A Comparison of Education in Secure Children’s Homes in the UK with Juvenile Detention Centres in North America

Rona Chellew Churchill Fellow 2014
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“He who opens a school, closes a prison.”

Victor Hugo
## Contents

1. Introduction
   1.1. Research Focus 5
   1.2. Research Rationale 5

2. Context
   2.1. Educational Context 6
   2.2. Education in LASCHs 7
   2.3. Curriculum 9
   2.4. Assessment 10
   2.5. Qualifications 11
   2.6. Special Educational Needs 11
   2.7. Emotional Social Behavioural Disorders 13
   2.8. Training of Teachers 13
   2.9. Literacy in Science 14
   2.10. Engagement in Science Lessons 14
   2.11. Equipment for Science 15
   2.12. Safety in Science Practical Lessons 15

3. Why North America 16
   3.1 Itinerary 16

4. Overview of Units Visited 17
   4.1. Guilford County Juvenile Detention Centre 17
   4.2. Passages Academy 17
      4.2.1. Secure Juvenile Detention Centres 17
      4.2.2. Non-secure Detention and Placement 17
   4.3. Youth Correctional Facilities Nova Scotia 18
      4.3.1 Nova Scotia Youth Facility 18
      4.3.2 Halifax Youth Attendance Centre 18

5. Comparisons 18
   5.1. Guilford County Juvenile Detention Centre 19
   5.2. Non-secure Detention in New York 20
   5.3. Secure Detention in New York 20
   5.4. Nova Scotia Youth Facility 21
5.5. Halifax Youth Attendance Centre 21
5.6. Bedrooms in Secure Setting 21
5.7. Uniform/Clothes 22
5.8. Factors Affecting Education 23
  5.8.1 Education Staff 23
  5.8.2 Lesson Organisation 24
  5.8.3 Equipment 25
  5.8.4 Behaviour Management 25
  5.8.5 Special Educational Needs 28
  5.8.6 Resettlement 28

6. Findings and Recommendations 28
  6.1. North Carolina Juvenile Detention Centre 29
  6.2. Nova Scotia 29
  6.3. Operational Recommendations 30
    6.3.1. Behaviour Management 30
    6.3.2. Qualifications and Training of Education Staff 31
    6.3.3. SEN/BESD 31
    6.3.4. Internet Access 31
    6.3.5. Lesson Planning 32

Appendix 1: Abbreviations and Glossary 33
Appendix 2: Glossary 34
### 1.0 Introduction

For the dissertation part of my Masters I carried out a research project looking at the delivery of science lessons in local authority secure children’s homes (LASCHs). The research focused on how key challenges (poor perception of science and its salience, behavioural barriers, unknown baseline capability, poor literacy/numeracy, etc) could be overcome. The basis of the project was to understand how the science teachers managed their lessons to generate a picture of best practice that could be shared.

The findings from this project identified that many of the challenges around teaching science were also relevant to other subjects, for example, there is little or no knowledge of a young person’s previous attainment or attendance at school or any statement of educational need. Addressing these common challenges would help improve the outcomes of the education department and for the young people (YP).

My research project was limited by the small number (15) of LASCHs in England and Wales, and further limited because, at that time, not all units taught science and of those that did, not all had access to a laboratory for practical lessons. It was this limited pool of practitioners that caused me to apply to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for a Travel Fellowship.

I visited North America, first and foremost, as a practitioner with the intention of sharing what I learnt with my peers on my return. However, even though I am not a policy maker, some of what I learnt would be best shared with them at a more strategic level.

#### 1.1 Project Scope

The original aim of the project was to identify new strategies for enhancing pupil engagement and attainment in science. During my travels I did spend time with the teachers responsible for teaching science but unfortunately none had access to laboratory equipment and delivered only theory lessons (referred to as paper labs) as the YPs behaviour was considered not appropriate for practicals.

#### 1.2 Changes to Project Scope

The project widened from the original proposal of focusing on science lessons to looking at the broader issues around barriers to learning and how to quickly re-engage YPs in learning generally (rather than specifically looking at science). Many of the challenges were common to all subjects and institutions both in the UK and North America.

### 2.0 Context

Currently, there are three types of secure centres for young offenders under the age of 18. Broadly speaking, the youngest are detained in LASCHs (these can be as young as 10), slightly older in secure training centres (STC) and the oldest in young offenders’ institutions (YOIs) (usually no younger than 15 years old).¹

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I teach science in a Local Authority Secure Children’s Home (LASCH). A LASCH houses some of the most ‘extremely vulnerable children with most complex and challenging needs’ who may be ‘detained either on the grounds of their offending or for their welfare’. Therefore, they may be or have one or a combination of the following:

- young offenders,
- victims of abuse,
- learning difficulties,
- mental health issues,
- had a disrupted education.

It is important to remember that these young people are just children who feel, and probably are, neglected and forgotten by society. As Hayden says ‘these kids are everybody’s and nobody’s problem’ and given that they are children, near the start of their lives, they require a holistic approach to their rehabilitation, of which education is a subset and science is part of that education.

The LASCH where I work, can take up to 24 young offenders (male and female) aged between 10 and 18 years old, but more frequently between 13 and 16 years old. The young people can come from anywhere within Britain and the usual length of stay is between three and seven months, but can be 2 years or more. Class sizes are small, with a maximum of four students who tend to be selected from the same friendship group rather than on the basis of age or ability, to minimise disruptive behaviour.

When young people arrive at the unit they are initially placed into a group to learn about the policies and procedures within the secure unit. They move out of this group into more structured education after 1 or 2 days.

2.1 Educational context

The majority of the pupils in this setting have had ‘negative experiences of school’ and/or have been ‘excluded from school before school leaving age’. Research shows a minority of permanently excluded pupils enjoy science and that 27% of Pupil Referral Units (PRU) pupils believe that they were worse at science than their peers when in mainstream education.

The aim of LASCHs may be to get YPs to ‘contribute positively to society in adult life’, but given their age the first test is often whether they can re-integrate into mainstream education after 1 or 2 days.
education. Given their frequently visceral response to science, this can be a significant challenge. This is why a more constructive experience of the subject while in the LASCH is important, otherwise the ‘good work in custody can be quickly undone if a young offender returns to bad old habits’.

As ‘too often, children and young people who receive only a part-time education, or who have none at all, can become invisible to the local authority’, it is no surprise that when they enter the LASCH, we have no baseline information of their learning needs/abilities. However, it is often evident that they have very low levels of literacy and numeracy, which can make accessing science challenging.

As part of a previous research project I carried out interviews with the YPs which usually revealed an almost “Pavlovian” resentment of science. This has since been supported by conversation I have with YPs when they first attend a science lesson. The dislike of science plays out in behaviour that limits teaching and learning. While they accept that their behaviour contributed to the way they were treated in mainstream science lessons, their strong sense of injustice exhibits itself in resentment towards both the subject and me. They also complain that they don’t understand how science can help them in their lives.

As with mainstream education, science lessons tend to be a blend of practicals and theory work. Pupils prefer practicals which are more accessible as the writing is limited or non-existent. This ‘dislike of formal writing’ is consistent with Daniel's et al research with excluded pupils. However, practical work may add little to a pupil’s learning and can provide a ‘focus on the ‘hands on’ aspect of the task at the expense of the ‘minds on’ aspects’. This view is supported by discussions after a practical that often shows the young person’s enjoyment and interest does not necessarily lead to learning.

In contrast, theory-based lessons are enjoyed less and can be more challenging for me, but evaluative questioning during the plenary clearly demonstrates the learning.

This shows that to sustainably re-engage these students, it is essential that the lessons are immediately interesting, relevant and accessible even with low ability in literacy and numeracy. Consideration also needs to be given to the fact that they are young offenders or welfare children and the risks associated with them when carrying out practicals (for example using Bunsen burners with a pupil convicted of arson, or using a scalpel with someone who self harms).

In order to understand how key challenges can be overcome to engage YPs, it is essential to understand the purpose of education within the secure setting as well as the desired outcomes for these YPs.

