



**MONMOUTHSHIRE & TORFAEN
YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE
(YOS) Continuity Plan in response to
the COVID-19 Pandemic – March 2020
*Revised version June 2020**

Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOS, Mamhilad Park Estate, Mamhilad,
Pontypool, Torfaen NP4 0YT

Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOS: COVID-19 Continuity/Delivery Plan

This continuity and delivery plan has been developed to ensure there is a shared response from Gwent Youth Offending Services / Teams in relation to all areas of work, thus ensuring service provision consistency and to identify Monmouthshire & Torfaen's YOS specific requirements.

The Gwent YOS Service Managers met to agree areas of work to ensure consistency of service delivery across Gwent, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst this plan has been agreed at Service Manager Level, it is subject to amendment in response to changes in the COVID-19 pandemic and or Government advice and guidance.

Courts

The normal working practices of the Youth Court were suspended for 8 weeks, when the 'lockdown' period was initiated, except for remands and custody cases held overnight. From the 15th June, 2020, HMCTS announced that Courts will begin to resume hearings, with a number of social distancing and safety measures in place. The Court will operate to facilitate social distancing, in all areas. Appropriate interval slots have been factored into the listing and defendants have been advised of any revised times for surrendering to their bail. Black/yellow hazard tape will be used, around the building, as a physical barrier/visual reminder to people to obey distancing advice. Posters and information bulletins repeat this advice at all HMCTS premises. The courtrooms the courts will operate to allow everyone to maintain their distance from one and other.

Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOS has a Statutory Team rota and the allocated member of staff will contact Police custody and the Court to determine whether any young people have been detained overnight.

In the event that a young person is placed before the Court a number of procedures will be followed, in order to maximise the safety of all those involved. First, the YOS will liaise with the Court clerk to discuss whether representation can be made via telephone, video conferencing or email or other technologies. The YOS Officer will ascertain, from detention staff, whether the child is:

- Experiencing a high temperature (fever)
- Experiencing a new continuous cough
- And/or they have been self-isolating due to residing with a person displaying the above symptoms.

If detention staff respond positively to any of the above, then the YOS Officer will liaise with the line manager and the interview and presentation of findings will happen remotely. The YOS Officer will not attend the Court.

If detention staff confirm that the young person is not displaying either symptom and

has not been self-isolating, then the YOS Officer will be required to attend Court. In this case, YOS staff will follow the protocol agreed by Gwent YOS Service Managers for attendance at the Gwent Police Custody Suite, as outlined in the Appropriate Adult section of this plan (p.4).

Verbal stand down reports will be considered on a case-by-case basis, in agreement with the Court. A brief assessment will be completed at Court, during an agreed adjourned period and a verbal report then given. Consideration needs to be given to last YOS assessment date, up to 3 months ago and seriousness of sentencing, within the 3-month YJB guideline, (verbal stand down reports may not be considered suitable for potential custody cases). Under Covid 19 restrictions there may not be an appropriate area within the court to complete an assessment and therefore it will not be possible to complete a stand-down report in all circumstances.

If Youth Courts or Magistrates Courts revert back to virtual hearings, the YOS will engage via any communication method implemented.

If assessments can be started at Court safely, they will be whilst the young person is present. This will depend on the identification of a suitable space to allow social distancing.

YOS Operational Managers will consider if additional staff members are required to attend Court dependent upon risk and need. In this event, they would travel separately to maintain social distancing.

Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOS will continue to provide weekend 'on call' cover, as outlined by the duty rota. The Manager back-up provision will continue, throughout.

Bail and Remand Hearings

i) Bail

The Court Officer will consider the restrictions imposed by the COVID -19 outbreak, when proposing a feasible bail package. For instance, Bail Support will involve telephone calls and face-to-face contact. The use of external controls such as an Electronically Monitored Curfew will be carefully assessed, in view of the heightened risks of domestic abuse within family homes.

Officers will be aware that, as of the 30th of March 2020, Location Monitoring (LM) GPS tags are available to the Court as part of sentencing or bail packages. Further information regarding LM can be found at:

Y:\Shared\EDYouthJustice\3 - Statutory YJ Team\COURT INFORMATION\GPS Tagging

ii) Remand to the Care of the Local Authority

If the child's behaviour is so serious that Remand to the Care of the LA is a consideration, then the Court Officer should immediately notify the line manager and

Children's Services.

It is essential that a copy of the Remand Notice is obtained by the Court Officer, before they depart from the Court. If the young person is an out of county child, then the remand paperwork must be made out to their home Local Authority.

