

A Review of Techniques for Effective Engagement and Participation

Research study conducted for the Youth Justice
Board for England and Wales

Ipsos MORI

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Glossary

Assessment, Planning Interventions and Supervision (APIS) – refer to core elements of youth justice practice (see YJB, 2008).

Asset – a structured assessment tool used in the youth justice system prior to any intervention with a young person. *Asset* is used to assess both static and dynamic risk factors for reconviction and is predictive of reconviction over one and two years. In the case of Detention and Training Orders it must be updated prior to the young person's return to the community. Its aim is to identify particular needs or risk factors the young person may have to enable practitioners to structure intervention effectively.

Case Management Information Systems (CMIS) – computerised case management systems used by youth offending teams (YOTs) to collate information about the young people they work with, typically 'Careworks' or 'YOIS'.

Detention and Training Order (DTO) – allows for a period of custody for 12–17 year olds. The length of the sentence can be between four months and two years, the first part of which is spent in custody and the second part in the community. Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programmes (ISSP) can be specified in the supervision notice covering the community portion of the order.

Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programmes (ISSP) – a multi-modal intervention designed to address the criminogenic risks and welfare needs presented by persistent young offenders. ISSP has a number of requirements for supervision, such as a minimum number of hours in education per week.

Key Elements of Effective Practice (KEEPs) – describe the features of effective services and are intended to support consistency of delivery across youth justice services.

Multi-modal – the programme has multiple components to tackle the multiple needs of young offenders.

National Standards – the minimum level of service required of those delivering youth justice services set by the Home Secretary. These were revised in 2009.

Offending behaviour work – addressing the key causes of offending with the aim of reducing reoffending by young people. Some programmes are offence related, enabling young people to think about the offences they have committed, and others are more indirect in their approach, for example focusing on problem-solving skills.

Police National Computer (PNC) – the national computer that records police information on those arrested and prosecuted for crimes.

Pre-sentence reports (PSRs) – these are prepared by the YOTs to assist the courts in their deliberations upon sentence.

Supervision Order (SO) – a community sentence for young people aged 10–17. The primary role of the supervising officer is to advise, assist and befriend. The order can last for up to three years (of which six months can be on ISSP). Specified activities (such as ISSP intensive requirements) can currently be

attached to a SO for up to 90 days. The Supervision Order will be replaced in November 2009 by a generic community sentence, similar to the Probation Community Order.

What Works – the ‘What Works’ principles provide guidance regarding the effectiveness of interventions and have driven youth justice reforms. Two of these principles are that community penalties tend to yield more effective outcomes than custodial penalties (‘community base’) and that the intensity of the intervention should be matched to the risk of reoffending (‘risk classification’).

Youth Justice Board (YJB) – a non-departmental public body established in September 1998 to co-ordinate the youth justice system for England and Wales. Its objective is to prevent offending by children and young people by preventing crime and the fear of crime, identifying and dealing with young offenders and reducing reoffending.

Youth offending teams (YOTs) – multi-disciplinary teams, which have the role of coordinating services in their local authority areas. They have responsibility for supervising young offenders and working with young offenders who are at risk of offending.

Executive summary

Introduction and aims

Ipsos MORI was commissioned by the Youth Justice Board to examine how young people can be effectively engaged in youth justice services. This research focused on identifying examples of how youth offending team (YOT) practitioners engage young people and the barriers both practitioners and young people encounter. The report explores the views of (YOT) practitioners about how best to engage young people and the barriers to successful engagement. This is complemented by the views of young people about their own engagement with the services offered and their experiences of the system.

The key objectives of the research were to:

1. Understand what practitioners believe engagement to be, and how this might be demonstrated by young people.
2. Investigate the extent to which practitioners believe young people are engaged.
3. Determine what methods and techniques are being used to engage young people by:
 - a. identifying examples of promising practice, and
 - b. exploring barriers to engagement.
4. Explore 'who' works in the effective engagement of young people – that is, examine the characteristics that workers believe are necessary to build up positive relationships with young people.

Background

*Key Elements of Effective Practice – Engaging Young People Who Offend (KEEP)*¹, Mason and Prior (2008), highlighted that little research had been conducted into the engagement of young people in the youth justice system. This document suggests that 'although there is a growing body of research that focuses upon interventions, there is rarely detailed consideration of the techniques for engaging young people that are employed within them' (p.8). This research is a first step in that direction – focusing on what practitioners believe engagement to be, how they facilitate engagement, and the views of young people about their participation in youth justice services.

This report aims to supplement the guidance provided in the KEEP document, exploring practitioners' and young people's perceptions of effective techniques and barriers to engagement. It provides evidence of how practitioners have worked with individuals to overcome difficulties and outlines examples of good practice from which others can learn and gain ideas. It also presents suggestions for YOT managers and operational managers about how to support their staff to engage the young people they supervise, and highlights issues for the YJB to consider at a national level.

¹ The KEEP documents are available on the YJB website: <http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/practitioners/ImprovingPractice/EffectivePractice/KEEPS/>

Methods

The research adopted a mixed method approach and took place between August 2007 and April 2008. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used across the three stages of the study:

- **Stage 1:** a sample of YOT workers was invited to participate in a discussion group to inform the development of the questionnaire
- **Stage 2:** an online survey of YOT workers was developed and undertaken to gain the views of practitioners across England and Wales. In total, 421 practitioners responded from 66 YOTs across the 10 regions of England and Wales
- **Stage 3:** interviews were undertaken in 10 YOT case study areas to explore the survey responses in detail from both the practitioner and young person's perspective. In total, 125 interviews were conducted with young people (78) and practitioners (47).

Defining engagement

Defining engagement and participation is not a straightforward task. Mason and Prior (2008: 12) suggest that 'passive involvement' in activities, though regarded as 'participation', 'is not enough'; rather, engagement consists of young people being committed to the objectives of a programme.² Similarly, in this research, participation tended to be seen to relate to young people turning up to appointments, meeting targets and completing worksheets. Forming positive relationships, being motivated to change and being aware of the consequences of behaviour were seen to define engagement. However, most workers surveyed found it difficult to differentiate between engagement and participation, with clear overlaps existing between the two. Indeed, there are difficulties arising from Mason and Prior's definition, primarily that, other than by actually stopping offending, young people may have problems 'demonstrating commitment' to a programme. In which case, 'engagement' becomes a synonym for desistance from offending. It may be that 'engagement', like 'resilience', is a concept which defies definition in any meaningful sense.

Supervisor/supervisee relationship

Previous research of the Probation Service highlights that the relationship between supervisor/supervisee can be important in facilitating the process of change. However, Burnett (2004)³ suggests it has become unfashionable to talk about the "relational basis" within offender management. As with other elements

² Mason, P. and Prior, D. (2008) *Keeping Young People Engaged Source Document*. London: YJB.