### 2.2 Education in LASCHs

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10 Ofsted, (2013) Pupils Missing Out on Education
The value of education can be from either the YP’s perspective or the organisation’s perspective. In a youth offending institution (YOI) as many as ‘63% of young men and 56% of young females aged between 15-17 year old’ felt education would help them on release\textsuperscript{12}. My experience is that while a YP is detained, they are understandably unsettled; they have been removed from their home, often awaiting sentencing and unsure about their future. Hayden found that coming to a LASCH ‘leads to more disruption and trauma’\textsuperscript{4} so it is not surprising that education is not their main priority and they often do not see the relevance or importance of it. Maybe the difference in how YPs in YOI value education compared to those in a LASCH can be explained by their age and how many times they have been detained.

In STCs in the UK education is ‘set at such a high priority that no visits are allowed to interrupt lessons’\textsuperscript{3}. This is not my experience in a LASCH as YPs are often removed and brought back into lessons for meetings with professionals (medical, solicitor etc).

This leads to the question that Stephenson asked: ‘What is the purpose of education in a LASCH or any custodial institution?’ He suggests the following as the four main reasons\textsuperscript{3}:

1. Reconnection to education training or employment,
2. Acquiring basic skills,
3. Vocational training,

If vocational training and reconnection to education, training or employment are brought together Stephenson’s theory could be represented by the Venn diagram below:

**Figure 1: A Venn Diagram Showing the Purpose of Education in SCHs**

Stephenson recognises that all the main reasons for education in this setting ‘are closely allied\textsuperscript{3} and ‘all are necessary\textsuperscript{3} to stop reoffending. Seeing it at as a Venn diagram makes

\textsuperscript{12} Murray, R. (2012) *Children and Young People in Custody 2011/12: An analysis of the experiences of 15-18-year-olds in prison*
this clear: If the LASCH equips a YP with basic skills adequate enough to reconnect them with education or employment (position 3) but they do not change their behaviour then they will reoffend and return to a secure unit. If their behaviour changes and they acquire the basic skills of literacy and numeracy but are unable to get employment or have a school available to them on release (position 1) this could lead to them becoming disengaged again and wondering why they bothered and increase the likelihood of reoffending. If they change their behaviour and have employment or school to go to on release but they do not have the basic skills to remain engaged in education, training or employment again the likelihood of reoffended will increase. It is vital, in my opinion, then that education in a ASCH or any secure setting addresses all three simultaneously and aims for position 4 on the Venn diagram.

If, as 'research evidence suggests that engagement in education and training is one of the most important factors in reducing offending and reoffending', then we need to ensure that any intervention is a ‘learner-centred individualised programme[s] to motivate young people to gain basic skills’. The key to this lies in ‘strong staff – pupil relationships’ which take time to develop. Once the trust of the YPs has been gained it is easier to encourage them to work in a positive way as they no longer see staff as ‘more of the same’.

However, the following questions still need to addressed:

- ‘Can reconnection with education and training be readily achieved after disconnection through removal to a custodial sentence?’;
- ‘Can new behaviours be readily acquired in a tightly controlled environment and then subsequently applied in a far less controlled one?’;
- Does it [education] mitigate the educational risk factors that young people bring with them on entry into such institutions?, and
- Does it [education] have no discernible impact or could it even in some ways be involved in increasing the risk factors for reoffending?’.

If the above are to be successfully addressed during a YPs’ detention then it needs to be recognised that they previously had a disrupted education and could have undiagnosed learning difficulties and that during their short sentence (107 days), proper and relevant assessment (see below) is essential.

2.3 Curriculum

To help overcome the barriers to engagement in education, staff in custodial establishments have suggested ‘the range of programmes available for young people with special needs or poor literacy and numeracy skills’ should be increased and there should be ‘greater flexibility into the National Curriculum’. This is in line with the UK’s new SEND Code of Practice (2015) that states ‘all pupils should have access to a broad and balanced curriculum’ and Mount’s (1997) view that if PRUs ‘offered the same educational ‘menu’ as the mainstreams’ then the outcome would be same.

13 Youth Justice Board (2006) Barriers to engagement in education, training and employment
14 Mount, S. (1997) A Survey into the Teaching of Science in Pupil Referral Units
15 Ministry of Justice (2013) Transforming Youth Custody Putting education at the heart of detention London: The Stationary Office
16 Department for Education and Department for Health (2014) Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities.
A diverse curriculum might not be practical in LASCH particularly where they have a small number of beds and consequently a smaller budget and therefore 'the curriculum is necessarily much more restricted due to lack of facilities than would be a secondary school or FE college'\(^3\).

Mount went further in his conclusion on science teaching in PRUs by asking if we have 'a real, sensible and achievable entitlement curriculum for all?'\(^{14}\) His research was in 1997 and today alternative qualifications to GCSEs are available, but again the key to this is keeping staff trained and up-to-date with alternatives.

### 2.4 Assessment

According to Stephenson when a YP enters the secure setting there is an emphasis on educational assessment probably because the YPs arrives with 'limited' or no previous data, however 'no standard approach is used which renders comparative analysis difficult'\(^3\). The introduction of the electronic database known as eAsset in 2000 was to 'enable sharing of information about the YP between organisations'\(^{17}\) as it stores the following information about a YP:

- Case Notes
- Incident Reporting
- E-Learning
- Multiple Sentences
- eAsset Service Desk

However, as it was Stephenson’s view that ‘as a predictive instrument, it is of somewhat limited educational use’\(^3\) I met with the Quality Assurance and Development Manager to understand its limitations. The education department do not have access to this database and it only records data on literacy and numeracy, which can be entered in two different places in different formats. Further, it was stated that it was cumbersome to use and more significantly not compatible with systems used by the Youth Offending Team (YOT) or mainstream schools including PRUs.

'Most young people receive a literacy and numeracy assessment'\(^3\), probably because this is what is recorded on the system. The Quality Assurance and Development Manager was not aware of recording of levels in other subjects, even those that are core.

It was recognised how frustrated the YPs become because “they have done all this before” yet Stephenson said it would

‘not be unusual for young people with complex educational needs to complete the custodial phase of a DTO [detention and training order] without anything resembling a complete educational assessment to occur, let alone services provided to meet these needs’\(^3\).

The SEND Code of Practice (2015) states ‘schools should assess each pupil’s current skills and levels of attainment on entry, building on information from previous settings and key stages where appropriate’\(^{16}\) yet we do not take advantage of the YP being detained and ensure a full educational assessment is done.

\(^{17}\) Youth Justice Board (2014) AssetPlus Rationale
In 2015 the eAsset system is due to be replaced with AssetPlus. The document AssetPlus Rationale discusses the changes that will be implemented learning from previous systems. However, educational assessment (attainment and learning needs) is not included in this. Assessment in YJB terms is about behaviour and risk factors relating to offending but many young offenders have low prior attainment which could be down to having a special educational need. It feels as though the opportunity to put ‘education at the heart of detention’ is being missed as there is a disconnect between high level strategic decisions and what would be more appropriate/useful at the operational end. If engagement in education is key to reducing reoffending and it is recognised that young offenders have undiagnosed learning difficulties then we are missing a vital opportunity in a YPs life to affect this. I am aware of decisions that have been made not to assess a YP as they are only going to be with us for a couple of weeks.

2.5 Qualifications

The ‘approach to education by prison management that is all about meeting key performance indicators’ is in contradiction to the desire to re-engage them. There is a definite pressure to gain qualifications for the YPs probably because we report regularly on the number of qualifications by YPs irrespective of their age; we have entered year 9 pupils for GCSE exams on more than one occasion. Is this appropriate? Many of them would not be sitting exams if they were in school due to their age and we want to re-engage them in education and training. Many have not been in school and are now attending every day because they are detained and then have the immediate pressure of exams/tests.

I understand the desire to get young offenders re-engaged in education to reduce the risk of re-offending but as their sentences are short and their attainment levels below expected ‘can significant qualifications be gained in just a matter of weeks?’ Furthermore, if they are pressured into sitting GCSEs before they are ready or old enough and they fail, are we encouraging disaffection?

