

Bath and North East Somerset Youth Justice Plan 2020-21



Working in partnership to prevent youth offending

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1. Introduction

1.1 Requirement to produce a Youth Justice Plan

Youth Offending Services and the partner organisations they work with have a statutory responsibility to prevent offending by children and young people aged 10-17 years. This Plan has been written in accordance with Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and includes learning and activities arising from recent self assessment activity and delivery under the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic, the Youth Justice Board does not require submission of a Youth Justice Plans this year but has instead, asked for a Recovery Plan as a condition of its grant. This has been submitted and approved and actions arising from it have also informed the Work Plan.

1.2 Ambition for children at risk of offending and re-offending

We are working to prevent offending and improve children's outcomes as set out in the wider Children and Young People's Plan 2018-21: We want all children and young people to enjoy childhood and to be well prepared for adult life and parents to take responsibility for understanding and meeting their children's needs, enjoying their childhood with them and preparing them for adult life. Work with children at risk of offending and re-offending contributes to all outcomes sought locally, particularly that children are safe.

- Children and young people are safe;
- Children and young people are healthy;
- Children and young people have fair life chances;
- Children and young people are engaged citizens in their own community.

1.3 Responding to children's needs

Criminal justice and other agencies share the responsibility for working to prevent youth offending and keeping children and the wider public safe. Youth Offending Services carry particular responsibilities for assessing and working with children to address a range of needs linked to their risk of offending. Professionals from Police, Health, Social Care, Education and the National Probation Service help make up the multi-agency Youth Offending Service and work in an integrated way alongside other specialists and a group of volunteer Referral Order Panel Members. They have key statutory functions, including the assessment and supervision of children aged 10-17 subject to Out-of-Court Disposals and community and custodial Court Orders, giving a voice to those harmed by youth offending, enabling those who have offended to make amends for the harm they have caused, strengthening parenting skills and where, necessary, supporting effective transitions into adult services. This work is supported by a prevention service, Compass, which works with children aged 8-17 years who are assessed as being at high risk of offending and with their families.

2. Service Delivery under the Covid-19 Pandemic

1. Introduction: response to the impact of Covid-19

As the implications of the pandemic became clear and following government advice, some Youth Offending Service staff started to work from home in the week beginning 16 March 2020 and all were working from home by 23 March when most offices were closed. The key challenge was to maintain a statutory service whilst ensuring that young people and staff were kept safe from Covid-19. Initially, the priority was to maintain contact with young people in order to understand and support them with any safeguarding and mental health needs.

The Service took early steps to 'RAG'-rate its statutory and voluntary caseloads in order to identify young people with the greatest likelihood of offending and/or with welfare or safeguarding need. In practice, the most vulnerable young people known have continued to receive a consistent and responsive service. For most in this vulnerable group, weekly face to face appointments have continued, supplemented by telephone contacts. This has meant practitioners have been able to assess and respond to the emerging needs of young people and their families as lockdown continued and more recently, has eased. This has been a frightening time for young people and their families and many engaged well in different ways of working and particularly appreciated the contact and someone outside their immediate families to talk to about what was happening.

A few families were 'shielding' and their young people were reluctant to meet and so they, and those rated lower risk, together with some parents / carers, were contacted and supported by telephone. This means of communicating had mixed responses and practitioners reported that many young people felt anxious and uncomfortable talking on the telephone and so it was difficult to get an accurate understanding of how well they were coping. For most young people, especially where there was already a good relationship established with their worker, weekly sessions were usually conducted through socially distanced walks in their local neighbourhood or parks. Some meetings took place on doorsteps or within young people's gardens and although this was considered adequate, it raised difficulties with privacy and so limited the scope of conversation and young peoples' engagement. Where practitioners were able to have frank discussions with young people about the challenges they had been facing in the lockdown, they could provide support and understanding and assess their overall wellbeing. It was also an opportunity to discuss how they had been engaging in home schooling and seek to address the difficulties they encountered with this. Having face-to-face contact and an ability to have confidential conversations has been invaluable in supporting young people and has, in many instances, strengthened relationships between the worker and young person.

