

Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool

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Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Core Information | 7 |
| Child's Life Circumstances | 11 |
| Child's Current Circumstances | 16 |
| The Child's Behaviour | 24 |
| Decision Making Process | 32 |
| The Plan | 33 |
| The Child's | 33 |
| The Professional's | 37 |
| Contingency Section | 40 |
| Exit Plan Section | 42 |



Introduction

These guidance notes have been developed to support the use of the Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool and also supplemented with a training programme.

The tool is mandated for use with diversion and formal out of court disposal and is voluntary for targeted prevention.

When completing the assessment please refer to the guidance on assessments included in the [Case management Guidance](#).

The guidance provides you with information on how to complete the assessment and is organised in the following sections:

- Core Information
- Child's Life Circumstances
- Child's Current Circumstances
- The Child's Behaviour
- Decision Making Process
- The Plan
- Contingency Section
- Exit Planning.

Definitions:

[Prevention](#) is support and intervention with children (and their parents/carers) who may be displaying behaviours which may indicate underlying needs or vulnerability. In practice this involves a tiered approach of early and targeted prevention. The aim being to address unmet needs, safeguard, promote positive outcomes and stop children entering the formal youth justice system.

[Diversion](#) is where children with a linked offence receive an alternative outcome that does not result in a criminal record, avoids escalation into the formal youth justice system and associated stigmatisation. This may involve the YJS delivering support / intervention that may or may not be voluntary and/or signposting children (and parent/carers) into relevant services. All support should be proportionate, aimed at addressing unmet needs and supporting prosocial life choices.

Formal out-of-court disposals, the tool should also be used for diversion away from a court disposal, this includes Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions.

How to assess children

The key tasks in assessment for youth justice, including prevention, diversion and formal out-of-court disposals are:

- Collating information from a range of sources.
- Recording information.
- Analysing information.
- Predicting future behaviour.
- Presenting conclusions.
- Sharing information.
- Including children and families.

The core principles of good assessment apply to this assessment tool as they do with AssetPlus, that is:

- Identify and meet the needs of children.
- A plan tailored to the needs and circumstances of each child.
- Identify factors to support positive outcomes for the child such as inclusion in education and access to health provision.
- Identify safety and well-being concerns.
- Identify the child's strengths, interests, activities, and support networks which can help them to develop a pro-social identity.

However, the Prevention and Diversion Assessment Tool has several significant differences from AssetPlus:

- Voluntary engagement in many cases.
- Greater focus on family needs.
- Building on strengths.
- Change of language to safety and well-being for all.
- Behaviour section is not required for all children.
- One plan, but subsections.
- Exit plan.

This document is an assessment and where all the information from a range of sources is reviewed and analysed. It is not an interview form, but a document which is developed jointly with the child and their parents/carers, drawing in information from a range of sources, and then professional analysis used to develop a programme of support, which is the best available to meet the needs of the child and family, with the aim of reducing concerns of safety and well-being for the child and others, and possibility for future offending, to enable to child to achieve their potential.

When contacting the child and family about the assessment process it is important to keep them informed of what will happen. Therefore, when initially contacting the family, you must tell them that the assessment may involve asking them a lot of questions about their life, their circumstances and background, as well as information about the behaviour that led to them being referred to the YJS.

You should ask the child and family to put aside a reasonable amount of time to allow you to complete the assessment. A holistic assessment should also be informed by relevant and proportionate information from other agencies. It is also important that they know you will be contacting other services for information. While there is a legal basis for sharing information, it is good practice to obtain informed consent from the child's parents/carers and the child, if relevant.

In many cases intervention and support following a diversion disposal is voluntary. Children and families should be advised that they do not have to answer any of the questions, and it is their choice to participate in both the assessment and any intervention that comes as a result. It should be recorded that the child has consented to completing the assessment if this is not the case the assessment should not proceed.

Every effort should be made to enable the child to engage, and children should be encouraged to participate in the assessment. Consideration should be given to the suitability of the venue where the assessment will take place, the child's or family's learning or communication needs as well as any domestic concerns that need to be considered.

For many children a prevention or diversion intervention can enable them to receive the right help and support. This should be presented to the child and family, so they are able to make informed decisions about engagement. The assessor should ensure the child understands the consequences, if there are any, of not participating.

It is especially important the time is taken to explain this for parents/carers who may have a negative view of engagement with criminal justice organisations, as failure to engage based on parental views, could have the unintended consequence of the child receiving a more significant disposal. For instance, Outcome 22 is being used as a deferred prosecution and not engaging the child could result in a different disposal decision.

Consideration should be given to allowing the child and family to think about their willingness to participate in the assessment, and if necessary, complete the assessment on another day.

In feedback from children, they have consistently stated that they do not like repeating their story and so it is important that as much information as possible is gained from a range of sources before meeting the child and their family to complete the assessment.

There are some questions, which relate to the behaviour that resulted in the referral to the YJS that must be asked as part of the assessment, as this is part of the professional views that are crucial to developing the support plan and managing the safety and well-being concerns for that child and for the community.

Other screening tools and documents should be used to supplement and triangulate the information gathered. This should include a self-assessment form, this can be the prevention AssetPlus form, or one of the services' own developments. In addition, it may be necessary to complete exploitation screening forms, or substance misuse documentation. Consideration should be given to the timing of any additional screening

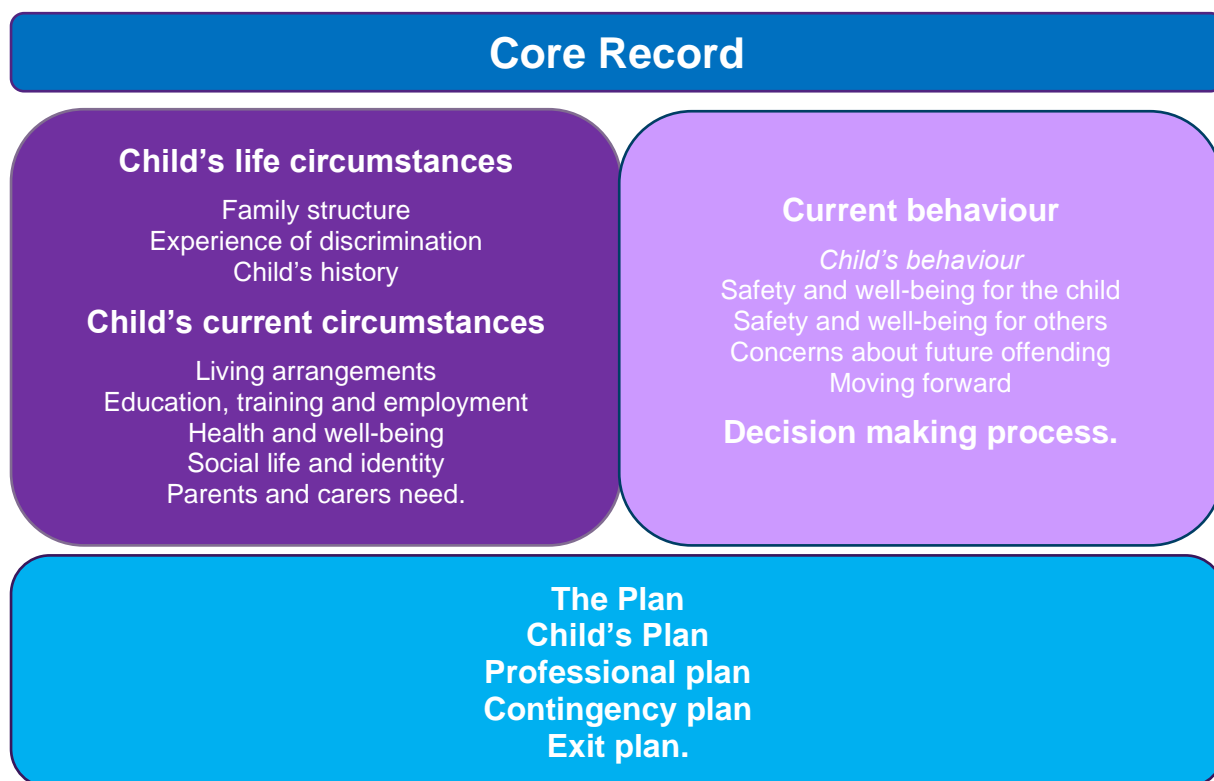
tools as too many screening/assessment tools at the same time could be overwhelming for the child.

The document is designed to be shared with the child and their families, except for the confidential section at the end. In exceptional circumstances, there may be other safety considerations where the assessment cannot be shared with the child or family. If this does occur any decision not to share should be discussed with the line manager.

How is the tool set out?

The below illustration summarises the different aspects of assessment and planning. The following sections of the guidance go into detail on how each of these should be completed.

Where the assessment is being completed where there is not a linked offence, the section on child's behaviour does not need to be completed.



Core Information

Preferred name

Record the name the child wishes to be known by this could be a shortening of their given name, or the child may have a completely different name they wish to be known by.

Unique Numbers

Both the CYPID and Unique pupil numbers are important data for tracking offending and drawing information from within and across databases. The CYPID is generated by the case management system and the pupil number can be sourced from the education database. If this information is not available to the assessor this should be raised at senior management.

The child's social care system number should be recorded to aid the ease in which information can be cross referenced across the systems. If the child does not have a social care number, this should be recorded as N/A

Sex

The child's sex should be recorded, this has been chosen rather than gender to be in keeping with census data collection principles. There is an option of 'prefer not to say' if children do not wish to be identified as either male or female.

Preferred pronoun

Here the child can choose whatever preferred pronoun they use to describe themselves, the pronoun does not have to be the same as the sex category, this is a matter for the child to self-define.

How does the child describe their ethnicity?

This question must be asked of all children, as ethnicity is a self-defined characteristic based on the individual's heritage, language, religion, and culture. If the child describes their ethnicity as different to that identified through formal records, record whether this is the case. Reflect why this may be the case and what effect this may have on how the child sees their identity.