Before I became a teacher I worked in business planning for many years and common sayings amongst my colleagues were “be careful what you measure because it will drive behaviour” and “are we hitting the target but missing the point?” When I witness this drive to get qualifications for YPs I think we have missed the point, re-engaging is not about qualifications it is about enjoyment and getting the YPs to want to engage in education or training. As said in an Ofsted report ‘Getting the grade is not the same as ‘getting’ the science’.

2.6 Special Educational Needs

This year new statutory guidance was issued by the Department of Education and the Department of Health titled SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 years (Jan 2015). It is the transfer of a statement of SEN to education, health and care (EHC) plans to ensure an holistic approach to planning between education, health and social care. The additional requirements arise from the Children and Families Act 2014 and cover disabilities, the Equality Act 2010 and the Mental Capacity Act 2005. It covers the age range 0 – 25, allows the individual and their parents/carers to be involved in decision making, and focuses on outcomes to help the individual to succeed in education and the transition into adulthood.
More significantly for this setting it provides guidance on identifying and supporting YPs with SEN and includes specific guidance for those in youth custody.

The Special Educational Needs and Disability (Detained Persons) Regulations 2015 details the new duties of maintaining and reviewing an EHC plan and arranging appropriate health and special educational provision for a detained YP\textsuperscript{18}.

A young person is said to have a learning difficulty if they have ‘a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age’\textsuperscript{16}. However, ‘Slow progress and low attainment do not necessarily mean that a child has SEN’\textsuperscript{16}. Certainly, low attainment in this setting could be explained by poor attendance at school and not a learning difficulty. Murray found the following figures on attendance for the 15 - 17 year olds in YOIs\textsuperscript{12}:

- 72% of young men and 84% of young women said they had truanted,
- 88% of young men and 74% of young women had been excluded from school at some point, and
- 36% of young men and 41% of young women were aged under 14 when they last attended school.

However, this needs to be balanced against the MoJ (2013) figures about detained YPs that state\textsuperscript{15}:

- 18% have an SEN compared to 3% in the general population,
- 23-32% have a generalised learning disability compared to 2-4% in the general population,
- 50% of 15-17 year olds in YOIs have the literacy levels of pupils aged between to 7-11.

Stephenson recognises that we are speculating about the actual level of SEN in the custodial population but thinks ‘it is not unreasonable to assume this may be about one-half’\textsuperscript{3}.

As SEN data on YPs is rarely available when they arrive into custody\textsuperscript{3} and there is an identified ‘lack of support and specialist help’\textsuperscript{13} for them during their detention it is unacceptable that YPs leave custody ‘without anything resembling a complete educational assessment ...... let alone services provided to meet these needs’\textsuperscript{3}.

Steer highlighted that exclusions were four times more likely for pupils with SEN than those without and identified a close link with poor behaviour and the failure to identify SEN properly. The group found that schools with high standards of behaviour also have good SEN strategies\textsuperscript{19}.

Bringing all this data together it is clear that is a complex area and that low attainment could be down to poor attendance (whether it is because of truancy or exclusions) and/or SEN. It is therefore essential that while a YP is detained any learning difficulty is diagnosed and

\textsuperscript{18} Special Educational Needs and Disability (Detained Persons) Regulations 2015
addressed and an EHC plan developed prior to them leaving to ensure position 4 on the Venn Diagram above is achieved.

2.7 Emotional Social Behavioural Disorders (ESBD)

The SEND Code of Practice says that ‘Persistent disruptive or withdrawn behaviours do not necessarily mean that a child or young person has SEN.’ It does go on to say however that such behaviour needs to be investigated further as there might be an underlying learning and communication difficulty, mental health issue or other cause as eluded to above. It recognises the importance of early intervention to prevent costly intervention at a later date. When a YP is detained, it is at the costly intervention stage and the underlying cause has not been identified.

Mental health issues for detained people are estimated to be between 46 and 81% (ONS 2000) and young offenders have a higher incident of alcohol and drug use than the general population. Department for Health (2013) found that problematic drinking is ‘far more common among offenders than the general population’ and that over 33% of woman and over 66% of men have an alcohol problem when entering prison. It also states that in the year before entering prison 69% have used at least one drug.

The YJB reported a ‘lack of willingness on the part of educationalists to tackle the causes of behavioural problems’ and Stephenson thought ‘that educators may be seen as separate from the disciplinary aspects of the regime’. Mount recognised that pupils taught in PRUs have very different and complex needs that need to be met before education is appropriate and that what is needed is ‘support, encouragement, constructive feedback and real resourcing’. He goes on to say that PRUs cannot be a modified model of mainstream education unless we want the same response from the YPs.

If it is expected that teachers in LASCHs should be responsible for disciplinary aspects of behaviour, which can be caused by undiagnosed learning difficulties or mental health issues and addictions then surely appropriate training is key.

2.8 Training of Teachers

Educators (teachers, instructors and support staff) in this setting have ‘identified their own lack of appropriate knowledge and skills as critical’ and recognise that they need training ‘in how to motivate disengaged young people’. The joint MoJ and YJB plan states that both LASCH and STC have specially trained staff and discusses the importance of developing their workforce. However, no specific training is required of teachers to work in this environment, in fact instructors are not required to have a teaching qualification or expected to study for one once appointed. There is no expectation for educators to undergo additional training to work with young offenders. Given all the challenges that these YPs come with, as

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21 Public health functions to be exercised by NHS England Service specification No.29 Public health services for people in prison or other places of detention, including those held in the Children & Young People’s Secure Estate

discussed previously it seems counter intuitive not to train all staff in identifying and managing these issues (drug abuse, mental health issues, SEN etc).

In addition to training to work with vulnerable YPs, teachers in this setting need to keep abreast of changes in the curriculum especially if there is a focus on delivering a range of suitable qualifications tailored to the individual. Mount, who carried out a similar research project in PRUs, recognised that PRUs are educational establishments ‘and like all schools, need to know what is expected of them in terms of the curriculum to be offered’14. He ‘believed that this lack of clear guidance was due to [his] own knowledge deficit and the isolation experienced by many teachers working in’ pupil referral units14.

This isolation and knowledge deficit could also be true of teachers in LASCH, especially if teachers are not undergoing any professional development training, this may lead to the YPs not having access to the most appropriate qualifications and hinder re-engagement in education.

2.9 Literacy in Science

When teaching science to YPs with a low ability in literacy it would seem that practical lessons would be a good solution to overcome reliance on reading and writing but, as discussed previously, practical work may limit progression in science.

A recommendation from Ofsted (2013) is to ‘develop literacy through using science as a motivating context for pupils’10. It recognised that having strong links between literacy and science increased achievement in both subjects. However, the report also linked the lower achievement of boys in science to their relatively weaker literacy skills because it limited reading and discussions about science as well as the writing up of science investigations.

The use of language in science is complicated; it is a ‘combination and interaction of words, pictures, diagrams, images, animations, graphs, equations, tables and charts’23 with the expectation that pupils can effectively take notes, read text books, write reports and interpret data. Furthermore, familiar words have precise meaning in science (power, friction, resistance) and so many new words are introduced in science that it is akin to learning a new language.

Dirkx and Crawford (1993) studied teaching reading through teaching science to adult prisoners and found that ‘making reading more contextually relevant and meaningful’24 encouraged the adults to practise reading.

The challenge here is achieving engagement in science with YPs with poor literacy while using science to improve their literacy skills. However we look at it, science requires a certain level of sophistication with language and as these YPs have had a disrupted education their ‘difficulty with language causes difficulty with reasoning’123.

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2.10 Engagement in Science Lessons

The best science teachers set out to ‘first maintain curiosity’ in their pupils\(^\text{10}\), however, in this setting it is about getting that curiosity back. The lessons need to be relevant, interesting and stimulating to capture and hold their attention, demonstrating how science can help them understand and inform their everyday actions\(^\text{25}\), as pupils ‘often fail to see the relevance of the work they are doing’\(^\text{25}\). This is corroborated by Smith who found ‘students appear to be more motivated by activities that they perceive as useful or relevant’; however, this motivation may not go beyond the specific task’. He recognises that to achieve motivation and engagement in science lessons is challenging due to the meta-cognitive and cognitive skills required to be successful\(^\text{26}\).