Practical support was offered to families across the RAG-rating, including sharing information and signposting on to other support and some food and medical deliveries.

For the first few weeks, young people appear to have remained indoors and there were reports of pressure on families and concern about an increase in domestic abuse. As they started to venture outdoors again, there were reports of anti-social behaviour and some violent and vehicle-related offending. The Service has worked alongside wider partnership initiatives to tackle domestic abuse and serious violence and has also tailored its contact with individual young people. A number of common issues have been identified with young people including access to education, employment and training, social isolation, mental health issues, difficulties in adhering to lockdown restrictions and access to information technology. There have been excellent examples of the staff team adapting to the new working environment to address such needs including supporting access to school, supporting post-16 provision, using technology to deliver interventions, addressing social isolation, supporting parents and carers and developing new reparation opportunities.

Much continues to be learned about innovative ways to deliver this service during the pandemic. The wider network of Youth Offending Services and partner agencies as well as internal colleagues within Children's Services provide ideas and learning and strengthen the service's ability to continue to work with children even if there are further restrictions on people's movements.

3 a. Children's Voices

The Youth Offending Service has continued to listen to children about their experience of the service including under lockdown and how it could be improved to better meet their needs. Focused pieces of work have been undertaken, for example, two young people travelled to London to support a charity consultation and later attended a Youth Offending Service Management Board to talk to strategic leaders about their experiences. They have continued to play an active role in staff recruitment and helping with the layout and decoration of meeting rooms.



What work did the Youth Offending Service do with you during lockdown?

It was weird over lockdown as that was such a long time and I talked to people over the phone that I hadn't met before.

In lockdown it was good to meet with my worker as I had nothing else to do - that was a good thing.

Writing the letters to old people in care homes was really good. I've never written a letter before except at school especially to someone I don't know. They were good responses from the old people too. Good to communicate like that - it was hard writing the first one but easier when I got a reply, the replies were nice and it was a good thing to do.

When the meetings are not in a formal environment it helps me. As when it's formal you think it's quite long and you can't really be bothered for it and that's why you miss appointments but when the environment is different like going for a walk or going to a cafe it doesn't feel so much like a chore.

I was disappointed not to use a studio to record but that was Covid!





What difference has working with the Youth Offending Service made to you?

My worker has helped me to calm my anger.

At the time I thought it was the worst thing to ever happen to me but I look back now and realise I would have most likely been in prison by now. I have worked with YOS for a long time, a few years and it has helped me a lot in many ways like understanding how the victim feels and learning how to control myself when I see friends fighting others.

The CV I did with the education worker was good and I used it at (local employer) today and they said they would get back to me, I was encouraged by this.

I am kinda sure that I am not likely to be doing the things I was doing before. Now I have my own job and I feel independent and am able to do my own thing. I definitely don't want to mess that up.

YOS has kept me out of trouble and this was helpful to me and my family.

I liked the relationship focus of the work. My caseworker listens well and help me sort things out.

I found it helpful to look at things like housing and income.

YOS has helped me in loads of ways like being able to understand my actions. Why I do the things I do, the consequences of my actions and how my actions affect others. As before working with YOS I never would have thought about them things.

I've been working with YOS since October 2019. I liked getting out and doing practical work like at the allotment. It's been good to meet up regularly with my case worker, having someone there that I can talk to.

The education worker helped me do a CV and helped me look for apprenticeships and jobs and she regularly updated me on jobs and apprenticeships and now I have an apprenticeship in a restaurant working in the kitchen which is what I wanted to do.





What could we do to improve the service?

I think it helps if the young person only has 1 or 2 workers depending on the length of their Order. As having different workers constantly can be frustrating as you have to form a new relationship with them and like start over again.

In the past I have been lucky enough to work with a friend who also works with YOS. It's not for everyone but it helped me and her to attend appointments together and made it enjoyable for us both.