What are the child's additional needs?

Additional needs should be identified considering information from a range of sources, including databases, specialist assessments, such as Speech and Language, Liaison and Diversion team, any Education and Health Care Plan (in England), or Additional Learning Needs (in Wales). In addition, ask the child and their parent/carer to see if there are any additional needs. The parent and child self-assessment should also be cross referenced for any information being provided.

Additional needs can include any needs they may have in relation to disability, such as wheelchair access, any learning needs they may have or any needs relating to

neurodiversity. It is possible this will not be known at this point in the assessment and may need to be revisited later.

Contact details.

Record the contact details for the child, ensuring that the preferred contact details are also recorded. Child and families may have a preferred method of contact-telephone, text, WhatsApp, Facebook messenger, etc. This should be recorded, and every effort should be made to ensure that contact method is used.

The section that asks for parent/carer name and relationship can be expanded to include all people with primary care responsibilities. Consideration should be given to any, and all their communication needs, however consideration can also be given to preferred method of contact and timings of contact.

Every effort should be made to include all immediate family members, even those that do not live with the child. These family members can still have a significant contribution in both the gathering information about the child, but also, later when planning around safety and well-being is being completed.

Westminster YJS have developed detailed guidance on contacting fathers. This can be seen in [Annex one](#)

Referral Information

Include information about the date of the referral and which agency has made the referral, including any parental or self-referral.

Reason for Referral

When the reason for the referral is known, this should be recorded here.

However, in many cases the child may have been referred to the YJS for an assessment pending a disposal decision. In these circumstances, please tick the box for assessment prior to decision. The decision-making section will then record the final disposal decision.

Information to be checked.

The following is a minimum requirement of the information to be checked and the assessment should not be completed without checking this information; YJS database, children's services, including early help services, police database, health records, education database, and community safety. If there is not readily available access to these information systems, this should be addressed through management and partnership arrangements.

The above is a minimum requirement and other sources of information should also be checked if that is applicable. This could be through data sharing agreements or use of seconded staff.

Information from the referring agency should be checked and reviewed before meeting with the child and family. It is good practice for the referrer to check with the child and family that they consent to additional information being checked about them as part of the referral. If this has not been done, it is appropriate to still check these records and it is important that the assessor shares with the family that additional sources have been checked.

In addition to checking the records on the child, it is good practice to put a flag on relevant systems to alert key partners that the YJS is now involved with that child.

If the child is known to any partner organisations the assessor must have contact with the organisation to discuss the reason for referral and information about the child and family.

Is the child; previously or currently care experienced, on child protection, identified as child in need, receiving care and support (in Wales), open to early help services.

In addition to ticking which of these apply to children, please record a brief overview of any previous or current contacts with children's social care services. This should include the reasons for referral, the nature of any intervention completed and the reason for closure.

Has the child and family consented to this referral taking place?

One of the key principles of Turnaround, and other prevention and diversion support is that the support is voluntary and therefore it is important that consent is gained to complete the assessment and provide support. As part of the introduction to the assessment the child and family should be reminded that, for prevention' their engagement is voluntary.

However, for some diversion disposals there may be consequences for not engaging in the assessment and programme of support. This can include a review of the disposal decision, or lack of engagement can be cited in any future court proceedings or diversion decisions. It is therefore important the child and family understand the potential consequence of non-engagement in the assessment and following programme of support.

Engagement is not voluntary for Youth Conditional Caution, and there is no requirement for consent for these cases, however it is good practice to gain consent as this can help to start to build a positive working relationship with the child and family.

Later, should the child disengage, it is useful to remind them they have previously consented and together work out what they may need to help them to re-engage with the support.

Other Organisations involved.

Include a summary of all other organisations involved, this will assist with the sharing of information and joined up delivery of support.

Are there other significant relationships? (Eco mapping)

In addition to parent/ carer it is important to understand other significant relationships that the child has. This can include wider family networks, such as aunt's/uncles, community relationships such as neighbours, or relationships linked to hobbies or interests.

When considering other relationships, it is important to ask the child and their family. The self-assessment questionnaire also asks this question and so this should be completed, and cross referenced to gather this information.

Consider a variety of questions that could be used to answer this question, this can include 'who sends you a happy birthday message' or 'who you tell when you have had good news'?

It is also important to think about people that the child has had relationships with, but these people are no longer in their lives. This can include any losses through bereavement. When considering bereavement, it is important to consider the date of death, and this could potentially act as a trigger for the child, and if possible, the circumstances of death. A traumatic, unexpected death is likely to have a significant impact on the child.

However, relationship losses are not restricted to bereavement, but can also include loss of contact; contact can be lost through a break down in relationships, parent in custody, or divorce.

Many children will need support to answer this question, and so additional tools should be considered. This can include a relationship mapping exercise.

Further information on eco maps is available in [Annex one](#)

As assessment is an ongoing process, the relationship map can be kept on the child's records and revisited at other times. If the timings allow the assessor can also ask the child or their family if the relationships are positive and would benefit from being strengthened, or potentially harmful, and would benefit the child if they were less strong.

Who has been spoken to as part of this assessment?

This is a list of people who have been spoken to as part of the assessment, as an absolute minimum it should include the child and a family member. Also include all others who have been spoken to, but in this section also include any people that the assessor is still waiting to hear back from and record that their contribution is still outstanding. This can be updated when they have had the opportunity to input to the assessment.

It is useful to specify who has been spoken to and on what date, as well as other information and intelligence gathered from other sources, such as police intelligence, education data base, or children social care records.

Child's Life Circumstances

This section aims to capture information about the child's life circumstances that could have an impact on their current behaviour.

What is the family structure?

The best way to understand the child's family structure is to complete a genogram. A genogram is a tool which shows family structure in a simplified format. This should be completed with the child and family as it is possible that the child may not know all the details of extended family.

In addition to the genogram, the family and child self-assessment provides information on the family structure.

Further advice on genograms is available in [Annex one](#)

If the child is already known to services, there is a possibility that a genogram already exists, and if that is the case, this information should be used to populate this section of the assessment.

In addition to completing the genogram, consideration should be given on what impact the family structure may have on the child.

It is important to remember to include existing strengths in the family and what strengths can also be built upon and how they can have an impact on the child.

Is there anything in the child's history that may impact their current circumstances?

Many children known to criminal justice services have experienced previous traumatic events and for many of these children they have unresolved trauma which needs to be addressed before targeted or restorative interventions can be undertaken with the child.

It is therefore important to understand the child's past experiences and how they may be impacting on them before developing an intervention plan.

As the assessment draws information from a range of sources, it may not be necessary to ask the child about their earlier traumatic experiences, however it may be appropriate to check the information is accurate. If this is the first contact with services and this information is not available elsewhere, it is important that this background information is gathered in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

It may be useful to complete a timeline exercise with the child, with their parent/carer or supporter present. This can start from birth, and this information, along with other very early years information is probably better provided by an adult who knows the child well.

Some services will have access to professionals who can support with timelining and or offer consultation to support professionals to work with the child in a way that is collaborative and meaningful to the child.

An example of a timeline is in [Annex one](#)

Consideration should be given to any life events that have had a positive impact on the child.

Information about moving home would benefit from further exploration to understand if there is a complicating reason for a house move, and the same with changes of education. It is important that the child is allowed to describe the events that they consider to be important, for example, this may include a death of a pet, which may not seem significant on first discussion, but which may present a disproportionate loss to the child, as the animal may have been a significant emotional support for them, especially in circumstances where that support may not be available through traditional routes.

One source of background information is the parent and child self-assessment, and this should be completed and reviewed with the child.

Factors to consider about a child's history is whether they have a parent or sibling who is either currently in custody or has been in the past. It is known that this can have a detrimental impact on children, and if this is known consideration should be given as to what support is available.

Information on the experience of child with parent(s) is custody is in [Annex one](#)

There is further guidance and information on how to complete an assessment in a trauma informed way on the YJB Resource Hub, and this is available in [Annex one](#)

It is important to not simply list a catalogue of past experiences, but also to consider what impact these may have had on the child. Has it affected how they build relationships with others, does it affect how the child sees the world, and does this need to be taken into consideration when developing a plan of intervention for the child.

What are the diversity needs of the child? How can these be met during the intervention offered?

Diversity covers a range of different factors for the child, as a minimum consideration should be given to any protected characteristics that apply to the child. These are age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation¹. Consideration should be given to any of these that apply to the child, and whether any adjustment will need to be made to the delivery of any programme of support which meet the child's individual needs and enables them to access services.

However, diversity is not limited to the protected characteristics, and therefore consideration should also be given to wider diversity needs of the child. Whilst not an exhaustive list, this should include consideration of maturity, any speech and language needs, care experience, learning difficulties, and mental health concerns.

The diversity of the child does add to what makes them unique.

In considering diversity it is also important that the assessor has an understanding of where disproportionate outcomes exist in their local area. In many areas Black and mixed heritage children are overrepresented in the youth justice system and consideration should

¹ Protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

be given as to what is the cause of this over representation in the system and what impact this could have on the child.

Diversity factors can also provide a strength for the child and family, such as a sense of identity, a connection to others and this should also be considered.

The concept of Social Graces (Burnham 1992) is a useful way of framing child's diversity and identity. More information is in [Annex One](#)

Consider how diversity factors can add to the child and family's strengths and how they are important to the child.

This section should also include information on how interventions and support will be planned and delivered in an inclusive and appropriate way. This can include practical considerations, such as venue, time, and day of any meetings, but should also include other considerations, such as materials that will be used.

Has the child experienced discrimination and how has this affected them?

This question should be asked to all children. The HMIP thematic on the experience of Black and mixed-race boys in the criminal justice system found that many of the boys were able to speak about their experience of discrimination and this opened a conversation with them about it, but in some cases, only did this when directly asked about their experience.

When asking a child about any potential experience of discrimination consider how the child was affected by this, and whether there has been a long-term impact.