³ Burnett, R. (2004) 'One-to-One Ways of Promoting Desistance: In Search of an Evidence-Base', in Burnett, R. and Roberts, C. (eds) *What Works in Probation and Youth Justice: Developing Evidence-Based Practice*. Cullompton, Devon: Willan.

of engagement, limited evidence exists within the youth justice context as to how such a bond develops and the impact it can have on improving behaviour. During interviews, staff appeared to reinforce stereotypical views about those with ‘probation’ versus ‘social work’ backgrounds, and the influence this had on their practice (the former being more about ‘compliance’, the latter about ‘welfare’). However, when asked in the survey, practitioners were clear about what they believed constituted a good basis for building a positive working relationship: ground rules such as setting boundaries and being consistent in dealing with young people, along with personal characteristics such as openness and patience. The majority of practitioners also believed that being a positive role model (70%) and flexibility of approach (60%) were ‘very important’ in encouraging young people to attend the YOT and participate in work with their caseworker. Young people frequently identified a mixture of ‘authoritative’ and ‘befriending’ elements in their workers’ approaches. However, practitioners believed ‘being a friend’ was not important for engagement, while a number did not favour adopting an authoritative approach. Consistency of worker throughout the course of intervention was also highlighted – 94% of those questioned believed this was ‘fairly important’ or ‘very important’. However, it was recognised that, as a result of staff turnover or the caseload capacity of individual workers, this was not always possible.

What facilitates engagement with youth justice services?

Wider social context: parental support

Practitioners acknowledge that young people do not ‘operate in a vacuum’ and that wider social factors or the lifestyle of the young person may prevent work being undertaken with them. When asked about what factors they believed to be important in facilitating effective work with young people, the greatest proportion of practitioners chose parental support (58% n= 421). Similarly, over three in five (61%) believe a young person’s engagement in an intervention is influenced by their family support *to a great extent*. Without family support, practitioners believed it unlikely that young people would engage with the YOT. However, young people did not always share this view – with some of those interviewed preferring that the YOT had little contact with their family.

Operational factors

While family support was seen as the key external factor (i.e. outside of the YOT), practitioners also referred to operational issues, such as the size of caseload and availability of more targeted interventions as being important for engagement (47% and 48% respectively). Concern was also expressed about the limited resources for young people on longer sentences. Although resource limitations were regarded as important, individual practitioners interviewed for the research reported they sometimes overcame this by developing their own resources. However, the opportunity to share resources and ideas within and between YOTs appeared to be limited. Practitioners also suggested that better work could be facilitated if external agencies (e.g. housing, social services) ‘took more responsibility’ and/or ‘worked more effectively’ with YOTs (39% of sample). Yet practitioners, though believing that a consistent relationship with a worker was desirable, noted that this frequently did not occur.

Variability in enforcement

An area touched on in both the survey and interviews was enforcement. Enforcement procedures are clearly set out for practitioners in national standards and these are explained to the young person during initial contact. However, both practitioners and young people interviewed for this research noted that there is variation in practitioners' use of Warnings and breaches. Some were more willing to overlook non-attendance than others, and what constituted a 'reasonable' excuse for missing an appointment varied between workers (even within the same YOT). This inconsistency seemed to prove particularly problematic in cases where there was a change in caseworker part way through the young person's sentence. A number of young people spoke of instances where changes in caseworker had led to a 'softer' approach being replaced by one that was more punitive, which was met with consternation. However, practitioners responding to the survey had very clear ideas about what should be done if a young person 'fails to engage or participate from the outset' or has 'poor attendance'.

Examples of promising practice

There were two types of practice highlighted by this research which appear to show promise within the youth justice context. The first is very general:

- Given the operational difficulties noted above, group work programmes offer an efficient means of supervision which is underutilised. Although some staff expressed reservations about group work, it was suggested that these would be assuaged if group work programmes were well funded and organised with a clear aim.
- The 'dual role' of YOTs on justice and welfare presents difficulties for staff in finding activities that fulfil both of these aims. Reparation programmes were regarded as useful tools for staff as these offer both a clear conceptual focus on paying back a 'wrong' and in some cases allow young people to gain valuable transferable skills (an example is the bike workshop given below).

The second included some very specific examples of resources which were available within case study YOTs. In brief, these were:

- Bike workshop – young people were taught how to build BMX bikes which were then given to underprivileged children in the local community.
- Music/graffiti workshop – this was run within a youth club and funded by a number of partner agencies. The aim was to give young people a space where they could create graffiti legally, learn how to make music and otherwise develop their interests.
- Intensive English course – one YOT had created a 'Rapid English Programme' which offered alternative education provision with the long-term aim of rejoining mainstream education.

While staff demonstrated creativity in overcoming local resourcing problems, they also reflected on the fact that there appeared to be little in the way of standardised guidance as to how much a scheme should relate to offending behaviour, or how much of a young person's time should be spent learning new skills, such as horse-riding or cooking. Many of these activities, while beneficial

and fun for the young person, did not, other than reducing time available to commit offences, directly address their offending behaviour.

Suggestions for policy and practice

Based on the findings from this report these suggestions are separated into those that could be considered by YOTs/YOT managers and those which are applicable to the YJB.

YOTs and YOT managers

1. Family support is central to addressing offending behaviour and engaging families is vital; YOTs should support workers in **engaging and involving families** in their work with young people to stop offending. However, as young people feel the YOT should offer them confidentiality and privacy from their families, a focus on working individually with young people must also be maintained.
2. YOT Managers could **facilitate discussion about how to engage young people**, including the sharing of ideas between those who have different professional backgrounds and preferred styles of work, in order to maximise the range of approaches available. It may help if Team Managers identify which staff members have been trained in approaches such as Motivational Interviewing and arrange for the others to receive 'cascade' training from this person (or persons).
3. Where there is a change of worker, managers should ensure that there is **adequate hand-over** and the new worker is fully briefed about what has been covered previously. Managers should also encourage staff to contact others who have previously worked with the young people they supervise, whether within or outside of the YOT.
4. While the success of schemes can be variable, there is evidence to suggest that **reparation work** can fulfil aims beyond punishment if it is engaging and imaginative and offers young people transferable skills.

Youth Justice Board

1. The importance of achieving a balance between consistency and flexibility must be noted and could be assisted by a **core set of minimum standards which allow scope for flexible practice**. Arguably, this already occurs with the use of worker discretion in relation to breach and non-compliance, and whether to work outside national standards in specific cases. Given the forthcoming amendments to national standards, overly prescriptive measures relating to working with young people may prevent staff from exercising their professional discretion which seems to be key for maintaining flexible working.
2. Given the current limited opportunities to **share effective practice** – both *within* and *between* YOTs – and the variation of working practices (which can be largely dependent on individual YOTs and the particular experience and skills of staff), consideration should be given to mapping evidence of promising practice across YOTs.

