers or youth offenders were often not integrated into the release planning process. He found that many young adults in custody were subject to three planning mechanisms which overlapped and duplicated each other: the local authority pathway plan, the custodial institution's sentence plan and the probation service's resettlement plan.

Two main problems arose from this bureaucratic complexity: firstly, key workers, particularly if they were based in the community, were often inadvertently excluded from multi-agency planning meetings and, secondly, young adults themselves were often confused about who was able to do what to help and support them on release.

Further investigation revealed that a substantial proportion of people with experiences of care who would be entitled to additional support on release (care leavers are typically eligible for dedicated support until the age of 25 years) were not being identified as such within YOIs. Part of the reason for this appeared to be that the Prison National Offender Management Information System (p-NOMIS) included a number of

definitions for the different legal status of individuals depending on the type of contact they had had with the care system. This range of options caused confusion and the Ingeus resettlement worker realised that the exact definition was not important within the YOI, with the priority being to refer the individual to the local authority leaving care team. The worker in this specialist team would then be able to provide a definitive statement about the level of support to which an individual young adult would be entitled, but, much more importantly, would ensure that that young person would be allocated a specialist worker who would be the lead individual in helping to develop an effective resettlement plan.

By making this referral at an early point in the young adult's sentence, it was possible to include the community-based worker, who had both the necessary skills and resources, in the resettlement planning process at the earliest opportunity, giving sufficient time to organise housing and other key support structures. Ingeus resettlement workers were key points of contact for community-based workers and were often able to facilitate access to prisons. It transpired that one of the reasons that specialist community workers were often excluded from the inter-agency meetings was that they were not invited directly and attempted to contact the young adult in their care through legal visits which meant that they did not meet and form working relationships with the wider range of professionals from different disciplines (education, psychology etc.) who were already working with that young person.

The ability of Ingeus resettlement teams to streamline the resettlement planning process resulted in young adults with experiences of the care system receiving a much better resourced service on release.

The initiatives described above enabled Ingeus to ensure that all young adult service users received help and support from a suitably trained practitioner using an approach that tailored interventions to their individual needs and level of maturity. The next chapter provides further details on how Ingeus is taking forward this dedicated young adult approach in the delivery of its Commissioned Resettlement Services and other contracts.

Chapter 3: Conclusions

Introduction

As we have seen, Ingeus set out to ensure that the previously often unmet needs of young adult offenders were addressed via a carefully thought-out strategic approach. Ingeus implemented an organisation-wide training programme, established a network of specialist practitioners, and developed a range of specialist services.

Taking forwards a specialist young adult approach

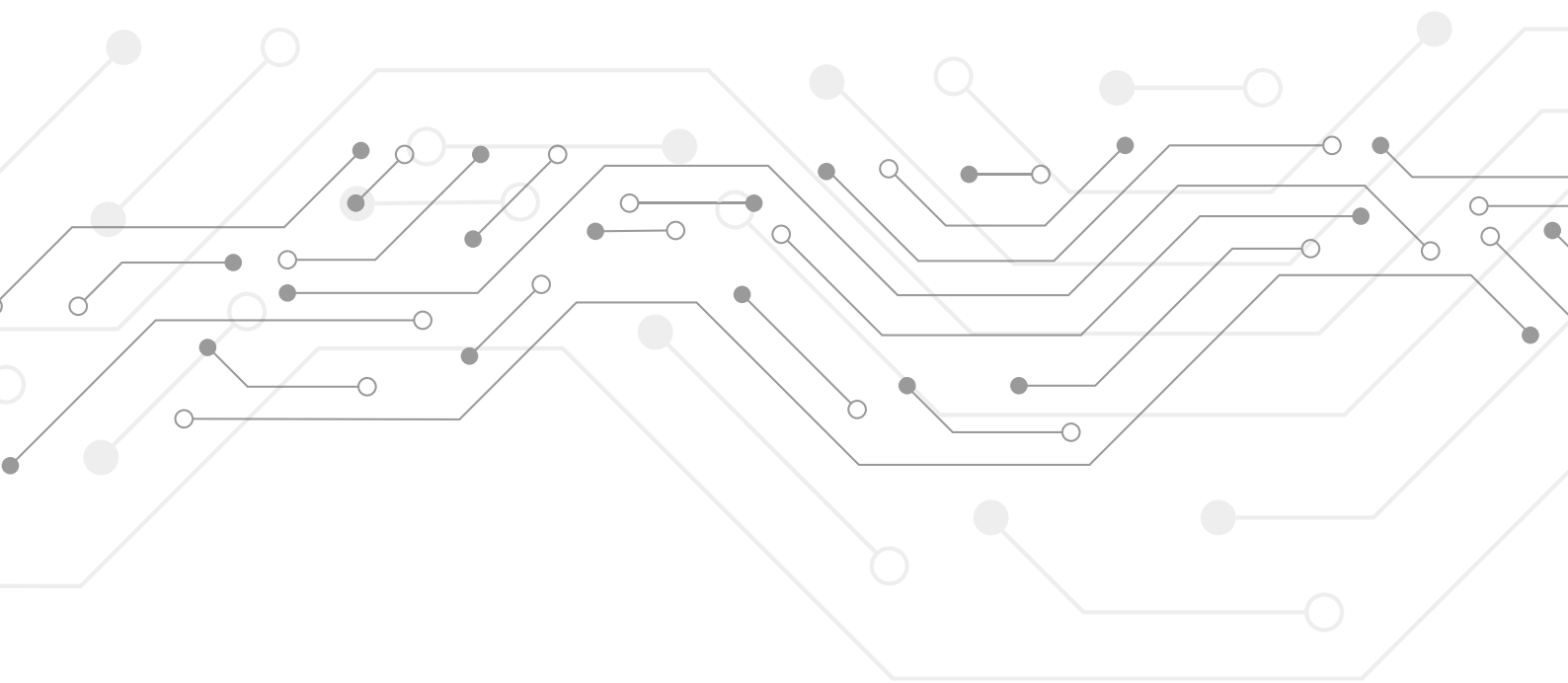
Ingeus was helped in this work by its collaboration with Ingeus' Youth division which runs the National Citizen Service (NCS), working with more than 100,000 15-17 year olds to date. In addition to understanding how to engage and motivate young people and personalise services to make them relevant, the organisation's work with both young adult offenders and those participating in NCS shared a number of common themes:

- Developing young people's skills.
- Building self-esteem and confidence.
- A strengths-based approach.
- Building employability.
- Help in managing relationships.
- Help in managing finances.
- An emphasis on mentoring and personal support.

This enabled both parts of the organisation to share learning and improve the quality of services on offer to service users across a range of different interventions and services.

The specialist skills that Ingeus has established in its work with young adults is amplified by other areas of expertise developed by the organisation and described and demonstrated in a series of companion reports. These include Ingeus' commitment to valuing lived experience and its extensive volunteering and mentoring programmes, its organisation-wide dedication to trauma-improved practice and its specialism in developing arts-based approaches to engaging and enabling young people.

This comprehensive toolkit that Ingeus has developed in working with young adults will be taken forwards in its ongoing work with NCS, Kickstart and young adults involved in the criminal justice system who receive support around accommodation, employment and health and wellbeing via a wide range of Commissioned Resettlement Services and other contracts.



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