As the young person is now remanded to the Care of the Local Authority, the Court Officer will need to liaise with the line manager regarding transport. The decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. Issues regarding social distancing will need to be planned for and addressed in these instances.

iii) Remand to Youth Detention Accommodation (YDA)

Should the Officer identify that the young person is likely to be remanded or sentenced to YDA, they should notify the line manager immediately. The line manager can subsequently support with AssetPlus stages and liaising with the Youth Custody Service.

Given the current situation, it is important to ensure the AssetPlus process is adhered to, to ensure appropriate safeguarding of children and young people. It is particularly important that the latest AssetPlus Custody Stage is sent to Youth Custody Service Placements Team at the earliest opportunity. This should be completed via Connectivity, where possible. In the event that Connectivity is not possible, the AssetPlus should be sent to the following regional secure email address:

YCSPT-Wales@justice.gov.uk

The Court Officer will discuss any concerns regarding the sharing of custody related information with the Senior Placement Officer.

Secure Estate / Parc YOI

All secure estates have implemented procedures in response to COVID-19. All visits have been cancelled and meetings are being conducted via telephone conferencing and Skype.

Contact is maintained for updates and developments, in the first instance, with YOI Parc on a fortnightly basis. This is achieved via telephone conference / briefings representatives of YOI Parc and all relevant Youth Justice Services.

Discussions will be held between YOS Officers and the secure estate to establish the most effective communication methods to replace direct contact / planning meetings / reviews / licence arrangements.

When contacting children, in the secure estate, discussions can include:

- Safeguarding – any concerns expressed by the child?
- Welfare
- Family contact arrangement for the child during lockdown period
- Financial situation/money for calls to family etc.
- Advocacy

- Contact methods for the children for YOS staff and families
- Provide any information needed/check understanding of situation

YOS Officers will maintain regular contact with the secure estate staff and the child. This will ensure that any information regarding Early or Executive releases are communicated in a timely manner.

YOS Officers will contact the child's immediate family regularly, to provide reassurance. YOS Officers will notify family members that there is an expectation that they will transport a young person upon release. In the event that the young person is not returning home, alternative accommodation will have been sourced prior to release and, if appropriate, a travel warrant will be obtained.

Appropriate Adults (AA)

Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOS has an AA duty rota. Should the Police contact the YOS for AA representation, the following procedures will be followed:

- Gwent Police will assess the need to take children into the custody unit
- Gwent Police will consider bail, RUI and future VA options as outcomes to reduce the need for AAs
- Should custody be assessed as necessary, Gwent Police will strongly seek family members and friends for AA role
- Custody unit staff will inform YOS at point of request for an AA, if someone in the custody unit has declared that they have the coronavirus or symptoms or have stated they were self-isolating and why prior to arrest. All appropriate information will be shared with YOS, especially in relation to the coronavirus.
- YOS staff will ask the triage questions when AAs are requested; the manager will oversee this process.

The AA will ascertain from custody staff whether the child is:

- Experiencing a high temperature (fever)
 - Experiencing a new continuous cough
 - And/or they have been self-isolating due to residing with a person displaying the above symptoms.
- If custody staff respond positively to any of the above, then the AA will liaise with their line manager.

In all cases, PPE will be provided by Gwent Police and must be worn by YOS staff at all times, whilst in the Custody Unit. Gwent Police will ensure accommodation will facilitate appropriate social distancing, as per Government guidance.

- For all other AA requests, once the above triage questions have been asked and confirmed as "no", staff should confirm all efforts to establish a family member or friend as AA. If no family or friend is available, YOS staff will confirm social distancing arrangements. YOS AA will request to speak to the child. The

YOS member can speak with the child to confirm responses to triage questions.

- Before leaving to undertake the role of AA, YOS staff MUST check that PPE equipment will be provided and what that entails / includes and how they will obtain it.
- Before leaving to undertake the role of AA, YOS staff MUST also ensure that they have collected PPE available from the YOS offices, at Mamhilad to supplement the PPE provided by Gwent Police, if needed.
- YOS staff will only enter custody while wearing / using appropriate PPE equipment and this must be worn at all times.
- YOS staff will not undertake the transporting of children, at the end of any AA duties.
- YOS staff will take any sanitiser, anti-bacterial wipes or other PPE equipment available to them from their YOS, for use after leaving the custody unit.
- If there are any further concerns or issues, following the above procedures being considered, YOS staff MUST communicate with Team Managers for support and clarification and direction regarding AA duties.