My role as their science teacher is key as my ‘approach, attitude and enthusiasm [will] influence their engagement’ and lessons that are fun and promote learning are ‘more likely to cognitively engage’ them\(^\text{26}\).

2.11 Equipment for Science

Stephenson found that teachers in LASCH tend to ‘have access to a much wider range of facilities, including information and computing technology’ while science laboratories ‘tend to be inadequate’. Mount found that only 5.2% of PRUs considered the laboratory to be fully equipped and only 12.2% said they had a laboratory.\(^\text{14}\)

If there is not adequate equipment to carry out practicals then the only option is to teach theory lessons, possibly alienating YPs with low literacy levels. It will impact on the qualifications that can be achieved as some require a practical element, for example, AQA science GCSE consists of a coursework element worth 25% of the final mark.

If we want to re-engage YPs in education and they have a fundamental dislike of science, re-integration into mainstream lessons will be more problematic if they have not learnt how to behave in science practical lessons.

2.12 Safety in Science Practical Lessons

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 put the onus on employers to ensure the health and safety of their employees and other people on their premises. This means the employer (the Local Authority) has to make sure procedures and policies are in place to keep the teachers and pupils healthy and safe. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 state that hazards to the health and safety of teachers and pupils need to be identified and mitigated and documented via a risk assessment.

Safety in any practical subject has to come first. For science lessons in a LASCH it is essential that effective risk assessments (RA) are carried out for two reasons; one because of the equipment and chemicals used and two because of behavioural and learning difficulties of the YPs. If the philosophy of the SEND Code of Practice is to be followed then a ‘broad and balanced curriculum’ should be available and barriers to learning removed.

There are many recognised learning needs and the specific needs of YPs in LASCH are often not met as they have not been diagnosed. It may not be until they are having difficulty with practicals that attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) might be suspected or when they intentionally break equipment or ignore rules that oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) might be suspected. This puts the science teacher in a LASCH in a uniquely difficult position of having the responsibility to have an all inclusive SoW but potentially and unwittingly putting themselves and others at risk.

It is not reasonable to expect a science teacher to be aware of all learning needs so collaboration with a special educational needs expert is essential.

### 3.0 Why North America

I researched Juvenile Detention Centres (JDC) in America and identified the top six JDC in America. I contacted them via email and phone and North Carolina JDC was keen to develop a working relationship with similar institutions in the UK.

Once this placement had been secured, I wanted to look at JDC in different (more urban) setting to see if there were any differences. I was not focusing on where the JDC was ranked in America as I wanted to understand the differences location might have on education and how staff managed their lessons, which is why I focused on New York. It was agreed that I would visit both secure JDC over a 5 day period. Unfortunately, the staff involved in agreeing these placements left and I was in the unenviable position of not having placements secured prior to leaving North Carolina. This did work to my advantage as the new itinerary included visiting non-secure centres which I had not been aware of previously.

During my research it became evident that Canada had a different philosophy around young offenders and I managed to secure 3 days in Nova Scotia looking at how young offenders are detained and reintegrated into school.

### 3.1 The Itinerary

I travelled to North America in November 2014. My initial placement was in Guilford County Juvenile Detention Centre, Greensboro, North America and lasted for 8 working days. I then travelled to New York where I spent a further 5 days visiting both secure and non-secure detention centres as detailed below:

- **Day 1:** Horizon JDC, Bronx – Secure detention
- **Day 2:** Belmont, Brooklyn - Non-safe detention and placement
- **Day 3:** Bronx Hope, Bronx - Non-safe detention and placement
- **Day 4:** Crossroads JDC, Brooklyn – Secure detention
- **Day 5:** Boy’s Town, Brooklyn- Non-secure placement
I then moved to Halifax in Canada where unfortunately the visits were limited by the poor weather but I still managed to visit the Nova Scotia Youth Facility, Waterville and the Halifax Youth Attendance Centre, Dartmouth.

4.0 Overview of Units Visited

An overview of the different centres I visited is given below with a more detailed comparison in the following section.

4.1 Guilford County Juvenile Detention Centre

Guilford County Juvenile Detention Centre is based in Greensboro North Carolina. It has a 48 bed capacity for both males and females though they are kept completely separate. It is a secure unit where young people will stay while they are on remand or waiting for a permanent placement. Education is provided in-line with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.27

4.2 Passages Academy

Passages Academy consists of seven detention centres across New York. Two of the units are secure detention centres and the remaining five are non-secure detention centres. The young people in the detention centres live in the unit and education is provided on site. With the non-secure detention centres the young people tend to live in group homes and are brought to the centre for education. More details on the centres I visited are given below.28

4.2.1 Secure Juvenile Detention Centre

There are two Juvenile Detention Centres in New York: Crossroads is based in Brooklyn and Horizons in the Bronx. Both have a capacity of 128 beds. The young people are detained in the centre and are aged between 10 and 17. The classes are split by gender and age group and taught middle and high school curriculum.

The young people live in the detention centre and education is provided at the site.

4.2.2 Non Secure Detention and Placement

Belmont is a non-secure educational establishment based in Brooklyn and can have up to 187 young people. It provides both a middle and high school curriculum. It caters for young people between the ages of 10 and 17 years who are either involved with court (remanded) or who have been sentenced. Those in non-secure detention have a short stay of approximately 3 weeks while those in non-secure placement have a stay of approximately 7 months and are expected to engage with education with the appropriate level of support (educational, social and emotional). They also undergo counselling. These two groups are taught separately.

27 https://www.ncdps.gov/Index2.cfm?a=000003.002476.003108.003109
28 Passages Academy Staff Handbook 2013-14
The young people live in local group homes run by separate agencies and it is the staff from these homes that are responsible for keeping the young person in the classroom (behaviour management). If the young person leaves the classroom the agency staff are responsible for them.

Bronx Hope is based in the Bronx area of New York and is very similar to Belmont but only takes 125 young people of both genders.

Boys Town is also based in the Bronx, is a non-secure placement with a capacity for 48 young people of both genders.

### 4.3 Youth Correctional Facilities Nova Scotia

Approximately 2/3 of young offenders are in custody and 1/3 are in the community, they may be tagged or under house arrest.

The departments involved with the YPs (health, community services and education) all work closely together.

Nova Scotia has four centres; Nova Scotia Youth Facility, Cape Breton Youth Detention Facility, Centre 24-7 and Halifax Youth Attendance Centre. More details on the centres I visited are given below.\(^\text{29}\)

#### 4.3.1 Nova Scotia Youth Facility

The Nova Scotia Youth Facility is based in Waterville and has a 120 bed capacity for both males and females. The young people here can be detained, remanded or serving an open sentence. The young people live in the facility, males and females are kept separate and education is provided at the site.\(^\text{30}\)

#### 4.3.2 Halifax Youth Attendance Centre

This centre focuses on moderate to high risk young people who are under court ordered community supervision and are attending mainstream schools.

### 5.0 Comparisons

The following section initially compares the units I visited to the LASCH in the UK and looks at areas outside of education such as the bedrooms. It then takes a thematic approach to discuss factors that affect education in this setting. Before reading this section it is worthy of note that in North America all Common Core subjects (equivalent to the NC subjects in the UK) are taught as per a mainstream school. There are Regent Exams every January and June that the YPs are expected to sit. In the UK, there is more freedom over what is taught, though YPs that are capable of passing exams are entered.

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\(^{29}\) [http://novascotia.ca/just/Corrections/youth_facilities.asp](http://novascotia.ca/just/Corrections/youth_facilities.asp)  
\(^{30}\) [http://novascotia.ca/just/Corrections/NSYF.asp](http://novascotia.ca/just/Corrections/NSYF.asp)
As in the UK, all the teachers are assessed against the same criteria as teachers in mainstream schools even though they have less time to teach and prepare YPs for the same exams/assessment. Differentiation is difficult across the board, given the different abilities and ages and preparation needed for exams.