3. YJB regional managers could arrange or **facilitate meetings for YOT operational managers/senior practitioners on specific topics**, in which practical matters could be discussed and good practice ideas shared. Specific meetings could be arranged for reparation managers, for example, to enable them to share ideas and experiences of types of reparation work that can work well, in which young people participate at a high rate.

4. **Training**, particularly around specific techniques for engagement and intervention was highlighted by practitioners. Although engagement can be largely dependent on the relationship between the worker and young person, equipping practitioners with knowledge about relevant guidance, techniques, training and tools can facilitate and encourage best practice.

Introduction

Introduction

This report examines the findings of a study carried out by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Youth Justice Board to examine the engagement of young people in youth justice services. The report explores the views of youth offending team (YOT) practitioners about how best to engage young people and the barriers to successful engagement. This is complemented by the views of young people about their own engagement with the service.

In brief, the key objectives of the research were to:

- understand what practitioners believe engagement to be, and how this might be demonstrated by young people
- investigate the extent to which practitioners believe young people are engaged
- determine what methods and techniques are being used to engage young people by:
 - identifying examples of promising practice, and
 - exploring barriers to engagement
- explore ‘who’ works in the effective engagement of young people – that is, examine the characteristics that workers believe are necessary to build up positive relationships with young people.

The report discusses the implications of the findings on current practice and presents recommendations for both policy makers and practitioners.

Background

The YJB has recently published a series of updated guidance documents – the *Key Elements of Effective Practice (KEEP)*⁴ – which offer advice on the provision of youth justice services. The KEEP documents are intended to be used in conjunction with the National Standards for Youth Justice Services⁵, which set out the minimum requirements which youth justice services should meet. One of the KEEP documents focuses on effective practice for engaging young people who offend and the source document on which this is based provides a comprehensive review of the available research evidence.

Broadly speaking, this source document suggests that for an intervention to be effective it needs to include careful assessment based on established need, employ a multi-model approach (i.e. focus on more than one aspect of the young person’s behaviour or life simultaneously), involve an element of

⁴ The KEEP documents are available on the YJB website: <http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/practitioners/ImprovingPractice/EffectivePractice/KEEPS/>

⁵ The YJB’s National Standards (2010).

reparation, be 'delivered as designed', and be long-term and flexible, with a focus on continuity. In particular, the review argues that to be 'engaged' a young person must show a commitment to the objectives of an intervention or programme and a motivation to change – simply turning up and participating in an activity is not enough. However, it is also emphasised that engagement is not an end in itself, but simply a means by which change can be achieved.

The KEEP source document acknowledges that there has been a lack of further research in this area. In particular, very few studies were identified which included evidence of *specific* techniques proving to be effective with *specific* young people.

A review of the available evidence for this report identified a number of factors that have been found to facilitate engagement. For example, for supervision to be successful, it has been suggested that practitioners should adopt the following (Andrews et al, 1990; Smith, 1999):

- a 'firm but fair' use of authority, involving a clear distinction between rules and requests
- an emphasis on voluntary participation
- the use of pro-social modelling
- an advocacy role
- open, enthusiastic and caring styles of delivery.

As argued in the KEEP source document, the formation of a positive, trusting relationship between the caseworker and the young person is considered to be essential to facilitate change. However, as with other elements of engagement, limited evidence exists within the youth justice field as to how such a bond develops and the impact it can have on improving behaviour. Indeed, Burnett (2004) suggests it has become unfashionable to talk about the 'relational basis' within offender management.

As a result, this report aims to supplement the guidance provided in the KEEP document, exploring practitioners' and young people's perceptions of effective techniques and barriers to engagement. It provides evidence of how practitioners have worked with individuals to overcome difficulties and outlines examples of good practice, from which others can learn and gain fresh ideas. It also presents recommendations for YOT managers and operational managers about how to support their staff to engage the young people they supervise, and highlights issues for the YJB to consider at a national level.

Methodology

The research adopted a mixed methods approach. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used across the three stages of the study, which were:

1. An initial discussion with YOT workers to inform the research and develop the questionnaire (August 2007). The draft survey was then circulated to practitioners for comments before being finalised.
2. An online survey of YOT workers to gain an overall impression of practice within YOTs nationwide (3–19 October 2007).
3. Detailed case studies of 10 YOT areas to explore the survey responses in detail from both practitioner and young person's perspective (January–April 2008).

Online survey

Development

Prior to conducting the online survey, the research team undertook a focus group with eight YOT staff based in or around London and the South East of England (this was due to their proximity to the location of the group, and practical issues of conducting the discussion at short notice). Those interviewed included three YOT officers, one ISSP worker, one Head of Service, one Resettlement Aftercare Provision Worker, one Service Manager, and one Deputy Operational Manager (Prevention). The dual purpose of this discussion group was to ensure that practitioners were involved in developing the research and to inform the design of the online survey itself. A topic guide of questions (see appendices) based on broad overarching issues was initially developed as a starting point for the discussion group. The draft survey was circulated, via email, to practitioners who had participated in the discussion group, as well as some from other areas outside of London and the South East. Both elements informed the final survey.

Sample for online survey

Developing the sample of YOT practitioners was an extensive exercise undertaken through 'snowball' recruitment. The Youth Justice Board initially supplied a database to Ipsos MORI which included the email addresses of YOT managers who were sent an e-mail introduction to the research. This message included a request for their support and participation in the survey, and also for them to reply with a list of up to 10 of their colleagues in the YOT who work directly with young people within the YOT. The subsequent replies were sorted and used to create a sample of 1,167 YOT practitioners to whom the main survey was issued.

The survey was scripted into an online CAWI (computer aided web design) format and emailed to all contacts in the sample. The introduction included a

contact name, e-mail address and telephone number for Ipsos MORI, allowing queries to be dealt with effectively. The web-based approach allows researchers to identify the email addresses from which a survey response has been received. It therefore allows researchers to identify those who have completed the survey, those who have started but not yet completed it, and those who have not yet clicked on the survey link at all. This ensures that reminder messages are only sent to respondents who have not completed the online survey.

