

## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO AN EDITED COLLECTION ON DESISTANCE AND CHILDREN

**Working title: Understanding children's pathways away from offending: critical reflections on desistance and children from theory, research, and practice**

Contributions are invited to the first edited collection, convened by the National Association for Youth Justice (NAYJ), on the subject of 'critical perspectives on desistance and children'.

The impetus for this volume comes from the shifting youth justice context in England and Wales. It lies at a critical juncture as desistance thinking is introduced into policy and practice with children across the spectrum of official sanctions. There has been scarce academic discussion of this development, which is perhaps surprising given that the research evidence on which desistance theories are based has primarily focused on adult routes away from crime. Yet, children's distinct needs, by virtue of their young age and ongoing neurodevelopment, together with their typically normative offending raise important questions about the relevance and meaning of desistance thinking to their pathways away from crime. In light of this, our core guiding questions are: How do children move away from offending? To what extent is the concept and theorisation of desistance useful to explaining this during childhood and adolescence? Does the application of desistance theories risk problematising rather than normalising children's behaviour?

While the collection is inspired by developments in England and Wales, we encourage contributions that consider these questions across a range of jurisdictions given the international relevance of this topic. This edited collection thus aims to bring together academics, researchers and practitioners at all levels, from a range of professions and fields (e.g. youth justice, criminology, sociology, social work, youth work, and psychology) from the UK and wider international context. We are actively seeking contributions from practitioners in the voluntary and statutory sectors, as well as those with lived experience of youth justice.

Contributions from a range of perspectives and themes are envisaged. Questions of interest include (but are not limited to):

- What is the relevance of desistance theories for understanding children's pathways out of crime?
- How, if at all, might desistance theories apply given that most children's offending 'careers' are limited to adolescence and, thus, desistance is largely normative?
- What is the role of identity and agency in children's desistance from offending; and how does the role of identity and agency in children's desistance vary by background, characteristics and circumstance?
- How do children's pathways away from crime vary by gender, ethnicity, neurodiversity?
- How is desistance thinking understood and implemented in youth justice policy and practice?
- How does contact with the criminal justice system or criminalisation affect children's ability to move away from offending?

Through contributing to knowledge about how desistance is understood, interpreted and experienced in youth justice, the collection seeks to shape emergent policy and practice in youth justice and advance the theorisation of children's pathways away from offending.

Interested authors are invited to submit a 250 word summary of the proposed chapter, together with a short biography of the author(s) by **Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2022** to Ali Wigzell at [akc36@cam.ac.uk](mailto:akc36@cam.ac.uk).

The collection **will be published through a commercial publisher**. We have had conversations with a number of established publishers who have expressed significant interest in the collection. The contract will be agreed following confirmation of contributions.

For further details or an informal conversation about contributing please contact the editors, Ali Wigzell ([akc36@cam.ac.uk](mailto:akc36@cam.ac.uk)), Claire Paterson-Young ([Claire.paterson-young@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:Claire.paterson-young@northampton.ac.uk)) or Tim Bateman ([tim.bateman@beds.ac.uk](mailto:tim.bateman@beds.ac.uk)).

NAYJ is a registered charity, which seeks to promote the welfare of children in the youth justice system in England by campaigning, lobbying, publishing practice and policy papers and providing training events and conferences. Find out more [here](#).