Black and mixed-race boys and girls are more likely to experience a process called Adulthoodification, whereby they are considered to be older than they are, and therefore adult levels of responsibility are attributed to them, whilst they are still a child. This is not experienced in the same way by their white peers. It is important to understand whether children have been subject to this process. It is important that the assessor is aware of this and does not apply the process themselves.

[Adulthoodification bias within child protection and safeguarding \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

It is not just Black and mixed-race boys that could experience discrimination. It could happen to anybody and may be associated with their diversity needs. Experience of discrimination can add to children's experience of unresolved harm, children may be experiencing racial trauma. This is defined as '*the events of danger related to real or perceived experience of racial discrimination*'.

[Racism, Mental Health and Trauma Research Round Up - UK Trauma Council](#)

Consideration should be given to the child's experience of discrimination as this can impact on their readiness to engage with certain support interventions.

It is known that many children open to youth justice services have speech, language and communication needs, and for some children the word discrimination may be difficult to understand. When asking this question, it is important to check back with the child and family that they understand the question that is being asked. It may be necessary to reframe the question to one that is more child friendly, such as 'has anything bad happened to you as result of something about you, like your religion, or skin colour'?

Has the child experienced; criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation, labelled as associated with a gang or radicalisation?

Here, use your own screening tools to identify if the child has been subject to any of the above.

Criminal exploitation is child abuse where children and young people are manipulated and coerced into committing crimes (NSPCC). Examples can include children being coerced to sell drugs, carry weapons or work in cannabis 'farms'. Children may report they are acting on their own free will, but there will often be an older person, or adult, manipulating them. Individual screening tools should be used, and if appropriate a referral should be completed under the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) process

More information and resources are available in [Annex one](#)

Sexual exploitation is when a *child* or young person is exploited, they're given things, like gifts, drugs, money, status, and affection, in exchange for performing sexual activities.

Labelled as associated with a gang. Gangs are defined as 'see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group and engage in criminal activity or violence (CPS)'. Many children find support and validation in a group setting and this can be a positive activity, but when there is planned criminal activity, this stops being supportive. Information about gang membership should be available from the police or the local Violence Reduction Unit.

Radicalisation is the process by which children come to support terrorism and extremism, and in some cases participate in terrorist activity. The process to become radicalised can be online or in real life and is not restricted to any religion or belief. If a child is believed to be involved in radicalisation consideration should be undertaken for a Channel referral.

[Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Prevent duty training: Learn how to support people vulnerable to radicalisation | Prevent duty training \(support-people-vulnerable-to-radicalisation.service.gov.uk\)](https://support-people-vulnerable-to-radicalisation.service.gov.uk)

Include information on the nature of these concerns and whether there are ongoing safety concerns for the child. Consider what the impact of these concerns will have been on the child and their family.

Prior to this referral has there been any previous concerning behaviour? In what context did this take place and what was the impact for the child and others?

Consideration should be given to any and all of the child's behaviour that could be of concern. This includes any formal or informal police disposals that the child has been subject to. Information should be gathered on these disposals from police and YJS records and a synopsis provided on the incident, what led up to it, what the impact was and how well, or otherwise the child engaged with any programme of support.

Police records should also be checked for any intelligence that relates to the child. This could include any matters that were not proceeded with, and the reasons for that, and whether the child has any warning markers. Police information about any missing episodes and any Merlin or Public Protection Notifications should also be checked.

In addition, any involvement with any anti-social behaviour incidents should be checked and reviewed. It should be recorded if the child has received any warning letters,

acceptable behaviour contracts or civil orders in relation to anti-social behaviour. This information is available from your local community safety teams or YJS records.

Concerning behaviour is not limited to behaviour that has resulted in a type of disposal but can also include behaviour from a range of locations and sources. Information from schools should be checked to see if the school or education establishment has identified concerning behaviour. This could include incidents of alleged bullying, having excluded articles, incidents of inappropriate language or touching.

Families and carers can also provide information about previous concerning behaviour that has taken place but has not been formally reported. This could include theft from home, assaults on family members, or emotional outbursts.

Consideration should be given to the context that the behaviour took place in and what the impact was for the child and others.

Concerning behaviour is not limited to behaviour by the child, but also consider any previous behaviour that may impact on the safety and well-being concerns to the child. This could include other information, such as when a child has been a victim of an offence.

This information should be treated with sensitivity and balance, with more emphasis placed on more recent behaviour, whilst not excluding historical information. This information should be weighted and reviewed at the section about future behaviour, but it must all be taken into consideration.

There may be occasions where, due to public safety, or ongoing police investigations, that this information is included in the confidential section of the assessment, and this should be agreed with a manager.

Child's Current Circumstances

This section is about the current circumstances for the child and includes reporting information on the KPI's. This section should be read in conjunction with the KPI guidance and counting rules. [Key performance indicators for youth justice services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk) For all the following sections, the strengths of each situation should also be identified.

Living arrangements

This section should reflect the current living arrangements for the child. This should include information on the type of accommodation and who they live with, such as mother, grandmother, other residents in a children's home, etc. Some of this information may have been gathered earlier as part of the family structure section but may be different for many children.

Consideration should be given to the strengths of the living arrangements, is the home stable and secure, how does it meet the child's needs.

Information should be included on the length of time the child has been in the accommodation and whether it is permanent, long term or otherwise. Consideration should be given as to whether there is a forthcoming change in accommodation and how this may affect the child.

Many families are concerned about financial hardship, and if this is the case this should be recorded.

Suitability of the accommodation is based on the assessor's professional opinion and further guidance is included in the KPI guidance. If the accommodation is not assessed as suitable, actions to address this should be included in the professional plan later in the assessment document.

Education, training, and employment (ETE)

Information should be included on the child's experience of their education to date, this should include a review of past education, what they are good at, any qualifications they have achieved whether there have been previous exclusions.

Any strengths around the child's education should be recorded.

Information should be obtained about the child's current ETE provision. This can be gained directly from the child's current education or training provider on how the child is currently and how many hours they are in ETE. Services with embedded education specialist should use their knowledge and experience to work with the ETE provider to source this information, either through access of relevant databases or directly with the provider. When sharing information about a child with an ETE provider, this should be done with sensitivity, and mindful of data protection requirements. It should be recorded whether the child has a current EHCP (England) or Individual Development Plan (Wales) and what this specifies. The information in this plan can be used to shape the YJS intervention plan that

the child may be subject to, and the information should be utilised to structure any future plan.

Information about their current ETE provision and how well the child is engaged should be recorded, as well as any barriers that are preventing the child achieve their potential.

It is for the assessor to make a judgement on whether the ETE is suitable for the child, based on the KPI guidance. Should the ETE be assessed as unsuitable plans to address this should be included in the professional's plan later in this assessment.

Health and well-being

Information should be included on the child's current health and well-being circumstances. This should include any information on the child's learning needs. This information can be gained from the relevant seconded specialist workers, such as health workers, speech and language therapist, or liaison and diversion (England-only) information. The child and family will also be able to provide this information. Learning needs includes a range of different needs including dyslexia, autism, Attention Deficit Hypoactivity Disorder (ADHD), any other neurodiverse needs and any speech and language needs.

Consider what impact these needs may have on the child on a day to day and ongoing basis.

Some children may have health needs associated with pre-birth experiences, such as foetal alcohol syndrome, which may have an impact on their current behaviour.

If possible, a speech and language screening should be completed which will add to the understanding of the child's communication needs.

These needs must be taken into consideration when developing the support plan for the child to ensure it meets their needs. Referral to appropriate support interventions should be considered.

Does the child have emotional well-being and mental health needs?

Consider any emotional or mental health concerns the child may have. This can include identified conditions, such as anxiety or depression, and whether the child is in receipt of any medication. However, also consider any undiagnosed conditions that may impact on the child. This could include any impact of past experiences that may leave a child 'hyper aroused' which could have an influence on their current behaviour.

Asking the child and family about emotional or mental health needs should be done sensitively as the child may not wish to disclose such information about themselves.

It should be recorded whether there is any formal diagnosis of health concerns, or whether there are suspected concerns.

Consideration should be given to whether there has been any self-harming behaviour or suicide ideation. Self-harming may not always take the most obvious form, such as cutting, or head shaving, but can also include deliberate self-destructive behaviour. This information can be gained from the self-assessment questionnaire. If the self-assessment form is used it is important that the form is reviewed, and any areas of concern responded to.

www.mind.org.uk

Information about emotional well-being and mental health needs should be available from seconded CAMHS workers, (if available) but information could also be available from any YJS health professional, family, self-assessment, or the interview with the child.

What are the child's developmental needs and what is their maturity?

Consideration should be given to the child's level of maturity and whether this is consistent with what is expected for their chronological age. A child's maturity level will influence their ability to engage with interventions and support and this will need to be considered. This information should be triangulated from a number of sources, such as the child's presentation during interview, information from family/carers and from any education provision.

When considering maturity, it is important to be mindful of the process of Adultification and not assess a child as older than their years based on an external characterisation, such as ethnicity, height, or physical maturity.

Also consider the child's developmental needs, such as physical needs, did they reach all their developmental milestones and if they did not, what might be the reasons for that. It is known that trauma and neglect can have an impact on child development and consideration should be given to this.

Development needs also includes social, emotional and cognitive development.

Detailed training is available on child and adolescent development.

[Courses – Youth Justice Institute](#)

Has the child had previous health trauma?

Health trauma can cover a wide range of health concerns. It is known there is a correlation between children who have received an acquired brain injury and being in the criminal justice system, and children and families should be asked if the child has ever had a brain injury.

[Brain injury and the criminal justice system | Headway](#)

However, health trauma is not limited to brain injury and some children known to youth justice may have experienced other health traumas, this could include being a victim of violence or having taken an accidental overdose. Consideration should be given to the potential health and psychological impact of this, and whether the child is still living with the consequences of this trauma.

Does the child have any physical health needs?