Survey

The online survey took place between 3–19 October 2007. The survey was designed to be as user friendly as possible. It took approximately 15 minutes to complete and was developed so that respondents could complete it in stages, with interruptions if necessary, without losing information they had already entered. The initial email to 1,167 respondents contained an introductory explanation of the research, along with a specific electronic link to the survey for each respondent/email address. Following the initial mail out to the sample of 1,167 practitioners, a reminder email was sent to all those who had not yet completed the survey. Although designed to be straightforward and quick to complete, the response rate at the close of fieldwork was 421 responses (36%)⁶. Table 1 (below) shows that the distribution of response rates covers all regions of England and Wales.

Table 1: Online survey response rates

YOT Region	Number of survey responses	Number of YOTs responding	Number of surveys sent	Response rate
East	39	4	90	43%
East Midlands	19	4	45	42%
London	65	10	228	29%
North East	28	6	80	35%
North West	42	13	146	29%
South East	44	9	101	44%
South West	36	7	88	41%
Wales	17	5	48	35%
West Midlands	37	2	86	43%
Yorkshire and the Humber	77	6	255	30%
Not stated	17	N/A	N/A	N/A
Overall	421	66	1167	36%

Source: Ipsos MORI

⁶ This relatively low response rate may be a result of factors including the short fieldwork period, the use of only one reminder email, and the potential inclusion of invalid email addresses collected through the 'snowball' recruitment process.

During the survey fieldwork, results were monitored to ascertain which YOTs were responding and any key themes emerging from results. This information was used to develop a topic guide for use in interviews with practitioners and young people to explore the results from the survey.

Analysis

Data from the survey was analysed using a standard statistical package (SPSS, see SPSS.com). The base of 421 responses was sufficient to allow sub-group analysis in some areas, and cross-tabulations were produced highlighting any significant differences between subgroups including specialism, practitioner/manager respondent type, and urban/rural split⁷ of YOTs. Results from the online survey are drawn upon throughout the body of the report where fitting. All responses from the survey are appended for information.

Interpretation of the data

When interpreting the findings of the online survey, it is important to remember that the results are based on the sample of respondents who took part in the survey and not the entire population of YOT practitioners. Consequently, results are subject to sampling tolerances, and not all differences between sub-groups will be statistically significant.

Throughout the report, we highlight differences between sub-groups of respondents – on the basis of, for example, region or gender. Differences are only commented on where they are statistically significant. A guide to statistical significance is included in Appendix IV.

Where percentages in the charts or tables in the report do not always add up to 100%, this is due to multiple answers, computer rounding and/or the exclusion of neutral, don't know or not stated responses. In addition, where percentages in the charts vary by one percentage point from those in the text, this too is simply due to computer rounding.

Throughout the charts and tables, an asterisk (*) denotes a value greater than zero, but less than 0.5%.

Young person case studies

YOT selection

Following the online survey, the data was explored qualitatively through case study visits to YOTs. In conjunction with the YJB, 10 YOTs were identified throughout England and Wales primarily according to YOT region and urban/rural setting. Detailed emails were then sent to each of the YOTs, explaining the methodology and requesting their participation in the case study phase of research. Site visits were set up at convenient times for each YOT, where researchers would visit for a minimum of two days per YOT to gather as

⁷ YOTs were divided in urban or rural areas based on how they map on to Local Authority boundaries.

much information as possible. Each of the 10 YOTs were asked to identify up to 15 young people according to selection criteria.⁸

Interviews with young people

Given the nature of YOT work and young people themselves, there were times when nominated respondents were not present at the appointed time. On these occasions, and where YOTs had been unable to timetable visits, researchers spoke to young people who attended the YOT on the relevant day. Overall, the research team conducted 78 interviews with young people in total from regions across England and Wales (see Table 1 below). All young people gave their consent for their anonymised comments to be used in the research. Interviews were conducted one-to-one, using a semi-structured format, and lasted around 15 to 20 minutes. Where young people consented, interviews were recorded and the great majority were subsequently transcribed.

Although not a primary aim of the research, during visits to some YOTs, researchers also observed young people taking part in activities or group work. This included watching a graffiti workshop, a music workshop, an archaeological dig, a gym session, a poppy making session, and a group discussion about consequences following a film.

Analysis

There were several stages to analysing the information gathered through the interviews with young people and practitioners. Notes from the interviews were written up and supplemented the majority of interviews that were transcribed. In coding the transcribed interviews, the main themes were inputted into a pre-designed template, alongside key quotations. The themes which emerged from both the young people and practitioner interviews form the structure of this report in highlighting promising techniques in engaging young people.

Case file data

Case files were gathered for each of the young person respondents, where available, including their *Asset* forms and caseworker's contact entries in Careworks/YOIS (YOT management information systems). These documents provided a detailed history on the young person, their offence, and family circumstances. In particular the contact log proved particularly insightful as it discussed the appointments the young person attended (or not) during their order.

⁸ Age, gender, ethnicity, seriousness of offence, level of need and on a variety of interventions.

Practitioner interviews

Practitioners at each of the YOTs were also interviewed, some of whom were linked directly with the young people who participated in the research, others who ran particular groups or sessions within the YOT that were of interest to the study. In total, 47 practitioners were interviewed, with a range of experience and seniority, supervising young people on different types of orders. Where practitioners are quoted in the report, their role is specified for illustrative purposes. Interviews with practitioners, like those with young people, were conducted one-to-one, using a semi-structured format. They lasted approximately 30-45 minutes.

Table 2 below details the number of interviews conducted in each YOT

Table 2: YOT region, interviews conducted and additional data collected

	Survey responses ⁹	Staff interviews	YP interviews	Observation	Case file data ¹⁰
<i>YOT number¹¹ and region</i>					
1. West Midlands	37	3	7	Yes	Yes
2. East	39	3	15	Yes	Yes
3. North West	42	5	7	No	Yes
4. London	65	4	4	No	No
5. Wales	17	5	7	Yes	No
6. North East	28	8	6	Yes	Yes
7. Yorkshire & the Humber	77	5	10	Yes	Yes
8. South West	36	6	6	Yes	Yes
9. South East	44	6	8	No	Yes
10. London	(As above)	2	8	Yes	Yes
Total	385 ¹²	47	78	7	8

Source: Ipsos MORI

⁹ These are the number of survey responses received per region, rather than from the individual YOTs (1–10).

¹⁰ Asset assessments and/or contact information from YOT information systems.

¹¹ Please note that, in order ensure confidentiality, these YOT numbers do not match the YOT numbers on the quotes in the report.

¹² In addition, 19 survey responses were received from the East Midlands: this region was not included in the case study element of the research. A further 17 YOT practitioners responded but did not state their YOT.