### 5.1 Guilford County Juvenile Detention Centre

The occupancy rate at Guilford County JDC was quite low at 50%, compared to average occupancy across the LASCH in the UK which was ‘77% occupancy at 31 March 2014.’\(^\text{31}\) The cost per night was cheap compared to LASCH: £82 for YPs from in County and £164 for YPs out of County, LASCH cost £570.\(^\text{32}\) The age profile of the YPs was similar but the age of criminal responsibility is 8 compared to 10 in the UK. The average length of stay is considerably shorter at between 14 and 28 days. The JDC are able to take as many females as required, but tend to have more boys than girls. The LASCH where I work usually takes 8 females and 16 males, though there is some flexibility around this. They do not have welfare beds and the YPs do not have access to mobility prior to their release.

A YP can be brought in by court officials or police officers. They are searched and paperwork completed to confirm a YP has been handed over. The YP has a medical assessment which includes a mental health assessment (drugs/alcohol, anger, depression, somatic, suicide thought and traumatic experiences) and gang affiliation. The YP then enters a room where they have to take a shower and squat and cough while naked (in case anything has been hidden). This is carried out behind a door with a viewing window and by staff of the same gender. In the UK searches are only carried out if there is a reason to believe this is necessary. They are issued with a pack of basic toiletries including a short toothbrush to prevent them making a weapon and clothes; underwear, socks, shoes, trousers, t-shirt and sweatshirt. YPs are not allowed into education until they have showered. YPs in the LASCH can select toiletries from a pick list and are put into education as soon as possible, this could be the same day they arrive.

If it is suspected that the YP is on high on drugs or drink the JDC refuses to take them and they are taken to hospital until clear of drugs/alcohol before being admitted. YPs in this condition are accepted into the LASCH where I work.

The JDC are able to use handcuffs and shackles and this is not allowed in UK LASCHs. On my visit to Juvenile Court it was quite a shock to see a YP handcuffed with their hands behind their back as they were sentenced. When they came in to court from the JDC it was not unusual for them to be cuffed and shackled. The lawyer can request the YP has cuffs removed.

On arrival the YPs spend the first 24 hours in their room to give them the opportunity to think about what they have done. If they return to the JDC within 3 months they spend 48 hours in their rooms to think about what they have done. This gives them time to read (if they can) the behaviour expectations and understand what it is like to be in a bare room. The induction


process in the LASCH may take up to 2 hours (though it rarely takes this long) and the YP is straight into education.

The JDC have bound over YPs. These are YPs whose crimes are so serious that they will be tried as adults, they will be detained (remanded) at the centre for 2-3 years while the court prepares for the case. It is important to note that they are not waiting for the YPs to turn 16 to be tried as adults but this is the time required to prepare the paperwork.

The philosophy of JDC is that it is a detention centre first and education is the icing on the cake. The safety and security of the YPs (and staff) is foremost in the centre. In the UK the philosophy is to put education at the heart of detention. The staff at the JDC are involved in outreach work and go into schools to talk to the pupils about the conditions for the YPs inside, they are now going into primary as they recognise that intervention has to happen at a younger age.

5.2 Non-secure Detention in New York

I visited three non-secure detention centres (Belmont, Bronx Hope and Boys Town) and for reasons of confidentiality I will discuss them without mentioning them by name unless there was exceptional practice.

In general the YPs living in group homes are waiting for court case or in process of court case. They are transported by bus from their group homes. Group homes are run by not for profit organisations. They house children who have been taken into custody and are a low flight risk with low level offending. Parents still have legal rights. YPs are taught in their group home groups so placement and detained YPs are kept separate. Short-term YPs are taught separately from long-term YPs.

The close to home initiative means that specific groups go to specific non-secure detention centres. This means the Assistant Principal can meet regularly with directors of group homes to discuss any issues that arise as well as giving the opportunity for positive feedback.

5.3 Secure Detention in New York

I visited two secure centres; Horizons and Crossroads. They were very similar and have similar issues to the LASCH I work in. A Juvenile Detention Centre is only for YPs on remand and therefore the length of stay can be as little as a couple of weeks but up to a year.

As New York has a close to home initiative the YPs are held in JDC close to their homes, this is different to the UK where YPs can come from anywhere in the UK.

When a YP is admitted to the JDC their Orientation is about 1 hour and then straight into class, this is the same as the LASCH.
5.4 **Nova Scotia Youth Facility**

There are cottages around the site where the YPs live and are educated. Girls and boys are kept separate.

5.5 **Halifax Youth Attendance Centre**

I spent the day with two different teachers. Their role involved going into schools and meeting with high risk pupils under court ordered community supervision. When they met with the YPs they brought basic school equipment for them and food and drink. They had excellent relationships with the YPs who obviously trusted them and were prepared to work with them. The teachers had good relationships with staff at the school and were able to get an update on the YP prior to meeting them. In some cases they had organised for the schools to allow YPs in early to shower. Meetings were not always possible as the YP was missing school (truanting) but from what I observed the YP made the effort to come and meet up with the teacher at least getting them into school. There were many examples of success with this approach.

Some YPs met with the teacher at the attendance centre where an initial assessment was carried out. This was done at the YPs pace and if it needed another meeting then this would be organised. Vouchers were provided for the YP to buy food.

I was privileged to meet with a YP who had been working with one of these teachers for two years. He had just completed two weeks of 100% attendance at school. The teacher had worked with him to find suitable foster care and not just on his education. The YP was pleased to see him and asked to keep seeing but said he did not really need him anymore. He did not need to be given food or equipment.

5.6 **Bedrooms in Secure Setting**

The bedrooms were basically the same in every JDC. They are very bare, with only a blue plastic mattress. There are no windows, the walls are painted breeze block and there is a sink toilet combination against one wall. The sheets are taken off the bed every morning so the mattress is bare during the day if they are returned to it. If their behaviour is considered too inappropriate then they do not even have their mattress. There is a shower on the pod and YPs have a 15 minute shower every day.
In the LASCH the bedroom has an en-suite, a bed with duvet, desk, TV/radio/PS, storage for clothes and an area to put own pictures and/or posters. The YPs do not have to have a shower every day but can shower when they want. However, if there is an issue with personal hygiene we do enforce cleanliness before they come to education.

5.7 Uniform/Clothes

The uniform was basically the same in every unit I visited. In secure detention it is issued to the YPs when they arrive and it is all they have to wear. Everything is provided; trousers, polo shirt, sweatshirt, underwear, socks and shoes and is the same for boys and girls. The trousers are elasticated and do not have pockets. In the non-secure units in New York the staff from the group homes are responsible for providing the uniform and ensuring the YPs arrive at school in it.
In the secure unit in North Carolina the night staff wash the clothes while the YPs sleep in a large blue t-shirt. The following day the clothes are given out to the YPs (they do not necessarily get the same clothes back).

In the unit where I work the YP’s school uniform is a polo shirt and sweatshirt. The YPs wear their own trousers and shoes and outside school hours they wear their own clothes. They wash and iron their own clothes and bedding. They may be entitled to a clothing allowance from the YOT, whereas in North America the YPs are dependent on clothes from donations (charity) to wear when they leave.

It could be argued that providing uniform for the YPs will not have an impact. But this was not what I observed: In New York, the YPs in non-secure detention behaved better and engaged more in lessons when they were in correct uniform compared to those in poor uniform. Furthermore in secure detention the lack of pockets in the elasticated trousers meant it was very difficult for the YPs to take equipment from the lessons and conceal it. This resulted in lessons ending without any confrontation and less graffiti on the premises.

Being responsible for washing their clothes and bedding in the UK means the YPs are learning a life skill.

In North Carolina if a YP’s behaviour continues to be unacceptable they can be confined to their bedrooms in an orange jumpsuit until staff consider their behaviour is suitable for the classroom. The YPs I spoke did not want this to happen and they managed their behaviour.

5.8 Factors That Affect Education

5.8.1 Education Staff

The day visits to units in New York meant I did not have the opportunity to meet the other education staff and the set up was so different in Nova Scotia it is not appropriate to compare their set up to the UK’s. The discussion here is based on findings from North Carolina and New York.