In this section consider any physical health need the child may have, this should include any health needs that may impact on their ability to engage with intervention, such as hearing or sight impairment. Other health considerations should also be considered, such as diabetes or asthma. Health conditions may have an impact on both the behaviour that led to the referral and the any adjustments that may need to be made to enable the child to complete their programme of support.

Consider the impact of the health needs on a day to day basis for the child, and what is currently in place to ensure the child's needs are being met.

Does the child use substances and if so, which substances do they use and what are those concerns?

If you have access to internal screening forms, please use these, however the self-assessment provides an opportunity for the child to self-report any substances they use. It is important to ask the child about any substances, and not 'normalise' any substance related behaviour. So, this can include asking about nicotine products such as vaping, which is becoming increasingly prevalent in school age children, as well as smoking. For some children the use of caffeine products can be problematic, as this relates to other conditions they may have, such as ADHD.

The use of nitrous oxide has become increasingly common and has now become illegal and can have some health concerns associated with its use.

The assessment should include information on whether the child uses alcohol and how much they drink, when and who with. Consideration should be given to the inter-relatedness of the actual substance and how and where the child is using it. It is the latter that may be as concerning as the use of the substance.

The situation with illegal substances is frequently changing and can vary across time and location. It is worth using intelligence from your local substance misuse services to understand your local picture, and local language for products.

In addition to asking the child what substances they use, also ask at what age they started to use the substance and how they fund their usage. It is important to understand whether their concerning behaviour was committed whilst under the influence of a substance, or to gain funds to pay for the substance.

The child's use of substances may also be related to their emotional and well-being concerns. Many children may use substances as a way of 'self-medicating' or masking their internal thoughts and concerns. Substances can be used to block out thoughts and feelings that are difficult for a child, or as a way of belonging (to a group), where that feeling is missing for a child.

The second substance misuse question asks if anyone is concerned about the child's substance misuse. Many children may not see their substance use as problematic, but it is worth considering whether other people do. This can be used to start a conversation about whether there needs to be any support to change their substance misuse.

Social life and Identity

No child lives without some connections to family, friends, and formal and informal support networks.

If you have previously done an ecomap, much of this information will be available here, but this is another opportunity to explore the child's relationships and identity.

How does the child describe their social life, leisure interests, community, and support network?

In this section consider aspects of the child's life that help form who they are and what strengths can be developed from them

- Social life: how does the child spend their free time, who do they mix with, and how do they do this, don't forget about the importance of social media/gaming for children, so this is not limited to socialising 'in real life' but include internet connections.
- Leisure interests, does the child have any hobbies or interests that can be built upon, this can include sport, music, art, creatively that the child enjoys doing. Also consider anything that the child used to do but have stopped and what may help them re-engage in the leisure activity.
- Community, consider how well located the child is in their community, do they know their neighbours, do they make use of community facilities, are there community activities the child could make more use of.
- Support network, a child's support network can be extended beyond family and may include friends, family, community/religious leaders, sports leaders. Who reaches out to the child when they have bad news?

How does the child describe themselves and their identity?

A child's identity is much more than just their age, gender, and ethnicity. Identity is about how they see themselves. The work of Beyond Youth Custody suggests that a move from a pro-offending identity to a pro social identity can help children move away from offending.

[Nacro-Using-an-identity-lens-2020.pdf \(t2a.org.uk\)](https://www.t2a.org.uk/Nacro-Using-an-identity-lens-2020.pdf)

Whilst this report relates to resettlement, for children having an identity away from offending, wherever they are in the youth justice system helps the child feel positive about their future.

When asking a child about their identity it is important to consider all aspects of the child's life, this includes their interest in sport, music, their connection with their local area, any political interests, religion, responsibilities, school etc. You can ask the child whether there are parts of their identity they are not keen on, as this can help with the development of the support plan.

[Identity Session: Exploring My Identity and What is Important to Me - Ealing Youth Justice Service \(February 2023\) - Youth Justice Resource Hub \(yjresourcehub.uk\)](#)

'Activities, Interactions and Roles' (AIR) can play an important role in how a child can build their pro-social identity, and there should be an exploration of how these current links, such as sports clubs, relationships with others, play a role in forming the child's identity.

Roles can include the roles that the child may take in the family, at schools, or with friends, so if the child is always seen by others as the 'joker' for example, this may be the role they choose to take on in other circumstances. Roles in families could include being seen as the carer, or in some cases provider, which could lead to offending decisions that relate to that role, such as stealing to provide food.

As the child’s sense of identity can be based on links to both people and places, consideration should be given to how and what these are and what impact this may have on a child. This can include points of transition, such as change of school, moving accommodation, or having less contact with a key family member.

Does the child have access to suitable IT and how do they use it?

One of the key findings of the HMI Probation Covid delivery thematic was the uncovering of the digital divide of access to the internet and IT for children known to youth justice services. The full report is available in [Annex one](#)

If the child does not have access to suitable internet consideration, should be given to what help and support can be given to provide access to these facilities. Children without internet are more likely to fall behind at school or college.

There are a number of social tariffs available for families who are in receipt of certain benefits, and these could be explored as part of the support offered to the family.

This is an opportunity to start talking to the child about how they use the internet and what apps and social media the child uses. There should be a discussion with the child on how they use the internet, do they have all the social media platforms, how do they use them, how do they present themselves on internet platforms, and it is also insightful to discuss who they follow on social media.

This can be a useful conversation to refer back to when considering how to keep the child safe.

Parent(s)/Carers wider family needs

What strengths already exist (for the child, their family, in the community) to help the child achieve their potential?

In this section consider what strengths already exist to help the child, these can then be developed in the planning section if that is needed, or strengths can be protected to ensure they continue to support the child.

Child’s strengths. This can be factors in the individual child that can help build potential. Strengths could be an interest in school, the child is able to identify ambitions and hopes, or they are good at building relationships. Very often a factor for offending, such as being easily led, can also be seen as a strength, being able follow others.

Family strengths. This can be factors in the family, such as there is a large family network, or individual members of the family, such as a sibling who is very supportive.

Community Strengths. Include any factors in the community that are strengths that can support the child, this could be good facilities, transport links etc. A stable community is also a strength.

The following is suggested strengths but is not exhaustive.

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Child’s strengths | Able to engage, developed appropriate coping mechanisms, motivated to move forward, understands their emotions. |
|--------------------------|---|

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Family strengths | Positive relationships, good communication, family is supportive, positive role models. |
| Community strengths | Stable community, good transport links, good leisure activities, strong community leaders, positive school environment, employment opportunities. |

Are there any needs in the family that are having an impact on the child?

The assessment should consider the needs and voice of the parents/care giver and other family members (where appropriate). Taking a whole family approach builds on everyone's strength and builds their resilience.

Non-resident parents are also important, and efforts should be made to include non-resident parents in the assessment. Children will often have levels of contact with these parents, and they will have both an impact and a role in the child's life. If there is no contact with a parent, this should also be considered as this will also have an impact for the child.

A vital aspect in considering a child's needs is the context in which they live, their domestic and family relationships.

In this section, include any factors in the child's family that may have an impact on the child's ability to achieve their potential.

Also consider that parents and care givers can face a range of barriers and have their own support needs. A package of co-ordinated support to meet them will best enable the child to develop and meet their potential. It is also important to consider the needs of other people living in the family home, including siblings.

Consider:

- **Health** – Any outstanding health needs including around mental health and substance misuse. Consider if any family member has additional health needs or disabilities.
- **Parenting capacity, including social connections** – Parent/ carers ability to meet the child's needs despite any difficulties they may be experiencing, this can include setting boundaries to prevent a child's involvement in ASB or offending. Consider parental conflict and domestic abuse.
- **Environment Factors** – This could be any practical issues that the family are experiencing, and could include housing, poverty, employment, finances, or rural isolation, which could stop the child being able to access services or positive leisure activities.

Consideration should be given to the parent/carers needs and how they can be met in the planning section of the document.

Are there any concerns in the community that are having an impact on the child?

Contextual safeguarding identifies that no child can be seen in isolation from the environment around them, and as children grow older, they are more exposed to the

influence and impact of the wider community. This takes account of any concerns that may expose a child to risk outside of their home.

[What is contextual safeguarding? - YouTube](#)

Consideration should be given to the wider community and what concerns this may have on the child. It is not in the gift of the child to change their community, but professionals can work together with an approach that may help to create better safety in the community for the child.

The Child's Behaviour

The next section is about the behaviour that has led to the child being referred to the YJS.

In certain circumstances this section should not be completed, a child should not be asked about their behaviour before the case has been resolved.

If it is inappropriate to ask questions in this section, it should be recorded as Not Applicable.

What behaviour has caused the child to be referred to the YJS?

In this section include information about the behaviour that has resulted in the referral to the YJS, include as much information about the behaviour as possible, what happened, when did it take place, who else was involved etc.

This information should be available from the referring organisation, the police, or community safety team.

What does the child say about the behaviour?

This is where the child can talk about the behaviour, many children will need prompts to help them explain what happened. You can use a range of engagement method to help with this, which may include cartoons, timelines, or aided discussion. In the child's view, why did this behaviour take place, how were they feeling at the time, was there anything that led up to this behaviour, and how did they feel after the event. This should **not** be a copy and paste of the official documents.

If you have CPS or police statements, you may need to use these to gently prompt the child to help them recall the behaviour and understand any differences between the child's version of the event, and that contained in official documents. The aim here is not to challenge, but to understand the child's experience.

What do parents/carers say about this behaviour?

This is where parents/carers can say what they think about the behaviour. They may have a different view from the child, for example believe someone else was influencing their child, or that other influences, such as substances, were at play.

There may be occasions where the parent/carer are also the victim of the behaviour and therefore this must be managed sensitively.

In the assessor's opinion, what needs/goals was the child trying to achieve?

Behaviour can be motivated by a range of different psychological or physical needs and the assessor must consider what need the child was fulfilling by this behaviour. The needs may not be the most obvious at first, for example, a child shoplifting food may have a need

for the actual item, but further exploration of their motivation may be a need to join in with others, for a sense of belonging.