Limitations

The use of YOT managers as gatekeepers for research may be problematic as managers may have selected staff to be contacted according to criteria which would affect the outcomes of the research (e.g. by selecting their 'best' staff as respondents). Further, the low response rate (36%) means that the survey results are not representative of YOT staff in England and Wales. Equally, the criteria used by the YOTs to select young people for interview were not rigorously enforced. On occasion, interviews with young people were undertaken on a convenience basis (e.g. the young person was attending the YOT on the day and another young person had not turned up for the scheduled interview). While this could be considered a random process, it might be that those turning up for appointments are a self-selected (more compliant) group, introducing bias into the interview responses. As the timing of interviews may come at different points through the young person's order, recall bias is also a problem with self-report data (see e.g. Grimes and Schulz, 2002) as it relies on (fallible) individual memory (Koriat, 1993). Response bias might also arise from young people believing that their answers would be revealed to their caseworker. However, reassurances of confidentiality and anonymity were given to all young people interviewed which has been shown to improve the reporting veracity of adolescents (Murray and Perry, 1987). These limitations mean that interpretation of survey and interview responses should be undertaken with caution.

1. Perceptions of engagement

Engagement or participation?

According to Mason and Prior (2008), engagement is ‘concerned with the question of how to gain young people’s interest and willing participation in interventions or programmes of interventions intended to prevent or reduce offending’ (2008:12). However, this research found that YOT staff tend to define the term more broadly. In the online survey, YOT workers were presented with a list of behaviours and asked if they signified engagement, participation, both or neither. Table 3 below shows the results. Those behaviours that are process driven, such as meeting targets, turning up but having minimal input into services, and completing worksheets, are more likely to be viewed as participation. By contrast, activities that seem to have a more proactive context are more often viewed as being characteristic of engagement, such as forming positive relationships, being motivated to change and being aware of the consequences of behaviour. However, practitioners do not see the two concepts as entirely distinct, with the majority categorising the list of behaviours as both ‘engagement’ and ‘participation’. Further, while Mason and Prior argue that engagement is not simply ‘passive involvement’, but requires commitment to change and an active participation in services, practitioners appear to be more divided on the issue: more than a quarter (28%) feel that *‘turning up, but having minimal input in sessions’* still signifies a form of engagement, while 37% feel it is participation rather than engagement, and 27% do not feel it represents either.

Table 3: Defining engagement and participation

Defining engagement and participation					
Which of the following forms of behaviour by young people do you see as signifying engagement, participation, both or neither					
	Engagement	Participation	Both	Neither	DK
	%	%	%	%	%
Turning up when required	31	29	25	15	2
Turning up but having minimal input in sessions	28	37	7	27	2
Developing a positive interpersonal relationship with case holder	30	3	64	1	1
Communicating effectively in sessions	16	11	72	*	1
Completing worksheets and other activities set	7	34	56	1	2
Meeting agreed targets as part of intervention plan	12	15	70	1	2
Being motivated to change	28	5	61	5	1
Acknowledging consequences of their behaviour	25	9	60	4	2
Being proactive in attempts to stop offending	16	6	73	2	3

Source: Ipsos MORI online survey of YOT practitioners. Base: all responding (421); fieldwork dates: 3rd – 19th October 2007

Ipsos MORI A * denotes a finding of less than 0.5 but greater than zero

The definition of engagement was followed up with in-depth interviews with practitioners. Some YOT workers considered it unhelpful to see engagement and participation in black and white terms. Many spoke of adopting a flexible

approach to the ever changing attitude and compliance of young people. While young people might turn up and actively engage in a supervision session one week, this does not mean they will the next week, as the following quote illustrates. The importance of flexibility in one-to-one practice is considered later in this report.

Young people are changeable. One day you can have a young person with their head on the desk and they're not willing to look up at you or communicate with you and then by Friday they're coming in and they're telling me what they did the night before. So I think you can't really say that a young person is totally disengaged through a process because on occasions they don't engage. So again it's about ongoing assessing and then once you get to know a young person you know what mood they might be in when they walk through the door and what buttons to press that day. Sometimes it's actually more proactive or better for that young person not to even address any of those issues that day, but leave it for another day.

YOT1, interview 1, caseworker

Further, some practitioners indicated that a young person may listen, communicate well and understand the issues at hand (i.e. appear to be engaged), but may nonetheless not succeed in putting into practice what they have learnt from their caseworker.

I supervise one young person at the moment who is actually amazing in her levels of communication and understanding. And she's brilliant in terms of telling you all about the victim and why victims suffer in society and why her victim particularly suffered and why she offends, what she sees as the reasons. But actually she still is really quite a high risk, complex, challenging young person and it's being able to implement all the things that she's saying that she needs help with.

YOT 1, interview 1, caseworker

How engaged are young people?

Many of the young people interviewed said that the main reason they turn up for appointments is to avoid breach or being sent to prison, or simply to get their order over and done with.

It's better than going back down in prison.

YOT 10, interview 2, young person

However, some young people perceived their supervision sessions to be productive and beneficial, rather than simply an unwelcome annoyance.

They can help you to see why you shouldn't do the crimes in the future and what effect it has on other people and yourself.

YOT 2, interview 9, young person

They are quite helpful. It's going to be quite a blow leaving actually in a couple of weeks. I like coming here because they do help me out quite a lot. They tell you which way to go.

YOT 2, interview 9, young person

When asked in the online survey how often they experience difficulties or success in engaging young people, practitioners were reasonably positive about young people’s engagement. For example, more than four in five (84%) say they work with young people who have no difficulty engaging ‘all the time’, ‘frequently’, or ‘sometimes’, with half (50%) saying this is frequently the case. However, practitioners are also accustomed to poor attendance, with 77% saying this happens at least sometimes. Further, over half (56%) say that young people sometimes turn up but give little input into sessions, while 12% say this happens frequently. Table 4 below ranks behaviour by the frequency with which it is experienced by practitioners.

Table 4: Experiences of direct work with young people

Experiences of direct work with young people

How frequently do you experience the following in your direct work with young people?