There is a key performance target in the UK stating that the ratio of teachers to YPs should not exceed 1:4. As a result there are more teachers in the LASCH in the UK. There are 4.6 teachers covering maths, English and science and this includes the Head and deputy Head of Education. An additional 3.5 instructors cover cooking, PE, design and print and art. Agriculture and horticulture, hair and beauty, car mechanics and car body work are covered by a further 3 vocational staff. This compares to 2.5 teachers in North Carolina, where they have one maths teacher, 0.5 SEN teacher and one Social Studies teacher. The Social Studies teacher teaches literacy through many different topics. While I was there she taught the American Revolution and Hounds of the Baskerville. There are no vocational staff.

However, in the non-secure detention centres in New York there are a high number of qualified teachers employed at each institution, for example one had 28 teachers (seven SEN qualified) with a maximum of 100 pupils. All the national curriculum subjects are taught as per a mainstream school (called Common Core subjects). There are Regent Exams every January and June and the YPs are expected to sit them. In some cases three out of the seven lessons are team taught. In the secure detention there was also a high number of
teachers; 19 teachers covered English, maths, science and PE and the maximum capacity was 62 YPs.

In Nova Scotia, there are less teachers responsible for up to 8 pupils. The teacher’s role is more holistic as they are involved with the YP’s teachers from their home school, probation officer and social worker via the case conference. They attend the monthly meetings and are responsible for the YPs Education Transition Plan on their release. The release plan is started from the moment a YP arrives and the lead teacher plays an important role in this. The teacher visits the school the YP will going to aid reintegration.

5.8.2 Lesson Organisation

This was different in every unit I visited. In general the teacher’s non-contact time is greater with a fixed timetable in North America. In fact in Boy’s Town I was only able to observe one lesson as that was the only science lesson being taught that day, giving the science teacher the rest of the day for planning etc. In the UK we are only entitled to 10% PPA and the timetable varies every week and is issued the weekend before.

Lessons tended to be longer: 90 minutes compared to 45 minutes and the YPs do not come into education until they are considered ready to do so. In General, teachers do not have their own classroom and move around between lessons as well, carrying resources and work with them.

Classrooms tend to be larger and can take up to 16 YPs at a time however, while I was there, I did not observe any lessons that had the maximum number of YPs. In some cases it would be very difficult to accommodate additional YPs (and staff) without it impacting on the lesson.

In the JDCs additional staff are always present in the classroom, the number of staff present depends on the number of YPs. The rule is that a teacher is never to be left alone with the YPs. This is taken very seriously and will lead to staff being disciplined if they have allowed it to happen. This is because the teacher is not responsible for the behaviour of the YPs but the Counsellor Technicians are (the equivalent of care staff in the UK). The Counsellor Technicians are always in the classroom and additional staff are visible and available. As mentioned above the KPI means in the UK LASCHs one teacher cannot have more than 4 YPs. If care staff are available teachers can request them, but this is not always possible and rarely happens. In the UK the teacher is responsible for the behaviour in the lessons and additional staff are not visible during education. The care staff are used to take YPs to the toilet or remove them if their behaviour becomes unacceptable. We also have access to a flare (personal alarm) if an incident happens in the classroom and staff respond instantly.

The obvious difference here is the responsibility for behaviour management. The JDCs want to protect the teachers and ensure they do not get hurt so that the teacher can come in the next day. As one Counsellor Technician said ‘Who would teach the kids if the teacher was off?’

Across all the units (secure and non-secure) I visited, there are no practical lessons or vocational subjects taught.
Again in Nova Scotia the timetable is set and the teacher has a lot less contact time. Additional staff were not present but were around in case of any issues. Differentiation is on ability and subject taught. In the lessons I observed with between 5-8 YPs, everyone was doing something different and the teacher was going from pupil to pupil to keep them on task. The programmes are individualised and the YPs have prepared booklets to work from.

5.8.3 Equipment

The use of computers varied: In the North Carolina JDC computers were available, but were not used as they have the same problems as we do in the LASCH with YPs being able to access sites that were blocked. In the one of New York JDC the teacher had a laptop with access to the internet but the YPs did not.

However, where the access to the internet was effectively managed the use of the internet to facilitate learning was outstanding: I observed excellent differentiation where the teacher had prepared individual lessons for the YPs doing exams so that they could work independently accessing the internet and the teacher was able to focus her energy on the less able. I also saw the use of virtual labs which allowed the YPs to carry out virtual experiments such as dissections.

In North America the YPs are only provided with a short pencil with a rubber on the end for the duration of the lesson. I had to get permission to use felt tip pens to deliver a lesson in the JDC in North Carolina. The pencils are all collected in at the end of the lesson by the Counsellor Technicians and consequently there is no graffiti on the walls. In the UK pens and pencils regularly go missing and we have had issues with graffiti. We are sure to collect in scissors or other equipment, but pens and pencils are not considered so important.

At most sites the YPs had access to text books: This is not the case in the UK.

5.8.4 Behaviour Management

In North America behaviour management was better than the UK and how it is implemented varied from place to place. I have discussed it below by the different units I visited as they were so different.

In North Carolina behaviour management was exceptional. The YPs were treated with respect and I did not hear any inappropriate language or witness any incidents while I was there. During one lesson that I taught a YP sniffed a felt tip pen and was removed from the lesson for 20 minutes for their inappropriate behaviour. I asked about this after the lesson and the belief in the JDC is that as the YPs tend to have drug and/or alcohol abuse prior to being detained that this behaviour is inappropriate and that it needs to be actively discouraged.

When lining up outside a classroom or while walking around the JDC the YPs line up in single file in height order with their hands behind their backs and do not talk. There is no talking or play fighting. One YP did a little skip when walking into the classroom and all YPs had to go back outside the classroom and line up again.
During lessons the YPs do not get out of their seats unless they are given permission to do so. They understand that if they step out of line they return to their room (with nothing), so do not get up and walk around classroom. As a consequence the YPs are fully engaged and learn for the whole lessons as they do not want to return to their room. This is also facilitated by the outstanding teaching by the Social Science teacher who is energetic, engaging and enthusiastic throughout.

In the non-secure detention in New York the staff from the group homes are in the lessons and are there for safety and counselling. They are allowed to restrain the YPs. There are school safety agents present in the building who are part of New York Police Department who can use handcuffs if necessary. Additional staff are in the corridors to ensure class change over is safe and help deal with YPs that leave the classroom. These staff are either from the group homes or from the Administration of Child Services (ASC).

Staff from the group homes are responsible for behaviour in the lessons. Where the staff were proactive with behaviour management and fully involved with the YPs it was evident as they arrived in full uniform and engaged in lessons. Excellent practice was evident here when staff sat with the YPs and engaged with the lesson and modelled good behaviour. However, there were examples of poor practice where staff from group homes were not involved and this resulted in the YPs not being in full uniform and not participating in lessons. The most extreme of this that I witnessed was where the staff were sat at the back of the lesson texting. Not surprisingly, in this lesson a fight broke out and it was the teacher who was the first to intervene. I asked teachers if there was a behaviour management policy and the response was implied that the situation was similar to the UK. Staff believed there was one somewhere but no one really knew where and felt that even if it did exist it was inconsistently applied.

Worth mentioning is the Assistant Principal of Belmont who noticed that explosive behaviour leading to incidents was happening after professional meetings, court and difficult meetings with parents. She has implemented a policy that all professionals and agencies have agreed to where meetings are held outside school. Parents were also supportive. If the YP comes
to school after court they have lunch and spend time with their counsellor who will assess if they are ready to return to education. If necessary the counsellor will also come into the lesson with the YP. ACS was in agreement with this and issued memo to relevant bodies. Initial evidence is that this change has reduced the number of incidents, but this procedure had not been in place long enough to say how effective it had been. The Assistant Principal was a teacher and this may explain why she implemented such a policy as she understands what is needed for effective lessons to occur. One disruptive YP stops the teaching and learning for the whole class.

Both secure units in New York had a behaviour management policy. One JDC used a behaviour management based on giving and taking points for individual YPs, this allowed the YPs to make up points if they got it wrong early in the day. It was well monitored and used effectively.