Other needs that the behaviour may be fulfilling is a need for warmth and love, an inappropriate expression of emotion, a need to be seen or heard.

Some children may be able to articulate what need the behaviour was fulfilling, but most will not, as this is and can be a difficult concept. The assessor should record, in their professional opinion, what need or goal the behaviour was fulfilling for the child.

In the assessor's opinion why has this behaviour taken place?

This is where the assessor makes a professional view on why the behaviour has occurred. This should consider the child's view of the behaviour, as well as the parent/carer's views as well as all the information that has been gathered from the range of sources that are available.

Any discrepancies in views of the behaviour should be explored and understood, how does the child make sense of their behaviour, why is this, do parents blame other people. What role did the child's history play in the behaviour, did their life experience have an impact on how they behaved, what in the child's current circumstances is relevant to the behaviour. Are there things in the child's life now that had an impact on their behaviour?

This should be an overall analysis of the behaviour that has resulted in the referral to the YJS, taking account of all information available and forming a professional view of the reasons for the child's behaviour.

Who has been affected and how?

Consideration should be given to the actual victim of the offence and how they have been affected. This information should be available in a victim statement, or from contact from the victim worker in the service, or any linked victim service involved. If this information is not available, the assessor should form an opinion on the potential impact for the victim. For example, for shop theft, there would be a loss of profit, or an assault the victim may be left shaken and concerned for their safety.

If there is no direct victim, consideration should be given to any indirect victims of the offence. This could be the community, taxpayers, or the public. Consideration should also be given to personal indirect victims such as family members.

Is there an opportunity, and is it appropriate, for the child to make amends?

Consider whether it is appropriate for the child to make amends for their behaviour, and what that might look like. The victim's views should also be considered as to the appropriateness of any restorative actions. If there is no identified victim, such as with some public order offences, consideration should be given to making amends to the community that has been affected by the behaviour. In some situations, this may not be appropriate, and this can be recorded as N/A.

In some circumstances, even where there is a direct victim, there may be good reasons why it is not appropriate for restorative activities to take place. This may be traumatic or 'shaming' for the child and this approach does not align with a strength-based approach. Consideration should be given to the child's 'readiness' to participate in any restorative approaches, based on their own past traumas or experience of victimisation (including

racism). If a restorative approach is appropriate it should build on the child's strengths or be used to develop new ones.

Safety and well-being for the child

The assessor must designate a level of safety and well-being concern and explain why they have assessed the safety and well-being concerns at that level. The assessor should say what they consider that concern to be, from whom or what and why.

Points to consider:

- What might be the circumstances where the concern may occur?
- What is the context that the concern may occur?
- What is the capacity of the others to cause the concern to the child?
- What are the opportunities for others to achieve the concern?
- How soon is the concern likely to occur?

This is a professional assessment of the safety and well-being concerns for the child. It should consider all the information about the child from all available sources. The assessor should assess the safety and well-being concerns for the child based on the following criteria:

Low – No concerns to the child's safety and well-being have been identified, or unlikely to occur that would have an impact on the child's safety and well-being.

Medium – Some safety and well-being concerns have been identified, but they are unlikely to cause serious safety and well-being adverse outcomes to the child unless circumstances change. Action should be taken to mitigate this occurring.

High – Concerns about the child's safety and well-being have been identified that are currently occurring or could occur in the near future and the potential impact could be serious. Actions are required now or soon to address these concerns.

Very High – There are clear concerns about the child's immediate or imminent safety and action is required immediately to protect the child. If this action is not taken the impact on the child could be very serious.

| Safety and well-being for the child | Unlikely | Possible | Likely | Very Likely | Almost Certain |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Slight Impact | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low |
| Minor Impact | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low |
| Medium Impact | Low | Low | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| Major Impact | Medium | Medium | Medium/High | High | Very High |
| Critical Impact | Medium | Medium | High | High | Very High |

A serious impact of a safety and well-being concern is one where the impact can have a detrimental impact for the child and the recovery is likely to be long or in some circumstances, not at all. Recovery is considered the point where the child can return to everyday functioning as it was before the event or behaviour. The impact can be physical or psychological.

Safety and well-being concerns can be broadly split into three categories:

- The child’s own behaviour
- Concerns inside the home
- Concerns outside the home

Safety and well-being concerns that result from a child’s behaviour may include their own substance misuse, periods of going missing. Consideration should be based on what the assessor knows of the child’s own behaviour, A child may also be able to say they have concerns about their own safety and well-being.

A child can also have safety and well-being concerns as a result of behaviour from other people, this can include within the family home, where there may be safeguarding concerns, this may include witnessing domestic abuse or lack of care due to parental mental health or substance misuse. If a child is subject to child protection concerns, there is a concern about their safety and well-being, and this must be considered as at least of medium concern.

Many children now face safety and well-being concerns outside the home, this can include concerns about both criminal and sexual exploitation. There is a great deal of resources and materials available below to help with screening for concerns outside the home.

[toolkit overview | Contextual Safeguarding](#)

Reference should be made to any safeguarding plans that are in place.

There should be a clear rationale for the judgement recorded, this should demonstrate how the judgement has been made, including past information, current behaviour and information from a range of sources. All information should be weighted and evaluated.

Safety for others

The assessor must designate a level of safety and well-being concern to others and explain why they have assessed the safety and well-being concerns at that level. The assessor should say what they consider that concern to be, what, when, to whom and why.

Points to consider:

- What might be the circumstances where the concern may occur?
- What is the context that the concern may occur?
- What does the child say about the likelihood of the concern occurring?
- How soon is the concern likely to occur?

As part of the Child First principles the language is moving from labelling a child as a 'risk' to moving to consideration of safety and well-being for others. The concern levels remain the same, but the assessor should think about the safety and well-being for others which may result from the child's behaviour.

Low – No safety and well-being concerns to others have been identified, or unlikely to occur that would have an impact on other people's safety and well-being.

Medium – Some safety and well-being concerns to others have been identified, but they are unlikely to cause serious safety and well-being adverse outcomes unless circumstances change. Action should be taken to mitigate this occurring.

High – Concerns about other people's safety and well-being from the child's behaviour have been identified. These are currently occurring or could occur in the near future and the potential impact could be serious. Actions are required now or soon to address these concerns.

Very High – There are clear concerns about the safety and well-being of others from the child's behaviour. This is immediate or imminent and action is required immediately to protect others. If this action is not taken the impact others could be very serious

A serious impact of a safety and well-being concern is one where the impact can have a detrimental impact for others (members of the public, family members, potentially known victims or potentially unknown victims) and the recovery is likely to be long or in some circumstances, not at all. Recovery is considered the point where the person can return to everyday functioning as it was before the event or behaviour. The impact can be physical or psychological.

There should be a clear rationale for the judgement recorded, this should demonstrate how the judgement has been made, including past information, current behaviour, and information from a range of sources. All information should be weighted and evaluated.

| Safety for others | Unlikely | Possible | Likely | Very Likely | Almost Certain |
|------------------------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| Slight Impact | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low |
| Minor Impact | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low |
| Medium Impact | Low | Low | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| Major Impact | Medium | Medium | Medium/High | High | Very High |
| Critical Impact | Medium | Medium | High | High | Very High |

Concerns about future offending:

The language of future offending is used here for the first time. This focusses the concerns about future behaviour on offending, not other concerning behaviour. Any other concerning behaviour should be captured in the previous sections, and this section is focussed on concerns about illegal behaviour which constitutes offending.

This section considers the likelihood of the child being involved in any future offending, not just behaviour that could have a safety and well-being impact on others. Consideration should be given to all previous behaviour, including any behaviour that did not result in a criminal disposal.

Low likelihood - there is no indication that the child will be involved in any future offending.

Medium likelihood - there is some possibility that the child will be involved in future behaviour, but this is not likely in the short term.

High Likelihood - the child is more likely that not to be involved in future offending behaviour and this could happen in the short or medium term.

Points to consider:

- What might the circumstance be when future offending may occur?
- What is the context for when future offending may occur?
- What does the child say about future offending?
- What are the opportunities for future offending?
- How soon is future offending likely to occur?
- What need might future offending fulfil for the child?

The assessor must designate a likelihood of future offending possibility and explain why they have identified the likelihood of future offending to be at that level. The assessor should say what the future offending is likely to be and when it could happen.

For all domains of future behaviour, this section is for undertaking the analysis and likelihood of the future behaviour. Planning to mitigate the behaviour takes place later in the document.

There should be a clear rationale recorded for the judgement, this should demonstrate how the judgement has been made, including past information, current behaviour, and information from a range of sources. All information should be weighted and evaluated.

| Concerns about future offending | Unlikely | Possible | Likely | Very Likely | Almost Certain |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| Slight Impact | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low |
| Minor Impact | Low | Low | Low | Low | Low |
| Medium Impact | Low | Low | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| Major Impact | Medium | Medium | Medium/High | High | Very High |
| Critical Impact | Medium | Medium | High | High | Very High |

Moving Forward

This section is about what already exists to help the child move away from any concerning behaviour and to achieve their potential. It also considers any barriers and how they be overcome.

What strengths, for the child, family and community can be built on?

Revisit the strengths that exist for the child, this can be self-reported from the child, feedback from family, or other professionals, or observations from your engagement with the child. When a child is not able to identify a strength, due to their own low self-esteem, there are strengths identified from other sources, this could include practitioners reflections on how they have engaged in the assessment, how they have acknowledged the behaviour, or qualities that may be linked to offending, but could be 'flipped' to become positive qualities, such as being a loyal friend, showing leadership qualities.

Strengths can include skills at using social media or internet games.

Strengths in the family are also important, and should not be restricted to the immediate family, consideration can be given to the wider family, but also what the child considers to be their family, which could include friends and friend's family.

Finally, consider the strengths in the community, is there a strong sense of community, do people identify with their local community. For some children peer groups are strongly associated with their sense of community and how they identify those groups by post code etc. This connectiveness is a strength that could be developed.