	All the time %	Frequently %	Sometimes %	Rarely %	Never %	DK %
Young person has no problem engaging at all – turns up and engages with staff and intervention plan activities fully	1	50	33	10	2	5
Poor attendance	*	19	58	18	1	4
Young person turns up when required but gives minimal input into the session	*	12	56	26	2	5
Young person fails to engage or participate from the outset	0	10	45	39	3	4
Young person has a strong relationship with staff but won’t comply with intervention plan	*	8	41	37	7	6
Young person complies with intervention plan but has difficulties engaging with staff	*	2	38	46	8	6

Source: Ipsos MORI online survey of YOT practitioners. Base: all responding (421); fieldwork dates: 3rd – 19th October 2007

Ipsos MORI

A * denotes a finding of less than 0.5 but greater than zero

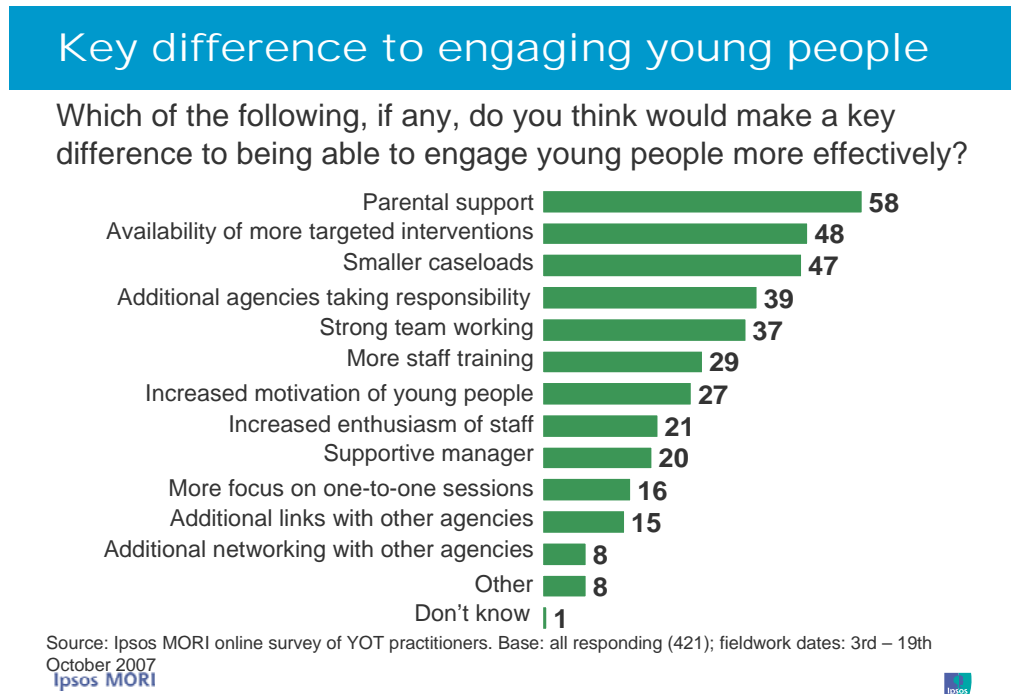


Practitioners from urban areas experience more problems with participation and engagement than those working in rural areas. Fifty-eight percent of practitioners working in an urban environment report that young people fail to engage or participate from the beginning of intervention ‘all the time’, ‘frequently’, or ‘sometimes’, higher than for rural practitioners (48%). Likewise, 80% of urban practitioners say they experience poor attendance ‘all the time’, ‘frequently’, or ‘sometimes’ compared with 73% of rural practitioners. Fourteen percent of urban practitioners say they rarely or never experience young people with no problems engaging at all, compared with only seven percent of rural practitioners. Little insight was given in subsequent interviews as to the reasons for these differences, but transportation and problems with overlapping ‘gang’ territories has been cited in previous research (Cooper et al., 2007; Young et al., 2007).

Practitioners were also asked what would make a key difference to engaging young people effectively. As shown by chart 1 below, the majority (58%) cited an external factor – parental support, while nearly half mentioned the availability

of targeted interventions (48%) and smaller caseloads (47%) – both operational constraints. Further, while additional networking and forming better links with external agencies were least likely to be mentioned, nearly two in five (39%) felt better work could be facilitated by external agencies ‘taking responsibility and working more effectively’.

Chart 1: Engaging young people effectively



Please note: for the question above, practitioners were able to select more than one response and, as a result, the total adds up to more than 100%.

Practitioners were also asked whether they find a range of specific measures effective for addressing different levels of engagement and participation. As Table 5 below shows, the measures considered most effective vary depending on the form a young person’s disengagement has taken. For example, where a young person *‘fails to engage or participate from the outset’* or has *‘poor attendance’*, the greatest proportion of practitioners feel liaising with their family, peers or other workers and setting out (or indeed using) enforcement procedures is most effective, as well as practical measures such as collecting a young person and bringing them to the YOT.

However, where young people *‘turn up, but [give] minimal input’*, or build a *‘strong relationship with staff but won’t participate’*, involving them in their intervention plan, using creative interventions (such as videoing or artwork) and setting clear objectives, are considered to be most effective. Where a young person *‘participates but won’t engage with staff’*, practitioners are most likely to say that matching based on personal characteristics (e.g. gender or ethnicity) and encouraging frequent and consistent contact are effective.

Table 5: Effective methods for addressing engagement

Methods used to improve engagement

Young people engage with YOTs to varying degrees: some fail to turn up, whilst others attend but do not engage with the staff. Which of the following methods do you think are most effective in addressing different levels of engagement and participation?

	Behaviour				
	Fails to engage or participate from outset %	Poor attendance %	Turns up but minimal input %	Strong relationship with staff but won't participate %	Participates but won't engage with staff %
Personally collecting them and bringing them to YOT	23	42	6	5	6
Liaising with family/peers/other workers	44	40	20	22	26
Pro social modelling	11	7	22	20	27
Setting clear objectives for progress	20	14	33	33	15
Setting clear enforcement methods and breaching for non-compliance	37	42	11	17	9
Breaching for non compliance	30	32	5	8	3
Encouraging frequent/consistent contact	16	20	17	12	32
Involving them in intervention plan	20	14	44	46	26
Matching case worker based on ethnicity/gender etc	14	4	12	7	36
Using worksheets to help engage in session	2	4	23	21	11
Using rewards/incentive schemes for engagement/achievement	13	17	19	21	12
Using creative interventions such as videoing/artwork	16	10	39	41	25
None of these	3	1	1	1	1
Don't know	9	8	8	7	8

Summary

As with previous studies (e.g. Mason and Prior, 2008), this research shows that YOT staff have difficulties identifying what 'engagement' means and how it can be recognised in practice. For many, overt behaviours which are suggestive of participation (e.g. filling out worksheets) also signal engagement. Under Mason and Prior's definition, even if a young person does attend and complete a worksheet task, unless they can 'demonstrate commitment' to the aims of the programme/intervention, they are not 'engaged'. This in itself presents a problem as it appears to make it very difficult for a young person to actually demonstrate commitment to an intervention other than through not reoffending – in which case, engagement (in Mason and Prior's sense) seems to be a synonym for desistance from reoffending. It may be that 'engagement', like 'resilience' is a concept which defies definition in any meaningful sense.