Good practice at one site meant that after an incident the YP is removed from the lesson and put in their bedroom until next the day for security reasons. A meeting will happen with the YP, the teacher involved, the Assistant Principal, Department of Youth and Family Justice (DYFJ) staff and counsellor before the YP is allowed back into the classroom. The YP has to be calm and ready to learn.

As practiced in North Carolina teachers are not allowed to be on their own with YPs in class or moving them from class to class. In contrast and similar to the UK teachers are responsible for behaviour in the class room, but they have staff from the DYFJ (paid for by the city) ready to step in. Again the emphasis is on not wanting teachers to be injured as it is difficult to get a suitable person to cover lessons. Both hand cuffs and shackles are permitted unlike the UK.

I observed one science teacher at one site, two at the other and all their lessons. The interruptions they have to their lessons were similar in frequency and cause to those in the UK. It is not until you observe it, instead of managing it, that you realise how disruptive these interruptions are. For example, in one lesson, two YPs were removed and placed back in the lesson by DYFJ staff. One of the YPs was not ready to return to learning as they did not fully understand what had been told to them and wanted clarity over their court case, which the teacher was unable to do. A different YP in this lesson had been given medication which made him sleepy and had his head on the desk and was fully disengaged. Added to this is the way YPs are removed by the DYFJ (care) staff; there is no interaction with the teacher, or allowing them to finish what they are saying/doing, the door is opened and a YP told to leave and door shut. There is no modelling of appropriate behaviour or acknowledgement of the teacher in the classroom which is undermining their position in trying to manage behaviour.

In Nova Scotia the atmosphere was very relaxed and the door to the classroom was open probably because the classroom is within the cottage where they live. There is a clear behaviour management policy in place: A minor level 1 incident results in a YP being in their room for a maximum of 3 hours, a more serious level 2 incident and the YP can be in their room for up to 7 days. The most serious level 3 incident results in removal to cottage 1B where a YP can be placed for up to 15 days.
5.8.5 Special Educational Needs

How this is approached varied considerably. In Nova Scotia learning disabilities are low in numbers probably because they do not like to label a YP as it is felt this could hinder their progress. However, staff training here is mandatory and extensive covering the legal system, effective intervention and the core correctional practices (posters of these were displayed in the office to remind staff).

In some unit it is the same as the UK as there is no special training for teachers to help them deal with YPs mental health issues or SEN. However, teachers can select their teaching qualification to be SEN based, so they are suitably trained prior to going into this setting.

In secure centres in New York, the situation is similar to the UK as it is estimated that 60% of YPs have SEN but as many YPs are not in the system, statements are not up-to-date. The list of criteria for a statement in New York include; emotional disorder, learning disorder, other health disorder and being mentally retarded.

5.8.6 Resettlement

This was managed better in North America. Different approaches were taken, but common to this was having a single member of staff responsible for liaising with the school the YPs has come from and will go to on release. The system for this is well organised and the information was readily available.

While I was at juvenile court, a YP from a JDC was brought in (hand cuffed and shackled) and he was re-remanded. This was because the judge was not prepared to release him unless a suitable school had been found for him. He said ‘I am not prepared to make a decision today about whether he should be released unless I know he has a school to go to. Is his old school prepared to have him back?’ As no one knew if he had a school to attend he was sent back the JDC until this information had been found out. The belief here is that a YP is more likely to re-offend if they have nothing to do all day. This is very different to the UK where a YP is released at the end of their sentence irrespective of whether a school has been identified for them.

6.0 Findings and Recommendations

Recidivism rates were very similar, at the sites I visited, to those in the UK. On the surface it appears that different approaches lead to the same outcomes. However, if education or the lack of it is a key risk factor when it comes to offending and re-offending (see above), and, if education is really seen as giving young offenders the opportunity to change then we need to ensure education is given a high priority and is effectively monitored against appropriate targets. There are lessons that we could learn from each other on how we approach education, so that it can improve the outcomes for the YPs.

All of the teachers I have met in the UK and in North America are enthusiastic about teaching in this setting. Where the relationship between care staff and teaching staff is not good, probably because there is not clarity over their roles, there is a level of frustration that impacts negatively on the teaching and the outcomes for the YPs.
I do not know if I feel reassured or disheartened that the LASCHs and JDCs have similar problems which are discussed below.

6.1 North Carolina JDC

The behaviour management in JDC in North Carolina was exceptional, but they are risk averse when it comes to more hands on activities with the YPs. The JDC has enough land to have vocational training such as agriculture and horticulture as we have in the LASCH. The YPs that I interviewed were keen to have more time outside and having a curriculum that facilitated this could be linked to good behaviour as part of a rewards incentive.

The JDC was keen to understand how we manage welfare beds and mobility for YPs prior to their release.

The staff at the LASCH would benefit from having an understanding of how to manage the YPs behaviour in such a positive way. We do not have anywhere near the standard of behaviour expected of the YPs in the JDC.

The communication between previous and next schools was efficient and effective; if data was available on the YP it was passed to the JDC quickly enough that the education staff could use it.

There was excellent teaching of literacy through every topic and we would benefit from understanding and developing these skills.

The JDC is firm on not accepting YPs who they believe are on drugs or drunk. They do not have staff suitably trained to deal with the withdrawal the YPs may go through and do not want to put the YP or staff at risk. The LASCH does accept YPs in this state and they are allowed into education.

We have so much that we could share and learn from each other that would improve the outcomes for the YPs.

**Recommendation:** Implement an exchange between Vinney Green SCH and North Carolina JDC

6.2 Nova Scotia

The approach here is so different, there is a desire to protect the YPs as they are children and they resist trying them as adults. In fact I met a YP who was 20 years old and was still detained at the youth facility. There is involvement with YPs in the community and on their release from the JDC. The teachers are key in this. As I said I wish I had time to understand their approach in more detail.

**Recommendation:** YJB to consider working with youth justice in Nova Scotia to understand the approach to re-integrating young offenders into school and the teacher’s role in this.
6.3 Operational Recommendations

6.3.1 Behaviour Management

When a YP is in a lesson and they are not ready to learn, for whatever reason, this causes a decline in behaviour for the whole class. There are lessons to be learnt from the secure JDCs in New York, where YPs are interviewed before returning to lessons and additional staff coming in with them to facilitate the learning. Education is not about how many lessons a YP attends in a day, it is about how many they learn in.

As evidenced in Belmont non-secure unit, allowing YPs time to calm down after difficult meetings, reduces the number of incidents. We have gone some way to address this by placing YPs in a different class after meetings where formal lessons are not happening, but I am aware this is causing problems in other LASCH. We need to develop a robust strategy and supporting policy on how to manage YPs after difficult meetings and/or news. This policy should be effectively monitored by measuring the number of incidents.

**Recommendation:** Develop and implement a policy for YPs returning to lessons after meetings or an incident.

The responsibility for behaviour management varied. In the main the teachers were not responsible for behaviour and the care staff (or equivalent) were. Without exception this arrangement worked well. Having reflected on this since my return I believe this has a knock on effect to behaviour outside the lesson. If care staff are responsible for ensuring that behaviour is of a high enough standard to ensure learning can take place then they will have to maintain this standard outside lessons. Currently within the LASCH, the expectation around behaviour is different for lessons than outside lessons and teachers do not feel supported by care staff. Where additional non-education staff were present in lessons and it was not clear who had responsibility for behaviour this did not work as well and behaviour management was difficult for the teacher. When I asked if I could have a copy of the behaviour management policy the response was “There are probably policies around somewhere”.

Moving the responsibility for behaviour from teachers to care staff would be a big cultural shift within all LASCHs. At the very least, we need to consider how we manage behaviour to facilitate learning; keeping in mind that education is considered key to reducing re-offending. This is a huge and, in my opinion, key area to address, in turning around young offenders behaviour. As a starting point, a project looking at the behaviour management policies within all LASCHs to identify good practice with the aim of producing a consistent policy across all units should be carried out. It needs to consider if removing YPs from lessons for meetings can be avoided and the etiquette around removing them if it is unavoidable.