Also consider community strengths that could build upon the child's existing strengths, such as leisure activities, places of worship or community groups.

What will help the child to achieve their potential?

The assessor needs to think about what will help the child achieve their potential. Consideration of this can be aspects about the child, such as self-belief, things within the family, such as parental support, factors in the community, such as access to sports or art activities. This should cross reference the strengths that have already been identified in this assessment and consideration on how these could be consolidated.

Does the child's family need additional support to help them achieve their potential?

This is where consideration should be given to any additional support the family may need to enable them to support the child. At this stage it is a matter of identifying the support-further details will be captured in the planning section. This should not be limited by what support mechanisms are in place, but rather, what support the family may need. This could cover practical support, such as help with benefits, or longer-term skills building, or therapeutic support to address a behaviour that is not helping the child, such as parental substance misuse.

What are the structural barriers, or anything else, that may prevent the child achieving their potential?

The assessor should consider external structural barriers such as poverty, poor housing, lack of access to health care etc. It is important to think about these barriers as societal barriers, that is, not in relation to the child or the family.

The assessor should consider any barriers that may be preventing a change in the behaviour for the child. These could be associated with the child themselves, such as perceived benefits from the behaviour or unresolved trauma that is creating an emotional barrier. It could be concerns about the family's ability to support the change, or it could be external, such lack of access to positive routes away from the behaviour, such as a suitable ETE provision or undiagnosed mental health concerns.

Decision Making Process

This section is optional, based on local decision-making processes.

Where there is a pre assessment before a decision-making panel, or bureau, the recommendation of the assessor should be included here, and the assessment shared with the decision makers.

Who has made the decision?

Include here all members of the decision-making panel, include the name and job role of the people on the panel.

Rationale for the decision

This should be populated by the decision-making panel, this should include information about the gravity score of the index offence, [child-gravity-matrix-v2.2---september-2023.pdf \(npcc.police.uk\)](https://www.npcc.police.uk/child-gravity-matrix-v2.2---september-2023.pdf) if appropriate and reasons for the decision. If the decision is outside of the gravity score guidance there must be very clear rationale included for that decision, and if needed, clear evidence that the decision has been cleared by at least Sergeant level or CPS.

The decision by the panel should also be included on the relevant police system.

The Plan

The Child's

In a move away from the structure of AssetPlus, the plan contains two sections. Both sections should be shared with their child and their family, but the first section, relates to the activities and actions that the child will complete, whilst the other, is for the professionals.

The plans should complement and support each other, but it is known that, for many children, there are activities outside of their control that are needed to help keep the child and others safe, and it is important that the professionals working with the child all know what actions are required of them to meet the child's needs.

The plan should be co-created with the child, this can be done through discussion, with the case manager writing up the ideas and thoughts from the child. This may be suitable for a child who lacks confidence in completing their own plan, however the plan should always be shared with the child and check-ins with the child to ensure they understand the plan, they see it as relevant and can engage with it.

A more collaborative approach may be to print off just the plan section and share this with the child, inviting them to write their own plan. Children may need support to do this.

If using a laptop to work with the child, it is possible to share this section with the child and invite them to input their ideas on their plan directly onto the planning document (ensuring due diligence and having no other applications working). Both these approaches can give the child greater ownership of the plan.

Some children may benefit from time to reflect on their plan, and so it may suit a particular child's learning needs to be given a blank document and they work on it on their own, or with parents/carers to share with the case manager at the next session.

Child's section

The child's plan is written in first person format, is strengths based and focussed on moving forward positively. When writing the plan, consideration should be given to sequencing the activities and actions and should be based on the previous information about how the child sees their behaviour and their circumstances.

References should be made to information from other sources, such as the self-assessment tool, any eco or relational map that has been completed, use of the identity app, and information from family and other professionals.

These are the things I am good at

Encourage the child to identify things they are good at, this can be emotional things, such as being a good friend, or practical things, such as football or gaming. Start the plan by being very clear that there are things that the child is good at. These things may then be used as the building blocks for the plan.

Children may need help to start to identify their strengths, and the assessor can help them to talk about things they are good at. Assessors can reflect back comments the child has made about some of their strengths and some characteristics can be redefined as a strength for the child.

These are the things I need help with

This can be anything and does not need to be related to the concerning behaviour. So, this can include information taken from any speech, language, communication needs assessment, information from the self-assessment, or information from family or other professionals, and what the child thinks they need help with.

This may also include practical things that may help the child keep to their programme of support, such as remembering appointments, or telling the time. Reference can be made to any speech and language assessment, or EHCP (England), Individual Development Plan (Wales).

My Plan

This is who will help me with my plan and what they will be doing.

In this section identify all the people and services that will help the child with their plan. This could include parents and wider family, social worker, school support etc. This section of the plan should relate directly to the information and actions that are contained in the professional plan.

This is what will happen to help me move forward and stay out of trouble.

As the plan is for children subject to shorter term support programmes, it is important that the plan is proportionate to the disposal. There may be children with very complex needs and consideration to exit planning and which services can provide longer term support should start to be considered here.

Things to keep the child out of trouble can be very simple activities, such as attend my meetings with my YJS worker and join in the sessions, to behaviour related activities such as learn to walk away. The plan can also include activities that will build strengths and build resilience. These then become the scaffolding that will support a child throughout the intervention and potentially afterwards, such as join a football club.

This should also include the activities other people are doing that will help keep the child out of trouble.

This is what will happen to stay safe.

This is the child's plan and therefore this considers what the child needs to do to stay safe, activities for the professionals are in the next plan. Even if a child is assessed as low safety and well-being needs, there may still be activities they can do to ensure their continued safety, as children, by virtue of their age, may be considered vulnerable, such as making sure their mobile phone is charged, or having a small amount of money on them.

Children now live in a digital world and considerations for safety planning should also include references to how the child can keep themselves safe online and how their online world can interact with the real world.

For children who have been assessed as medium or above safety and well-being, this section may be more detailed. This could include the child working with specialist workers in exploitation teams or substance misuse team, children having the contact details of a trusted adult who they can turn to if they are concerned, identifying a safe place for when the child is out and about, such as a youth club, leisure centre, library etc.

This will be based on the individual needs of the child.

Children should be supported, through guided conversation, on their own ideas and suggestions on how they can keep themselves safe.

This should not be restricted to what the child will be doing to keep themselves safe, but also include activities that other people around the child will be doing to keep the child safe.

Calendaring is a useful concept where it is possible to structure all the family and community support that can be included in the plan to support children. Youth Justice appointments can be included in this.

[Calendaring, Promote healthy relationships and meaningful experiences. - YouTube](#)

This is what will happen to keep others safe.

If the child has been assessed as low safety and well-being concerns to others this section may include little or no detail.

For children assessed as medium or above there must be some aspect of planning for the safety of others in the child's plan. The content will be based on the individual needs of the child, but could include support on managing emotions, agreeing for parents (or staff) to check their bedroom, or submitting voluntarily, to bag searches at school. These are only suggestions, and the plan should be individualised to the child.

In some cases, there is an overlap between safety for self and safety for others, and staying out of trouble, so this can also include working with other agencies such as substance misuse and engaging in suitable positive activities.

Children should be supported, through reflective and guided conversation, to come up with their own ideas on how they can keep others safe. This may include prompts in relation to any concerning behaviour and asking how they could not behave in that way again, which would then help them keep others safe.

This should not be restricted to what the child will be doing to keep themselves safe, but also include activities that other people around the child will be doing to keep the others safe.

If I have done something wrong, this is what I will do to put things right?

Where there is either an identified victim, or the community in general is considered a victim as a consequence of a recorded offence, consideration should be given to the suitability of any restorative activity for both the child and the victim.

Where there is no direct victim, the impact on the community and opportunity for indirect reparation should be considered.

Restorative activity can be a letter of explanation, either kept on file, or sent, reparation, verbal apology or something else. Any restorative activity should build upon the child's existing strengths or be used to develop new ones.

There are examples of successful reparative activity on the Resource Hub.

[Search - Youth Justice Resource Hub \(yjresourcehub.uk\)](https://yjresourcehub.uk)

Where there has not been criminal behaviour recorded that has resulted in an outcome it is possible to leave this section blank.

As noted previously, it may not always be suitable or appropriate for a child to make amends for their behaviour, and if this is the case this should be clearly recorded.

Activities that help a child put things right should be strength based and build upon the child's existing strengths or enable them to develop new ones.

These are the things I might need to help me to achieve my plan:

Here the child can specify the things they may need help with to achieve their plan. This information can be drawn from a Speech Language Communication Needs (SLCN) assessment, self-report from the child, or information from parents, professionals. Learning style questionnaires can also be a good source of information. Suggestions can be where the appointments take place, whether the child needs prompts or reminders, but also consideration for wider family support and other professional support the child may need.

These are the additional things I am told will be put in place to help keep me and others safe, if needed:

If the assessment has identified that the child is medium or above safety and well-being concerns, both for self and others it is likely there needs to be some external controls that need to be in place. External controls are those activities or oversight that are external to the child that can help support the child. They are often what other services, structures or people are doing to or for the child to keep them or others safe. It is not what the child has to do, but it is important that they know about the actions that are being taken by others.

This can include liaison with the neighbourhood police team for increased oversight, increased monitoring at school, a voluntary curfew with doorstep checks, the use of a weapons wand when visiting the YJS office. Any external controls should be proportionate to the concerns around the child's behaviour and should link to the programme of support that is in place and being delivered to the child.

I know my plan is finished when:

This is for the child to know when their plan of support is completed, this may not be a fixed time, rather when the work required of them is completed, so this may say 'when I have finished all of my reparation', or 'when me and my family are getting on'.

This is for the child to say how they will know they have achieved their plan. Success is not limited to not offending, but other measures of success also need to be considered, this could include better attendance at school, joining a football club etc.

For Outcome 22/Deferred prosecution disposals there will be a clear expectation of what the child needs to achieve for the disposal to be closed. This should be recorded here so the child has a clear understanding of what they are required to do.