With reparation I think the things that are done should benefit someone-either the young person or the community. From my experience I had to clean a charity shop... take all the things off the shelves and put them on again. I know it's probably helping the shop owner but it's not really productive. Reparation should be about giving back to the community, that's what I think. Things like a bake sale for charity or something that will benefit someone.

b. Victims' Voice

The Service values feedback from those who have been harmed by children's offending behaviour and have later taken up the offer of a service to provide answers to their questions, receive letters, experienced something being 'put right' or even had opportunities to meet for mediation:

'The incident was very scary and, although he was not the only one involved, we're really grateful for his letter of apology' (husband and wife whose car was damaged whilst driving).

'I'm glad that you could tell the young person what might have happened, and I'm reassured that this won't happen again' (elderly victim near his greenhouse when stones thrown caused glass to smash).

'The young person worked really hard gardening and chatted to us, which was great' (from staff following direct reparation for having caused criminal damage) at a cemetery.

'It's been so good for all of us to tell our story and hope it helps the YOS work to bring us back together' (family members of young person who had threatened them and caused damage to the home).

'Thank you for letting me know what happened at the panel – it's good to know that they will be getting some help with their anger' (victim of criminal damage to their home).

'The (shuttle) mediation helped answer some of our questions about why the assault happened' (parents of a young person assaulted outside school by peers).

'We really appreciated having the apology, which was extremely well-written and carefully thought out' (mother and daughter assaulted whilst visiting Bath).

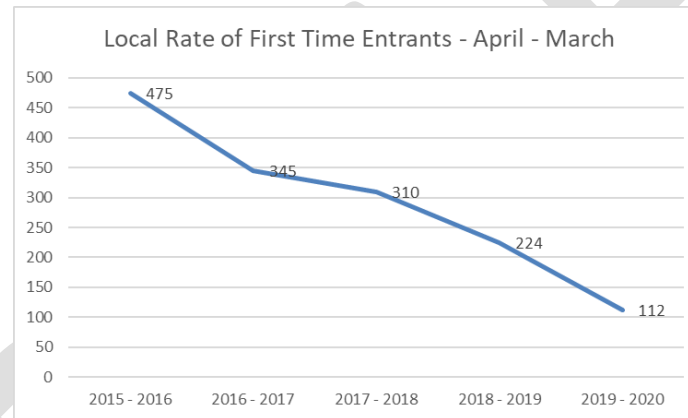
4. Performance

National Indicators

There are three national indicators for youth justice. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, local data has continued to be provided to the Youth Justice Board as required but no national comparison data has been published for re-offending and first time entrants.

A. First time entrants

The indicator is the number of young people aged 10-17 who received their first substantive outcome (Caution, Conditional Caution or Conviction) shown as a rate per 100,000 young people in the general population. The number and rate continue to reduce significantly, reflecting the positive impact of specific youth crime diversion and prevention and wider early help services which mean that children's needs and behaviour can be addressed before they become entrenched.