**Recommendation:** Identify good practice for behaviour management within LASCH.
6.3.2 Qualifications and Training of Education Staff

What is clear is that these YPs have high incidents of mental health problems, poor literacy and numeracy skills and like the young offenders in the UK are ‘some of the most troubled and troublesome children’ (YJB 2008). It would make sense to invest in the specialist training of education staff to deal with these issues especially as strong teacher-pupil relationships are key to engaging them; the more able the staff are at understanding them the quicker the relationships can be built. This would help mitigate some of the issues around YPs being put straight into education as staff will feel more confident in dealing with them.

**Recommendation:** Train education staff in how to identify and manage mental health issues.

Staff would also benefit from training in how to develop literacy and numeracy skills through their subject. Teachers are trying to deliver a secondary/High school curriculum to YPs with low literacy (or illiterate) and numeracy skills. This is difficult given the extreme level of differentiation all the teachers I met were dealing with. Being skilled in this area will facilitate management of lessons and improve the outcomes for all YPs. Consideration should be given to having “reading experts” in units to give focused effort for YPs who are illiterate.

**Recommendation:** Train education staff in how to improve literacy and numeracy skills through their subject.

6.3.3 SEN/ESBD

Many YPs come into the secure setting (here and in North America) with little or no previous educational assessment. Just because they do not have a statement of SEN it does not mean that they do not have a SEN, it could simply be because they have not been assessed. In the UK, the YPs are described as ‘extremely vulnerable children with most complex and challenging needs’ and ‘violent’, with ‘mental health issues and sexual exploitation’ on the increase, on top of previously identified issues of ‘poor educational attainment, dysfunctional family backgrounds, and drug and alcohol related dependency’.

This was a similar picture in North America.

This supports my belief that for whatever reason they are detained that all of the YPs have a special need on top of those recognised in the usual scheme of things (dyslexia, dyspraxia, ASD, ADHD etc). If the extent of SEN/ESBD is not fully understood, how can a teacher effectively do their job?

**Recommendation:** All YPs to have an appropriate educational assessment on arrival in detention.

**Recommendation:** Educational assessment outcomes to feed into the individual EHC Plan.

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33 Lord McNally’s speech to the annual Youth Justice Convention 2014
6.3.4 Internet Access

Use of IT varied. Where it worked well it was because there was a high level of control over internet access via software packages, restricting which websites the YPs could use. Where staff had access to the internet they found it invaluable. The best practice I observed was using internet access to enable differentiation and independent work. I am aware of teachers in the UK using online packages for YPs to gain qualifications.

**Recommendation:** Identify and implement software packages to monitor and manage internet access for teachers and YPs.

6.3.5 Lesson Planning

The teachers in North America had significantly less contact time than teachers in the UK, the timetable was fixed and some lessons were team taught. I cannot stress enough the difference this made, teachers were able to:

- contact previous school and teachers to understand the YPs attainment and any behavioural issues better,
- read the paperwork there was on the YP,
- effectively plan for the level of differentiation required, and
- do joint planning of lessons.

In the UK, there is an acceptance that these young offenders are the most vulnerable and troubled and that education is key to turning their lives around. However, this has not filtered down to the education departments and consequently teachers are almost working blind. By this I mean they do not have time to fully understand the needs of a YP before they are in lessons or have time to fully prepare the best resources for that YP. The classes in the UK are smaller than those I observed, but the level of differentiation often means you are delivering four lessons in one without any additional support. The differentiation within the secure setting is far greater than in mainstream; it is not unusual to have someone who is illiterate with someone accessing GCSEs. If the teachers do not have time to effectively plan taking into consideration the YPs individual needs then the YPs are being done a disservice.

**Recommendation:** Identify how lesson planning and timetabling can improve outcomes for YPs.

Consideration needs to given to the role of the teacher in this setting and how the education department can be organised to ensure positive outcomes for the YPs. There needs to be time available to liaise with schools (previous and next) and to develop effective ECH plans as required by the new SEND Code of Practice. This could be as basic as intensive literacy and numeracy workshops before the YPs go into subject specific lessons.

**Recommendation:** Develop EHC plans in line with SEND Code of Practice.
Appendix 1: Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASC</td>
<td>Administration of Child Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>AQA</td>
<td>GCSE exam board</td>
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<tr>
<td>DTO</td>
<td>Detention and training order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DYFJ</td>
<td>Department of Youth and Family Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EHC Plan</td>
<td>Education and Health Care Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESBD</td>
<td>Emotional Social Behavioural Disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSE</td>
<td>General Certificate of Secondary Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>JDC</td>
<td>Juvenile Detention Centres</td>
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<tr>
<td>LASCH</td>
<td>Local Authority Secure Children's Home</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODD</td>
<td>oppositional defiant disorder</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ofsted</td>
<td>The Office for Standards in Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRU</td>
<td>Pupil Referal Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>RA</td>
<td>Risk Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEN</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEND</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs and Disability</td>
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<tr>
<td>STC</td>
<td>Secure Training Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YJB</td>
<td>Youth Justice Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>YOI</td>
<td>Youth Offender Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOT</td>
<td>Youth Offending Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YP</td>
<td>Young Person/People</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 2: Glossary of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder</td>
<td>This may be diagnosed if a child has disruptive behaviour, cannot sit still, cannot concentrate, acts impulsively or has trouble developing friendships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration of Child Services</td>
<td>Based in New York, the ACS is responsible for welfare, justice and education services for children and young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Referring to mental processes such as perception, judgement, reasoning and memory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detention and training order</td>
<td>A custodial sentence for offenders under 18 years old which has education as part of the detention. Half of the sentence is in a custodial setting and the other half is in the community being supervised by the YOT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Youth and Family Justice</td>
<td>A Department of Youth and Family Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eAsset</td>
<td>A database used to help in the assessment and intervention planning of a young offender. It will provide the information in one place for an individual.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education and Health Care Plan</td>
<td>An EHC plan is for people up to the age of 25. It has replaced the statement of educational needs and now includes health and social needs and support to meet those needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Social Behavioural Disorder</td>
<td>This refers to a condition where an individual's response to a situation is so different to their peers that it may affect areas such as academic progress, relationships and self care.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Home</td>
<td>This is the most restrictive foster placement available to a young person in America. They provide care and support for young people with significant emotional and social problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juvenile Detention Centres</td>
<td>A secure residential place where young people (under 18) are held (detained) while waiting for their court appearance in America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority Secure Children's Home</td>
<td>A secure residential place where young people (under 18) are held (detained) while waiting for their court appearance or having been sentenced in the UK. They tend to take the youngest and most vulnerable young offenders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta-cognitive</td>
<td>This refers to higher order thinking skills such as working out how to approach a task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-secure detention</td>
<td>This is an alternative to secure detention in America. A young person lives in a group home and is taken to an education establishment every day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppositional defiant disorder</td>
<td>As the name suggests this disorder is when a young person behaves in a negative, defiant or disobedient way. This behaviour is often towards people in authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Referral Unit</td>
<td>A place run by the Local Authority to provide education for young people who have been permanently excluded from school or are unable to attend mainstream school do to illness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure detention</td>
<td>This is where a young person is detained and is unable to leave the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Educational Needs</td>
<td>SEN has a legal definition and refers to learning difficulties that mean a young person learns at a slower speed than their peers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Educational Needs and Disability</td>
<td>SEND has a legal definition and refers to learning difficulties that mean a young person learns at a slower speed than their peers. Some children may defined as disabled and require extra support in addition to or separate from having SEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure Training Centre</td>
<td>This is a secure residential placement for young offenders that are older than those detained in a LASCH. The ration of staff to young person tends to be less (ie more YPs per individual staff)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare children</td>
<td>These are children that may have a history of absconding and may continue to abscond, and may cause harm to themselves or others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Justice Board</td>
<td>The YJB is a non-departmental public body set up to prevent offending and re-offending by young people under 18 years of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Offender Institution</td>
<td>These are the largest secure residential placements for older young offenders than those detained in STC. The staff to young person ratio is the lowest in children's secure estate. They are also the cheapest and are not considered suitable for vulnerable children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Offending Team</td>
<td>The YOT are part of the young offender's local council and are separate from the legal system (police and court). They work with many agencies (police, charities, schools, children's services etc) to discourage a young person from offending.</td>
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</tbody>
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