The plan should be agreed and signed by the child.

As a parent/carer, these are the things I may need support with:

The child's section should focus on the child, but there will be times where the parent/carer will need further support, and this can be included in this section. This should be identified through discussion with the family and use of the relevant self-assessment. There are times it will be appropriate for the YJS worker to deliver this support, but in most cases, this may need a referral to a partnership agency. This might include mental health support, substance misuse, or budgeting.

The plan should be agreed and signed by the parent/carer.

The Professional's

The professional plan should complement and support the child's plan, but there are some activities or decisions that need to be delivered by professionals, such as referrals or escalation of concerns. In line with the principles of Child First, children should be seen as children, and it is the responsibility of adults to overcome the structural barriers that are preventing children from achieving their potential and it is the role of adults to meet the needs of the children.

As such, it is appropriate that a linked plan is in place which sets out what the professionals will do to meet the child's needs. This plan should be shared with the child and their family and should support the work that the child is doing.

What diversity needs will be considered to help the child achieve their goal?

Previously in the assessment the child's diversity needs have been identified. This section should use the information from the assessment section and set out what diversity needs the child has and how these will be supported.

Who will support the child?

This should be a list of all the people who will support the child, this should include all professionals; name, role and contact details. It should also include family and members of the community who have a role in supporting the child.

What other support is in place?

A child may be subject to more than one plan and therefore it is important that all these plans are known and are cross referenced to meet the child's needs. Examples of plans a child could be subject to include child protection and child in need plans, looked after child plans, substance misuse reduction plan, Education and Health care plans, mental health

safety plans. Any other plans should be identified in this section, along with details of the plan owner.

This section should identify what support and safeguards are being provided by the other plans that may be in place.

If there are no other plans in place, this should be recorded, this section should not be left blank.

Which of the child's needs are being addressed through these plans?

If there are other plans in place it is important to note which of the child's needs are being addressed in those plans. The professional plan should support and complement the work of the other plans. For example, if there is a mental health safety plan, because the child self-harms, that proposes the use of distraction techniques such as accessing text services, the plan should reference this and ensure the child has access to a phone.

Whereas a child subject to an exploitation safety plan, it may be entirely appropriate that they hand their phone in to parents at night-time, to limit the possibilities of them being contacted and persuaded to leave home.

How will structural barriers be overcome?

Structural barriers are those barriers that are wider than individual and may include suitable accommodation, poverty, access to amenities etc. It is a key role of the professional plan to overcome these barriers, as this is something that the child, or family cannot do on their own. In many cases the professional will have to be tenacious and at times escalate their concerns to meet the child's needs.

Some structural barriers may be seen as easier than others, for example, poverty may be partially addressed through ensuring the family are claiming all the benefits and allowances they are entitled to and referring them to a local food bank, but for this to be addressed in the longer-term parents may need support to get them 'work ready' and then sustained support for them to remain in employment.

Other structural barriers may include access to suitable education. A child may need an EHCP plan, which is not in place and so referrals and follow up actions with the appropriate authorities may be needed.

If there are no structural barriers identified, then this should be recorded.

What is the YJS doing to support the child?

This section should link in with the child's plan, and outline what the YJS is doing to support the child, this should include any referrals the YJS is making for the child, any additional support they are giving the child, such as mentoring, as well as any practical considerations, such as appointments after school on a regular day, or choosing a certain style of support that best meets the child's needs.

What are other agencies doing to support the child?

Identify what other agencies are doing to support the child.

What is the YJS doing to support the parent/carers?

If it has been identified in the assessment section that the parent/carers would benefit from support, this should be identified in this section. Any support to the parent/carer is voluntary and the practitioner should use their engagement skills to support the parents.

Support to the parent/carer can be delivered directly by the YJS worker, by the in house YJS parenting worker (if there is one) or by referral through to another specialist organisation.

What are other agencies doing to support the carers/parents?

If there are other agencies involved in supporting the parents this should be recorded here, this should include any agencies that were already in place to support the parents, such as the probation service, or adult mental health services, and those that are in place as a response of a direct referral following the child's involvement with the YJS.

The assessor should specify the type of agency and what they are doing to support the family. This should complement and support any work the YJS is doing with the family.

What external controls will be in place to manage the child's behaviour if needed?

For some children, external controls are required to help keep either the child or the public safe. Any external controls should be recorded here, as well as in the child's plan.

External controls are tangible actions or oversight in place, above and beyond usual case supervision, that are deemed appropriate for the child. If a child has been assessed as medium or above safety and well-being concerns for either self or others, consideration should be given to appropriate external controls.

External controls can include flags on the police system as a vulnerable child or adult, increased monitoring at school, or bags checks at school, parental use of 'find my phone' technology, any outstanding bail conditions, regular multi-agency information sharing meetings.

These are examples, and any external controls should be appropriate and proportionate to the safety and well-being of the child.

Contingency Section

Contingency planning is the planning that needs to be put in place if the circumstances change for the child or their family that may have an impact on the safety and well-being for themselves or others. This could be a rise in the concerns, or, if things are going well a decrease in concerns.

What foreseeable changes in circumstances would result in a change to safety and well-being concerns to the child?

Here, the assessor should consider what foreseeable changes may result in a change, that would result in an increase of concerns, and those associated with a decrease of concerns.

Foreseeable changes may include a change in education status, change in family circumstances, change in friendship groups (a friend moving back or away from the area), removal of any external controls for the child or others, etc.

This is not an exhaustive list, but some possible examples, changes will be dependent on the individual child and their circumstances.

Consider how will *this* child respond to the specific changes and how this child may respond to any changes to areas of concern.

What foreseeable changes in circumstances would result in a change to safety and well-being concerns to others?

Here, the assessor should consider what foreseeable changes may result in a change, this should include any changes that would result in an increase of concerns, and those associated with a decrease of concerns.

Foreseeable changes may include a change in education status, change in family circumstances, change in friendship groups (a friend moving back or away from the area), removal of external controls, for the child or others, etc.

This is not an exhaustive list, but some possible examples, changes will be dependent on the individual child and their circumstances.

If this happens, what actions will be taken and by whom?

Whilst an important action is to review the plan and discuss with the manager, and this should be done, consideration should be given to clear tangible actions that will have an effect and impact on the child or others. This should also pass the 'Friday duty' test, so if the case manager is not in, the duty worker will be able to clearly identify what actions will need to be taken and by whom. This should include contact details of the person undertaking the action.

Any actions should link to the earlier section on what the foreseeable changes could be and should include consideration of changes of safety and well-being. For example, if a child is permanently excluded from school, and this has been identified as an increase in

concerns, the actions would link directly to sourcing the child a new education provision, finding more information about the reasons for the exclusion, and putting in place potential activities to keep the child engaged during school hours.

It may be helpful to think about contingency planning in the following way:

Trigger - what might happen to bring about a change for the child, this could be an anniversary of an event, change of placement etc. Triggers can also be positive, which could reduce the concerns in the assessment, such as securing a college place or stable accommodation.

Response - what might the response be by professionals involved with the child, clearly state what actions need to be completed, such as new referrals, or flags on systems.

Individuals - which people are going to do any activity identified, clearly state who is going to do what and by when.

Goals- this is what you are aiming for the outcome to be by completing the actions.

Exit Plan Section

As part of diversion and formal out-of-court disposals, interventions are usually short term, consideration for exit planning should start as soon as the child is known to the service. Exit planning should address how the child and parent/carers can sustain the progress they have made whilst subject to support, as well as identifying what ongoing support they may need.

Exit planning is both a review of what the child has achieved and planning ahead for when contact with youth justice service stops.

What support has been given to parent/carers?

In this section the assessor should review the support that has been given to the parent/carers. This should include information of support from the YJS and from any other organisation involved.

What do the child's parent/carers say about the support?

The assessor should ask the parent/carers how they feel about the support they have received. This can be done through discussion at the final session, or through a feedback form, which can be used for both individual feedback, and collated for wider feedback.

If the parent/carer is unhappy about the service they have received they can be directed to any complaints/comments process the YJS has in place.

What support has been given to the child?

In this section the assessor should summarise the support that has been given to the child. This should include a review of the support the YJS has delivered as well as any other organisation that has been involved with the child.

What does the child say about the support?

The assessor should ask the child how they feel about the support they have received. This can be done through discussion at the final session, or through a feedback form, which can be used for both individual feedback, and collated for wider feedback.

If the child is unhappy about the service, they have received they can be directed to any complaints/comments process the YJS has in place.

Is there anything that could have been done differently?

This is an opportunity for the assessor to reflect on the support that has been provided to both the child and their parent/carer. This is to learn from the programme of support and use that learning for future development. It is not an exercise of criticism for anyone, but a view for development.

If there were delays in service delivery, or gaps of provision, this should be noted, and this information collated and used for the development or commissioning of future services.

Sometimes, it's very small things that can make a difference, would the family have preferred texts to letters, was the timing of the support sessions right for everyone etc.

Consider whether other factors had an impact on the delivery of the support, was there staff shortages that made a difference, were there external distractions for the child/family that made being receptive to support difficult, which were unforeseen, such as bereavement, industrial action etc.

Does the child need further support?

In many cases the child may benefit from further support, to address needs identified as part of the intervention. It is not appropriate to keep the child's case open to YJS longer than is required to meet a need that should be met by either specialist or universal services, and part of exit planning is identifying those services and ensuring a smooth handover of information and provision.

It is crucial that a child does not 'fall through the net' at the point of YJS support ending and so an important part of the exit planning is ensuring that other organisations are in place and have accepted their role in supporting the child at the point of closure by the YJS. This is why exit planning should start as soon as possible as many services may have delay or waiting lists.

Additional support could include work that has been done to support the parents/carers whilst subject to the support programme and ensuring the family has the ongoing processes in place, either internal strengths, or community or professional support, to enable them to continue to support the child.