Assessments

Initial, review and closure Asset Plus assessments and Bureau assessment will be completed via telephone or virtual communication methods.

It is acknowledged that the quality of the assessments may reduce due to virtual interviews. Furthermore, access to information held by other agencies may not be forthcoming during a time where many services are closed and staff redeployed.

Any outstanding information required will be recorded on the AssetPlus or Bureau assessment, and this will be followed up as soon as practically possible.

Priority Groups

- Future Behaviours - ROSH – High / Very High
- Safety & Wellbeing (vulnerability / exploitation) – High / Very high
- Likelihood of reoffending – High / Very High
- Child Protection cases (usually covered in above second bullet point)

Risk Management Arrangements

In relation to high / very high-risk statutory cases, these cases will be reviewed in case management discussions and supervision and will be considered within the virtual Risk Management Panel process, via MS Teams. Clear and robust plans will continue to be implemented in response to these reviews, with necessary modifications put in place as a result of COVID-19.

Prevention and Out-of-Court Disposal Cases

The service will continue to engage with Prevention and Out-of-Court Disposal cases; all assessment, review and planning, relating to these cases, will be modified in light of the COVID-19 crisis.

Exploitation Cases

These cases will remain medium / high/ very high risk cases. These will be reviewed via the Risk Management Panel Process.

COVID-19 Case Practice Response

Our usual practice has had to change due to workers not being able to make home visits, as a result of social distancing requirements; therefore, the service has to be creative in the way it makes contact with children and their families. The use of texts, emails, FaceTime, WhatsApp and Skype is encouraged and will be used to keep in contact and engage with children.

Workers will now be expected to contact children and their families daily, if necessary but certainly weekly, to ensure that they know that support is available to them and that usual service is continuing. Signposting, to support mechanisms, will be provided to families to help them cope with the lockdown and restrictions.

Any ISS interventions will be complied with, whilst implementing full guidance from both Welsh and UK Governments and utilising the appropriate PPE.

It is acknowledged that families may experience added pressures at home, due to schools being closed. Teenagers are often free to go out; however, they are now expected to stay in the home environment, which may create more pressure for them, their parents and families. We will aim to provide our families with resources to support this difficult situation.

They may also be concerned about the COVID-19 restrictions and symptoms. COVID-19 advice and guidance will be provided to families, by YOS workers. Daily COVID-19 Senior Management Meetings are held to ensure that teams are updated with advice and guidance, as it changes, to reflect new information received.

In appropriate circumstances only, YOS staff may wish to discuss with their line manager the possibility of a face to face contact. Any face to face contact will respect the social distancing protocols and health and safety procedures. The presumption is that staff will not enter family homes without the agreement of a YOS Manager and only in exceptional circumstances.

If there are imminent Risk of Serious Harm concerns to others, the Case Manager will follow usual procedures by contacting the Seconded Police Officer, 101 reporting or 999 depending upon their seriousness and urgency of the situation. Similarly, the YOS will continue to submit any Child Protection and Safeguarding concerns to Children's Services Single Point of Access (SPOA) team.

All contacts are to be recorded on the Childview electronic case management system, as a contact, entitled:
COVID-19 crisis contact with (name and relationship to young person)

Management Oversight for ChildView recordings during Covid 19

Case Managers, following discussion with Line Manager, will record a contact entitled: COVID-19 planning.

This may include consideration of:

- Risk levels
- Risk management plan.
- Communication and contact strategy for all professionals involved in the YOS contact/communication plans.
- Resources to be used, with the child – content of contact sessions.
- Form of contact/communication with children/families and frequency.
- The voice of the child and the parent / carer will be captured in discussions, with case holders.
- Communication method preferred by the family and not what is easier for the case holder (where possible). This must fulfil current safety guidance, relating to COVID-19.

Panels and Bureaus

The YOS will consider proportionate assessment and reports as above. Virtual Referral Order panels will be attempted, using a variety of communication / conferencing methods, each ensuring that the voice of the child is captured. Ultimately, Bureau Panel is a police decision-making process, in order that YOS can complete assessments and reports, schedule the panels and seek agreement re participation methods, for all involved and deliver outcome and associated interventions. However, police will consider how they capture the child's and parents' / carers' signatures on documents required by the police, for their processes. If panels are to be cancelled / postponed, it will be a police decision (in communication with the YOS).