When asked about what factors they believed to be important in facilitating effective work with young people, the majority of practitioners indicated that parental support was 'key'. However, they also referred to operational issues such as the size of caseload and availability of resources as being important. Equally, while liaising with family, peers and other workers is considered particularly helpful when young people do not engage from the outset of their order, or have poor levels of attendance, other methods such as setting clear objectives, involving young people in their intervention plan, and matching caseworkers to young people based on ethnicity or gender, are felt to be most effective. Interestingly, respondents also suggested that better work could be facilitated if external agencies (e.g. housing, social services) 'took more responsibility/worked more effectively'.

2. Supervisor/supervisee relationship

Overview

Research evidence gathered from investigations into the practice of psychotherapy and probation report the benefits for young people of having someone to talk to – namely, through the support and advice given and the development and reinforcement of pro-social skills and positive behaviour.

A number of Probation Service studies have indicated that, irrespective of programme design, an offender's relationship with their caseworker and the development of trust are the most significant factors in preventing further offences (see e.g. Rex, 1999). Coupled with an offender's own motivation to change, the support and advice that stems from such rapport is reported to be the most effective element of an intervention (McIvor and Barry, 1998; Rex, 1999; Dowden and Andrews, 2004; Farrall, 2000, 2002, 2004).

The necessity of forming good relations with young people was acknowledged and clearly illustrated in both the online survey results and interview feedback, with 94% of practitioners agreeing that *'developing a positive staff/young person relationship is necessary for effective engagement'*. This supports evidence from previous research which shows that the quality of the relationship between a caseworker and young person is critical to both change and resistance to change (Chapman and Hough, 1998). Indeed, young people interviewed for this research considered the relationship they had with their worker to be key to their engagement including their attendance, participation and enjoyment, as well as the level of progress made.

The chart overleaf shows how practitioners rank, in order of importance, a range of approaches considered effective in engaging with young people. This shows that establishing boundaries and taking a consistent approach are considered most important. However, while patience, openness, empathy and mutual trust are also highly rated, the majority of practitioners (76%) do not feel that 'being a friend' is helpful for engagement. Given that 'being authoritative' is also one of the lowest rated approaches, it appears that YOT workers perceive their role to be distinctive, neither entirely that of authority figure nor friend. This was supported by comments in interviews.

I try and personally...give something a bit different. I'm not a teacher, I'm not a social worker...I try and give that uniqueness to the relationship hopefully.

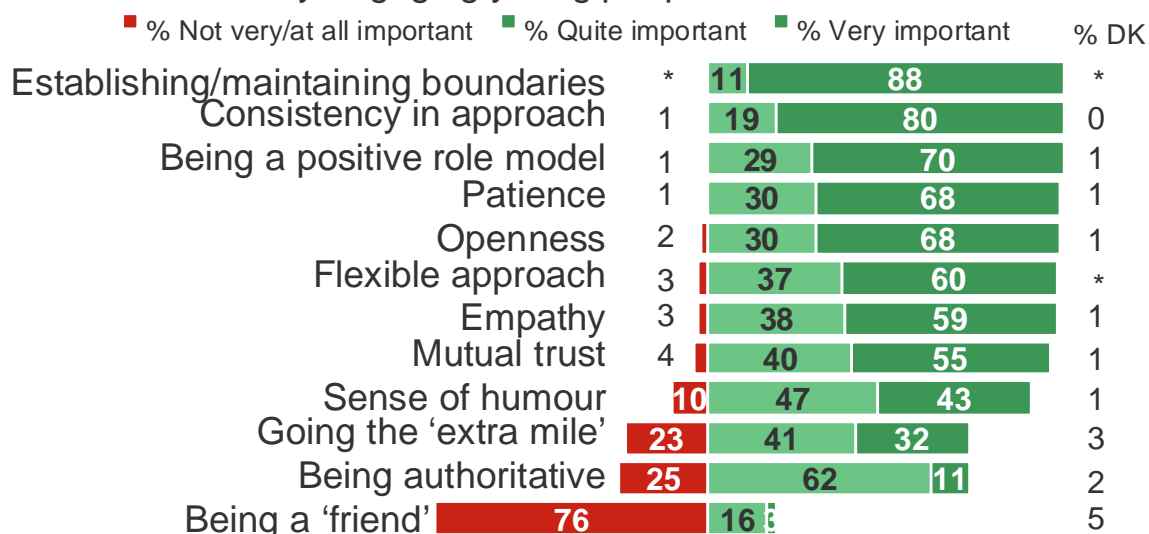
YOT 8, interview 2, supervising officer

This is discussed further on page 26 (see *'Mutual respect is more important than friendship'*).

Chart 2: Ranking approaches for engaging young people

Importance of different methods or approaches

How important are the following methods or approaches used by staff in effectively engaging young people?



Source: Ipsos MORI online survey of YOT practitioners. Base: all responding (421); fieldwork dates: 3rd – 19th October 2007

Ipsos MORI

A * denotes a finding of less than 0.5 but greater than zero



Young people also highlighted the importance of their relationship with their worker, making a direct link between feeling positive about their worker and the likelihood of them attending the YOT when required.

If I didn't like him I'd probably not...really want to turn up.

YOT 8, interview 9, young person

YOT workers explained that developing a positive relationship with a young person is often the first step of an order. A positive dynamic between the two can serve as a basis for them to address the more challenging elements of the young person's offending behaviour.

If you can build some sort of rapport with the young person then obviously you're better able to get them to attend, you're better able to get them to pay attention, you're better able to engage them across the board really.

YOT 9, interview 6, early intervention worker

Integrating 'welfare' and 'compliance' approaches

The professional background of staff appears to strongly influence their working practice (or, at least, that is the perception). From interviews undertaken with staff across the 10 case study sites, it became clear that those with a social work background were believed to adopt a differing approach to those who had previously worked in probation.

I suppose compared to others I'm probably quite punitive and maybe that's because I've got a probation background and not a social work background.

YOT 3, interview 3, senior practitioner (ex probation officer)

For those with a social work background it was suggested that there was a tendency for one-to-one work to be more responsive to the needs of the young person, discussing issues in their lives (such as accommodation, benefits, bus passes, mobile phone, substance misuse, family relationships and lifestyle problems) before carrying out any structured work on offending behaviour. For many practitioners with a probation background, the primary focus was said to be on addressing offending behaviour. Some adopt cognitive behavioural approaches focussed on helping the young person accept responsibility for their actions.

In practice, it appeared that most YOT workers do use a mixture of both approaches, but their preferred style varies, often depending on their professional background.

We all obviously have different individualistic ways of working and two terms have been used about myself, for example, people say, oh I'm a sensitive touch...We do all have different ways of working which we're entitled to do as professionals in our own right, and it's with the same goal at the end.