Informal support that has been identified as part of the intervention programme should be encouraged to continue after the YJS support has ended.

Has the child offended whilst subject to this intervention?

Offending in this circumstance is an offence which has resulted in either an informal or formal out of court disposal or court disposal.

There may be instances where the child is suspected of having committed another offence, but the investigation is ongoing, or a disposal decision has not yet been reached. This should be recorded as no but include information about this in the text box.

Please provide a summary of what support has been provided and what impact this has had on the child and their family.

Following on from the earlier section, where an overview of the support was provided, this section asks the evaluator to make a professional assessment on how well the work has been received by the child and parent/carer, and what in the assessor view has been the impact of the intervention.

Include how the support has built on existing strengths and supported any identity shift that has taken place.

Has there been a change in the assessment of safety and well-being to the child, to others, or of future offending?

The assessor should consider whether there has been any change to the previous assessments of concerning behaviour. This should specify which concerning behaviour

has seen a change, safety and well-being to the child, safety and well-being to others, or risk of any future offending. The assessor should say what that change is, and what has caused the change to take place. This could be a decrease in any concerns as a result of the intervention, for example a suitable school place may decrease safety and well-being concerns. However, sometimes, it is possible for the concerns to increase, as the assessor knows more about the child and what is taking place in their lives.

Any confidential information that needs to be considered

The assessment and planning document has been written so it can be shared in its entirety with the child and their parent/carer. However, there will be times where there is confidential information that needs to be recorded but should not be shared with the family. The reasons for this should be restricted to:

- Not interfering with a current police investigation
- Not to share information that could put anyone at risk.

If there is information that is in these categories, this information should be recorded in this section, and this *must not* be shared with the child or family.

With thanks to

Carmarthenshire Youth Justice Team

Susan Clarke- Torbay Youth Justice Service

Turnaround

Norfolk Youth Justice Service

Ealing Youth Justice Service

Walsall Youth Justice Service

Suffolk Youth Justice Service

Devon Youth Justice Service

Dr Caroline Hoskins

Dr Neal Hazel

Michael O'Conner

Hannah Kent (Conceptual Safeguarding)

Centre of Justice Innovation

Lincolnshire Future 4 me

Westminster Youth Offending Team

His Majesty Inspection of Probation

Leicestershire Youth and Justice Service

Annex one

Westminster Guidance on working with fathers.

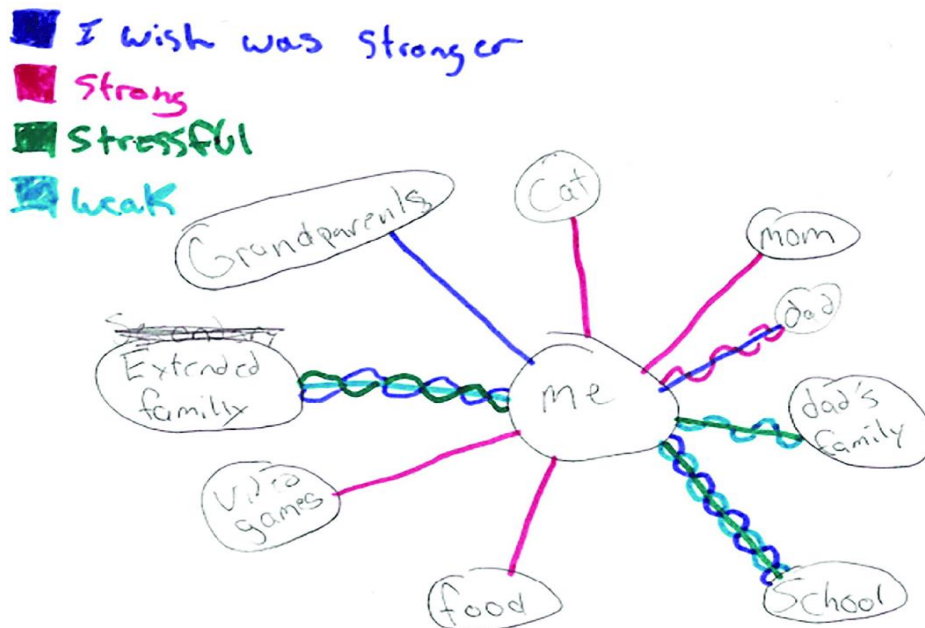
- Ensure that discussions in relation to families includes fathers and male role models to avoid excluding their unique contributions. Work jointly with professionals to engage with fathers.
- Supervision and case consultations need to ensure that they are being more explicit about the inclusion of fathers and challenge assessments if fathers/men are not included.
- Include in QA documents a section that prompts managers to explore whether attempts have been made to locate and include fathers' voice/ engagement in the process.
- Be curious about where fathers are. What is the fathers' role in the family and how can he be included in this plan? What social graces impact on this family in relation to the roles of the parents and care givers/ where is the father of this child?
- Increased organisational understanding of unconscious bias/narrative surrounding black fathers.

The podcast below demonstrates the impact of not including fathers.

[The Unheard Gender | Podcast on Spotify](#)

Ecomaps

[How to make an ecomap - YouTube](#)



njs
Important people in my life

Placing the child / young person at the centre ask them about the important people in their lives. Use the circles below to show who they think most influences and is important to them (close to centre) to those of lesser importance and who influence them the least (furthest from centre):

Notes:
Family / friends who are family
 - mum: don't always get on so I don't live with her, it's easier.
 - [redacted]: split time between them, chilled. Get on well.
 - [redacted] is my girlfriend, she goes to [redacted].
 - I play pool with [redacted] (step Gdwd)
 - [redacted]: my brothers + sisters, all younger & really noisy.
 - [redacted] close friend [redacted], he was [redacted]. He was cool.
Friends
 loyal, have their backs. know where I could run to. Would thank for them if I had to. Hang out on [redacted] Not [redacted] but beside them
Opps
 used to be close with [redacted] but don't chill with him now, fell out.

[redacted]
 (victim)

Ecomap example, thanks to Norfolk YJS

Timeline Exercise

Timeline of My Life

Name: Date:

On the timeline, mark on any events that you feel have been important in your life. Use writing and pictures.

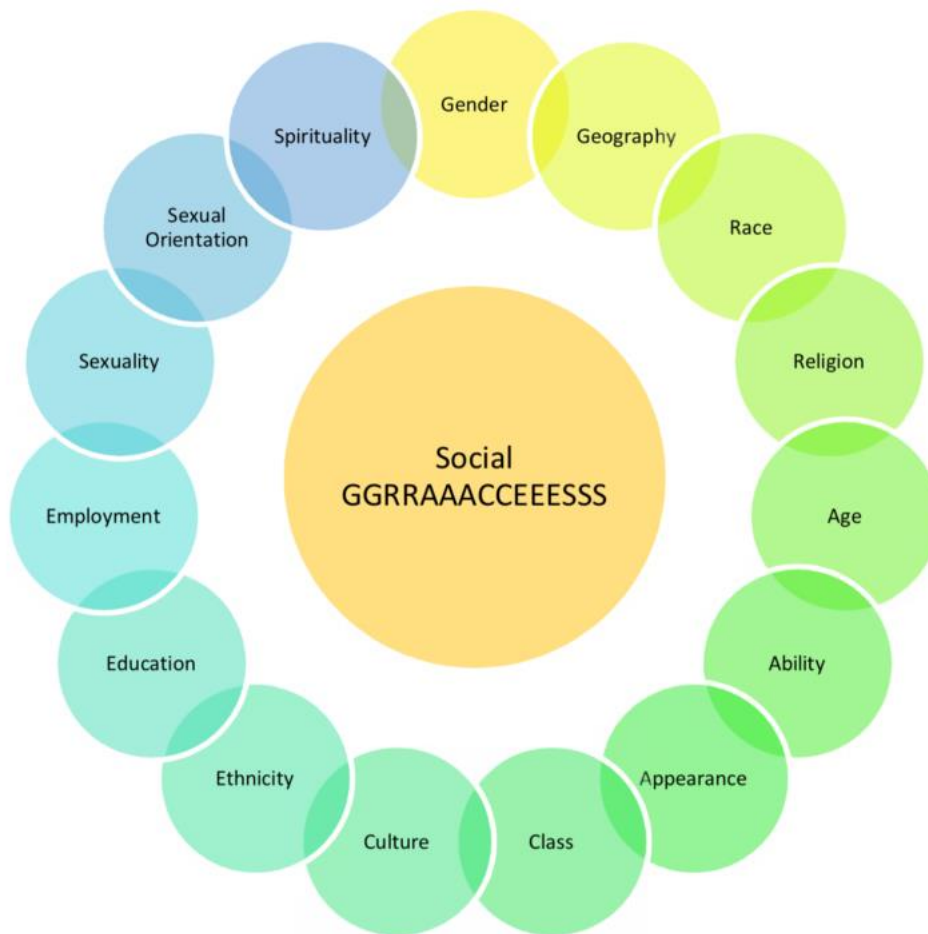
Birth Now

www.twinkl.co.uk Copyright © Twinkl Ltd

[GENOGRAMS: When a picture is worth a thousand words. - YouTube](#)

Social Graces

The GRRRAACCEEESSS (aka Graces) provide a structure to think about a child's diversity needs and identity. A useful exercise may be to have the Graces printed out and ask the child to pick those they consider most important to them and what they mean to them.



[Social 'Graces' Model - YouTube](#)

Children with parents in custody

[Who we are - Children Heard and Seen](#)

[Working with Children in a Trauma Informed Way – Trauma Informed Practice Pathfinder – Cwm Taf youth justice service \(Updated September 2022\) - Youth Justice Resource Hub \(yjresourcehub.uk\)](#)

[Child Exploitation Risk Assessment and Management Tool – Cambridgeshire County Lines Pathfinder \(April 2022\) - Youth Justice Resource Hub \(yjresourcehub.uk\)](#)

[A thematic review of the work of youth offending services during the COVID-19 pandemic.pdf \(justiceinspectrates.gov.uk\)](#)