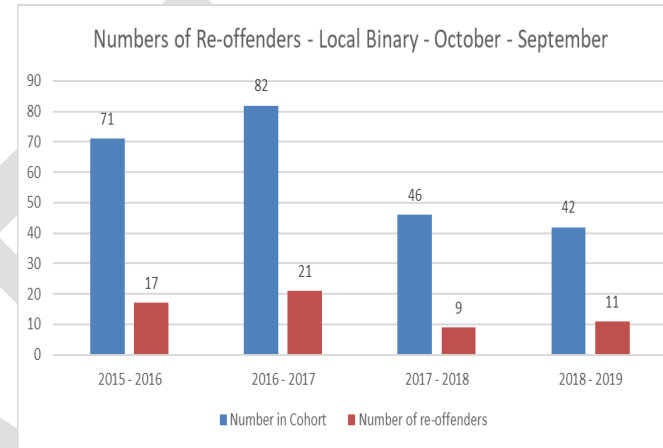
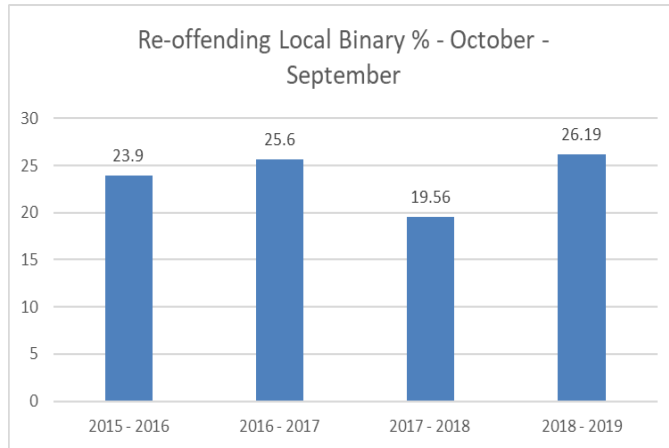


B. Re-offending

The indicator is the rate of re-offending after 3 months and 12 months of a cohort of young people who received a substantive outcome (Caution, Conditional Caution or Conviction). This is shown as a binary rate (the overall percentage of young people who re-offended) and as the rate of new offences per young person who re-offended.

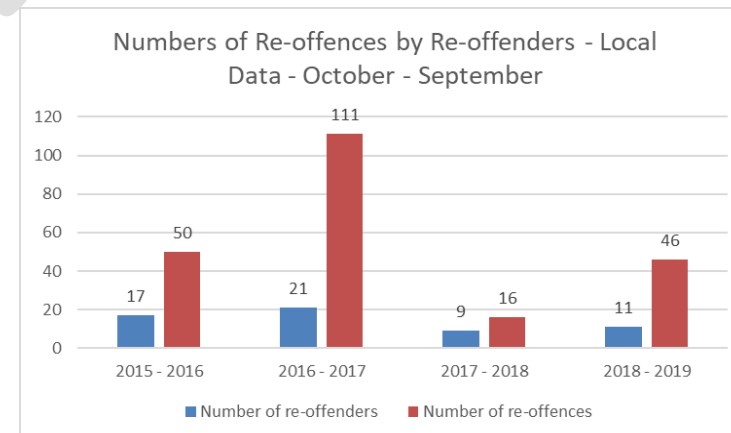
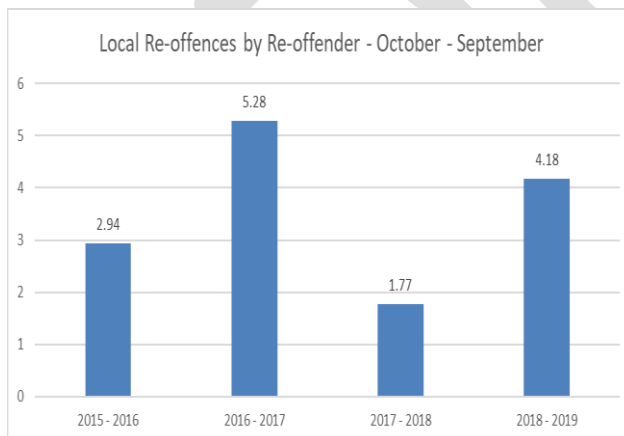
a. YOS Binary Data October 2018 – September 2019:

The tables below are taken from the local live re-offending toolkits for 12-month cohorts. The binary rate has increased from 19.56% to 26.19% but the cohorts are very small – 11 out of 42 compared with 9 out of 46.