If the police postpone Bureau Panels, this will affect children receiving their sanctions and starting their interventions. If Gwent Police postpone, YOS Police Officers will need to not triage cases through to YOS for allocation for future panels after postponement is lifted, as any assessments will be weeks out of date and will not meet National Standards. Therefore, no new cases should be passed to YOS and Gwent Police should "hold" outcomes/sanctions not YOS.

Reparation Hours

During the Covid 19 period, reparation hours will be completed via the use of resources such as educational You Tube videos that staff agree. After giving time for the child to watch them, the staff member will then discuss them with the child. The suitability of videos will be decided by the relevant staff members. Staff will consider ways of continuing to provide opportunities for young people to complete their reparation hours but only if it is safe to do so and complies with social distancing and government advice and guidance.

Victims and Restorative Justice

The YOS Seconded Police Officer will continue to liaise with the YOS Victim Liaison Officer (VLO) to ensure that contact is made with victims via telephone. It is acknowledged that convening victim impact assessments, via telephone conferencing, is far from ideal; however, it is important that victims continue to have a voice. The VLO will continue to contact and update victims who have requested ongoing services.

Victim impact sessions will continue to be delivered, as part of case management interventions.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

The seconded CAMHS practitioner will continue to provide consultations to staff and will maintain regular telephone contact with children and young people. The young people assessed, as requiring acute interventions, will be contacted more frequently.

Young people's safety plans will be adapted to reflected the additional pressures and anxieties caused by COVID-19.

Substance Misuse Interventions

Similarly, Substance Misuse Intervention will continue via telephone and other technologies. The level of contact will be determined by the individual level of risk, need and intervention.

ETE

Monmouthshire & Torfaen schools remain open for the children of key workers, and for children who are deemed vulnerable. The ETE worker will continue to engage and support vulnerable young people known to YOS, via telephone and other technologies.

The YOS Education Officer will continue to cross-reference the data received from the schools with the YOS caseload, and notify the relevant Case Manager of any developments.

Supervision

The COVID19 pandemic requires all YOS staff to work from home. This can heighten anxieties and create a sense of isolation. Indeed, decisions and assessments usually made with input and reflection from peers are increasingly made in isolation. It is therefore essential that supervision continues.

As far, as is possible, supervision will be the normal agreed format; however, it is acknowledged that modifications and flexibility will need to be available, in order to ensure that staff are fully supported.

Managers will continue to be available on a daily basis to discuss complex cases and to provide emotional support.

Team Meetings

Team Meetings will be held via MS Teams, as per the normal timetable. A Team Meeting will be convened urgently, should circumstances require it.

YOS regional and YJB national meetings will continue via teleconferencing. Managers contributing to the meetings will send updates to the team to ensure that the latest information is shared.

MCC issues a daily Bulletin to all staff outlining the latest developments.

Staff working locations

All Monmouthshire & Torfaen YOS staff are currently working from home and are able to remotely access emails and the case management recording system.

Team members are aware that if necessary, they may be re-deployed to support other essential and critical services.

All Children's Services teams have their own laptop. They have also been allocated Smart phones and are therefore equipped to continue service delivery from their home environments, without much disruption. Wellbeing and practical support is offered to the team to ensure they can manage their working commitments around their increased family pressures. No difficulties are envisaged in this area, due to the existing agile working arrangements. Equally, when the COVID19 crisis ends, the team should be able to revert to their office-based positions without difficulty.

Staff Well-Being

At this difficult time, it is important that we take time to look after ourselves. Everyone will adapt differently to working from home and social isolation, and there is no right or wrong way, so it is important for people to find the way that works best for them.

Staff are encouraged to maintain contact with their line managers and colleagues to discuss any issues or concerns they may have.

Overview

During this period of crisis, the situation will remain fluid and may change without significant notice. Therefore, the team is expected to be 'office ready' and prepared for every eventuality; however, safety and wellbeing will remain the paramount

consideration.

Monmouthshire and Torfaen Youth Offending Service will continue providing the best quality service possible, within the confines of the COVID-19 restrictions. We will strive to create opportunities where innovative ideas can be considered and trialed where possible, ensuring it is safe to do so to maximise the opportunity to reach as many children as possible.

We will also work closely with our partners, who we value as part of our service, to ensure that they are included in supervision and team issues and are supported to help young people and enhance service delivery in their usual way.

YJB Contacts

In the event that you are required to contact the YJB, the Wales regional contacts are:

Sue Thomas
Mark Cox

07989130696
07825860597

Sue.Thomas@yjb.gov.uk
mark.cox@yjb.gov.uk