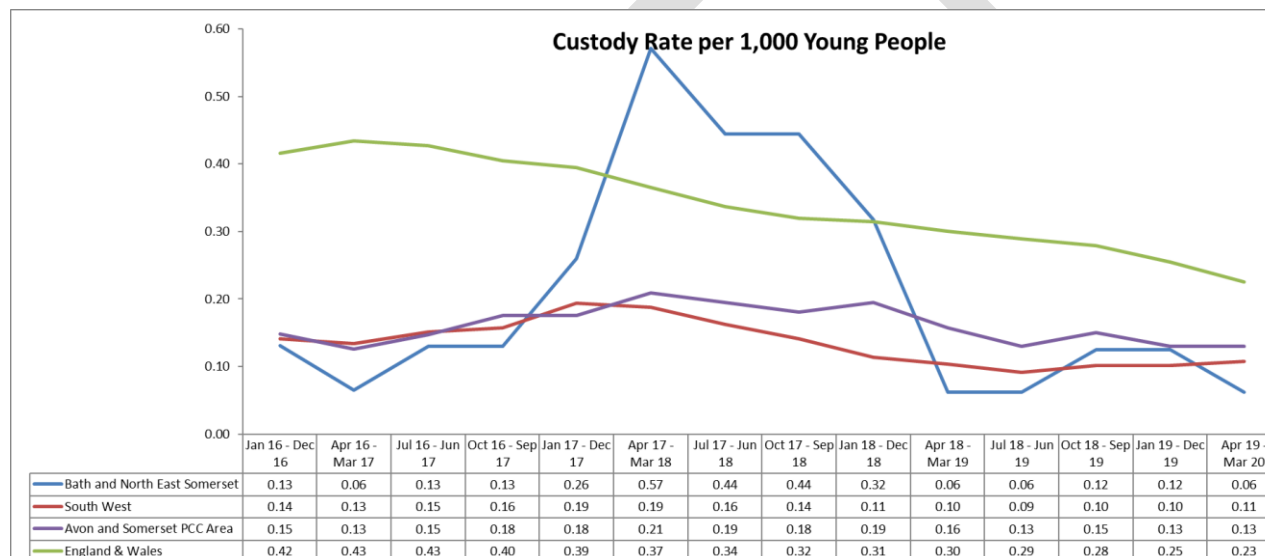
b. YOS Re-offences per Re-offender:

This rate of re-offending increased significantly from 1.77 to 4.18. Eleven young people committed 46 further offences in the 2018 – 2019 cohort, compared with 9 young people who committed 16 offences in the 2017 -2018 cohort. As numbers in the formal youth justice system continue to reduce, there is a much greater proportion of children with complex needs which impact on their offending.



C. Custody

This indicator is the number of custodial sentences passed by the Courts, presented as a rate per 1000 young people aged 10-17 in the general population. The local ambition remains to keep young people out of custody wherever it is safe to the public to do so because outcomes for young people in custody tend to be poorer than for those sentenced within the community. The multi-agency Custody Review Panel monitors outcomes, identifies learning and recommends actions in respect of young people at risk of custody as part of its standard agenda. The Youth Offending Service works closely with other children’s services to develop community proposals wherever it is considered safe to do so. Performance is considerably improved, with just one custodial sentence in each of the last two years and the custody rate reducing from 0.12 to 0.06. All comparators have also shown a reduction in the same period.



Self assessment

Youth Offending Services are obliged to work in accordance with a National Standards Framework and during 2019-20, were asked to conduct a comprehensive self assessment of adherence to a revised set of Standards. Locally, the Management Board played an active part in this assessment, including participating in an audit of cases and review of policies, procedures and protocols and judging against the following.

Judgment for each standard	Strategic (management board and partner self-assessment)	Operational (case file assessments)
Outstanding	A comprehensive assurance system is in place and there is regular support and challenge by all partners at the management board and within each respective agency. This includes driving improved outcomes for each standard 1-5 and thereby the children in receipt of the services	80% + or majority of all cases sampled
Good	The assurance approaches are well evidenced frequent and there is a focus on achieving the outcomes for each standard 1 – 5.	65 - 79% or most cases sampled > 85%
Requires improvement	There is some evidence of assurance approaches but this is not systematic.	50 – 64% or in some cases sampled
Inadequate	There are insufficient approaches to assurance.	under 50% or inconsistent or too few cases sampled

The local evidenced adherence was scored as follows and associated improvement actions have been included in the annual Work Plan below:

National Standards	Self Assessment	Self Assessment
National Standard 1 – Out of Court Disposals	Strategic audit: Good	Operational audit: Outstanding
National Standards 2 – Work in Courts	Strategic audit: Good	Operational audit: Outstanding
National Standard 3 – In the Community	Strategic audit: Good	Operational audit: Good
National Standard 4 – Work in Custody	Strategic audit: Good	Operational audit: Outstanding
National Standards 5 - Transitions	Strategic audit: Requires improvement	Operational audit: Outstanding

5. Risks to future delivery against youth justice outcomes

The following risks have been identified for delivery of the Youth Justice Plan and the statutory purpose of preventing youth offending.

Risk	Impact	Likelihood	Actions to reduce/manage the risk
Exploitation of young people, including into offending	High	High	The Service now plays a key role in the Serious Violence Operational Group (as well as the Exploitation Operational Group), giving opportunity to raise concern about individuals and networks, work with colleagues to address risks and seek assurance about how the partnership is working together to keep children and the wider public safe. It will be involved in a contextualised safeguarding audit to help take this practice forward.
More serious youth offending, including serious violence	High	Medium/ High	A small number of young people, often those who are being exploited, are at risk of committing violent and drug dealing offences. Those who carry knives are at heightened risk of committing serious violent offences. The Service has reviewed the interventions it uses and is working with the wider partnership through the Serious Violence Steering Group, to ensure that support to young people is 'joined up,' with a key focus on prevention. Continued participation in the enhanced case management pilot also presents opportunities for more structured, trauma recovery, work.
Increase in Looked After Children offending	High	Medium	The Service is leading on a local protocol to prevent unnecessary criminalisation of Looked after children. Implementation of this will support a partnership review of the use of restorative responses.
Increase in ethnic minority background disproportionality	High	Medium	The Service is now populating a national toolkit to improve understanding of this issue and is working with the Local Criminal Justice Board Lammy Sub-Group to understand how improvements can be made across the board.
Insufficient readiness for Inspection	High	Low	The Youth Offending management and team are actively preparing for Inspection, using the national framework. It is a standing item at Management Board.
Not able to deliver the Work Plan	High	Low	Regular review in management meetings and Management Board oversight and the Council's Scrutiny arrangements will hold everyone to account and provide support in progressing this.

Maintaining staff and business continuity	Medium	Medium	The relatively small Service is particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in staffing levels when people leave or are Sick. This is exacerbated under the current pandemic. The Service has reviewed its business continuity plan and risk assessments and operating models and is keeping these under careful review in light of the latest government, Public Health and Council advice. Commitment to staff well-being and provision of good quality Supervision and training support staff in this difficult time as well as maintaining its reputation and ability to attract good candidates.
Maintaining two office bases	Medium	Medium	Use of the central Bath reporting office depends on having two staff available for cover and is linked with staffing levels as above. This is kept under careful review.

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6. Youth Justice Work Plan 2020-21

National Standard 1: Out of Court Disposals		
Actions	Owner	Timescale
1. Propose making the Out of Court Disposal Panel a Sub-Group of the YOS Management Board to support local accountability and oversight	Chair of YOS Management Board	September 2020
2. Complete the B&NES protocol for Reduction of Criminalisation of Looked After Young people, including a focus on transitions.	Head of Service (with task and finish group)	September 2020
3. Ensure planning is explicitly done with the young person and their parent / carer after the Panel meeting and that the young person has a copy of their plan	Operational Manager	September 2020
4. Explore extending Out of Court Disposal Panel membership to make it more representative of the partnership	Head of Service	December 2020
5. Undertake a local review of Out of Court Disposal outcomes in relation to ethnicity and gender and consult on actions needed	Business and Performance Manager	December 2020
6. Revise the quality assurance and audit framework to include Out of Court Disposals and ensure independent oversight, including from Board members	Head of Service	December 2020
7. Survey pre-Court work satisfaction rates of children and their families and of those harmed by their offending and introduce any changes identified	Operational Manager	March 2021
8. Develop a pathway to show integration of youth crime preventative activity with a focus on serious violence	Head of Service (with Youth Crime Prevention Board and Serious Violence Steering Group)	March 2021

9. Consider how we measure effectiveness of all local youth crime prevention activity including collating service user feedback	Head of Service (with Youth Crime Prevention Board)	March 2021
10. Introduce an overall diversion strategy for B&NES	Police	March 2021
11. Review information sharing protocols to ensure they are up-to-date and fit for purpose	Business and Performance Manager	March 2021
National Standard 2: Court		
Actions	Owner	Timescale
1. Promote use of Magistrates' Pre Sente Report feedback system to ensure feedback in every case	Court representative on Management Board	September 2020
2. Reintroduce the Court information leaflet for young people	Operational Manager	September 2020
3. Introduce quarterly monitoring of congruence between Court proposals and outcomes	Business and Performance Manager	September 2020
4. Undertake a review of Court outcomes by gender and ethnicity and consult on actions needed	Business and Performance Manager	December 2020
5. Update Remand Management Protocol	Operational Manager	December 2020
National Standard 3: In the Community		
Actions	Owner	Timescale
1. Utilise the 'Social GRRRAACCEEESSS' tool in staff Supervision to ensure consideration is given to a wider range of diversity issues ¹	Operational Manager and	September 2020

¹ An acronym for a learning tool describing aspects of personal and social identity and related power and privilege, from Research in Practice, funded by the Department for Education

	Deputy Team Manager	
2. Ensure workshops for YOS practitioners and Panel Members to improve 'SMART' planning	Operational Manager	September 2020
3. Design and deliver a workshop about diversity to the YOS and ensure follow up in case discussions and Supervision	Deputy Team Manager	December 2020
4. Update Protocols with key partner agencies including Social Care, Police and National Probation Service (to include clarity about identification of enduring worker and delivery of the Enhanced Case Management and AMBIT approaches where relevant)	Head of Service (with Avon & Somerset Heads of Service)	March 2021
National Standard 4: Secure		
Actions	Owner	Timescale
1. Refresh SEND-Youth Custody Protocol	Education Officer	December 2020
2. Strengthen use of the Custody Exit Information Form to record young people's feedback on their experience of custody including transportation from Court to custody, being able to call family on their first day in custody and their experience of how behaviour is managed in order that the YOS and/or Board can escalate any issues	Operational Manager	March 2021
3. Explore the feasibility of Community Paediatricians inputting to initial health assessments for Looked After Children in custody	Chair of the YOS Management Board	March 2021
National Standard 5: Transitions		
Actions	Owner	Timescale
1. Review and address challenges around youth safeguarding assessments when transitioning to adult services	NPS member of the YOS Management Board	March 2021
2. Undertake analysis of young people's re-offending after they have transitioned to NPS and incorporating their feedback on the experience of transition	NPS member of the YOS Management Board	March 2021

Organisational Structure and Responsibility		
1. Review how YOS can continue to work safely in the coming months as the lockdown arrangements change and it anticipates increased demand.	Chair of Management Board and Head of Service	Ongoing
3. Clarify how services can be provided to shielded children and families	Operational Manager	Ongoing
3. Keep the BCSSP aware of the challenges over the next few months. The Management Board needs to continue to champion the work of the YOS and ensure it is sufficiently resourced.	Chair of Management Board and Head of Service	Ongoing
Organisational Culture		
1. Refresh the vision and values statements for youth justice in B&NES	Head of Service	September 2020
2. Consult on what has worked well for children under lockdown and what they would like to see continued or developed as a result of recent innovations	Operational Manager	December 2020
3. Re-visit concept of observed practice/peer reviews and feedback including as part of a wider Practice Week	Head of Service	December 2020