YOT 3, interview 2, agency caseworker

Workers with a background in probation discussed having received training in techniques such as Motivational Interviewing and Pro-Social Modelling (see YJB Source document, *Engaging Young People who Offend*, Mason and Prior, 2008). Those from other professional backgrounds were less likely to have received such training.

While a mix of 'welfare' and 'compliance' approaches was observed within the sample of practitioners in this research, neither approach emerged as being consistently 'better' than the other. Some young people appreciated having a 'softer' approach whereby time was spent discussing issues and concerns they may have in their lives, while others welcomed clear boundaries and understanding the consequences of non-compliance. This suggests that the integrative approach enables a unique relationship with each young person.

Mutual respect is more important than friendship

For Andrews and Dowden (2005) offender supervision should adopt a 'firm but fair' use of authority, involving a clear distinction between rules and requests. Practitioners interviewed as part of this research voiced similar views. Practitioners defined their approach as 'fair' if they were being non-hierarchical, not too authoritarian and treating young people as responsible. In return, many young people mentioned that their worker was more akin to a friend or big brother or sister to them, rather than a teacher or other authority figure.

I can tell [my YOT worker] certain things as a mate, my personal life and stuff like that, that I wouldn't normally tell someone else in authority or anything like that.

YOT 4, interview 3, young person

Some young people would not respond to a traditionally authoritarian approach, preferring someone who treats them as an equal.

The thing that helped was she wasn't strict in any way ... She just talked normally, just like not necessarily in like kind of teenager language but like not any of these complicated ways, it was just nice and simple and got straight to the point kind of thing and it was good useful information and advice she was giving me as well.

YOT 8, interview 13, young person

The survey findings show that only 22% of frontline workers and 8% of managers think being a 'friend' is important. It would seem that approachability and respect are key, rather than befriending. From the young people's perspective (as voiced above) a mix of authority and friendliness can work. This young person views his YOT worker as a father-figure, recognising and respecting that he is in charge but still having fun with him.

He's a funny person and he gives good advice. He's like a dad. He's like a dad and that. He gives a lot of good advice and he's good to talk to. I feel like I could tell him anything.

YOT 1, interview 8, young person

Taking a flexible approach

The content of one-to-one sessions can involve many activities, including (among others) informal chats, worksheets, addressing general welfare issues, developing the relationship, and offending behaviour work. The onus is on YOT workers to decide what type of support or work is appropriate to address both the offending behaviour and the needs of the young person. As shown in Chart 2 on page 25, 60% of practitioners felt a flexible approach was very important and 37% said it was quite important. In interviews, YOT workers also emphasised that having the skills, confidence and ability to be flexible is crucial to engagement, ensuring that you treat young people as individuals, and respond to their risks and needs on a daily basis.

Caseworkers suggested that the key to engaging young people is finding a sense of balance between offending behaviour work and activities that they enjoy. In delivering such an approach workers also need to be flexible and responsive to the situation young people present each week.

You always have a brief, you always get there with an idea of what you want to do, or where you want to go, and the session may then just turn itself upside down, you may have to go in a different direction. Sometimes something might come up that's oh, we need to talk about this. We've done our reading, but sometimes it just doesn't fit the young person at all. You've then got to start thinking. Well, you use your own life experience to try and tackle that specific issue, and try and give the young person the skills to deal with it. And that's, that's what we're here

for really; give them skills and information to be able to deal with different things.

YOT 9, interview 3, ISSP worker

Workers feel that they need to be able to adapt their approach on different days, focusing on offending behaviour one day, for instance, and on a young person's welfare the next, as their circumstances change. This may include holding supervision sessions away from the YOT office, or making one-to-one work more activity based rather than just focused on completing worksheets. Indeed, just over a fifth of practitioners responding to the online survey, agreed with the statement *there are some young people whose lives are so chaotic that nothing I do will engage them* (22%). Despite this, many more practitioners disagree with the statement that that there is nothing they can do to help (62%).

The necessity of being flexible often extends beyond the work undertaken in one-to-one sessions. Workers have to be particularly persistent with the more difficult young people in continually trying to engage them, thinking of different ways and 'going the extra mile' to provide help. Almost three quarters of respondents to the online survey agreed that it was 'quite' or 'very important' to 'go the extra mile' for young people (73%). Most of those interviewed said they thought it was natural for them to want to help the young people as much as possible. It should be noted however that what constitutes 'going the extra mile' varies considerably. For some it might include something as basic as providing telephone reminders about appointments (something which some YOTs have adopted as standard practice). For others however, it might be transporting young people to appointments, supporting parents and using alternative activities to encourage participation. In some areas, the young people have practical barriers to attending their appointments, such as difficulty travelling to the YOT either because of the cost of travel/bus fares or because they feel unsafe travelling through particular areas; in such cases, practitioners would sometimes collect them, or arrange for them to be collected. Other workers spoke of how phoning the day before a supervision session made all the difference to a young person's attendance.

I've got another young person who's been coming in for ages and keeps missing and keeps ringing up and saying things and I sat down and we reviewed all of that and said what can we do to help you? Now what he said is, well, I can't remember. So I said, well, I'm going to phone you the day before, would that be helpful? So he said, yeah, so I phone him and say you're due at ... tomorrow. Now that hopefully is working for him.

YOT 3, interview 1, caseworker (second probation officer)

Many young people acknowledged the extra help provided by their caseworker and showed appreciation of their actions. One young person recognised the extra assistance from her practitioner who had tried to make her life easier and find her additional support.

She used to pick me up from my house. I have a bus pass but she knows it's easier for me if she comes and picks me up, so she always used to come and pick me up ... I go to a young mum to be group and they helped me find that and M was coming up there, she come up last week

with me ... she just wants to see how it's helping and going up there's helped me a lot.

YOT 8, interview 12, young person

Some of the young people interviewed appeared to acknowledge the importance of having someone they could turn to who could intervene in other areas of their life, or act as a go-between with other adults. Having someone who could be their representative or mediator with other parties can be an important feature of their relationship with their worker.

They phoned up the school and everything because the school was saying I hadn't been attending enough and saying that they was going to have to get rid of me and everything. So they rung up the school and arranged for me to go in and they helped me with bus fare and stuff, just to get down there and stuff like that.

YOT 2, interview 9, young person

Persistence and patience

Where relationships have failed to develop, it can present a real challenge in getting young people to engage and address their offending behaviour. In such cases, the importance of perseverance and adapting their working practice was noted by practitioners. Where young people do not appear to be engaging, practitioners admit that it can be difficult to know what to do. The threat of taking breach action is felt to have a greater impact in some cases than others.

If there's wilful non-compliance then you've got no option, national standards require you to take breach action. But if somebody is partially compliant and certainly not committing further offences and attending, but not actually engaging in the work that you want them to, you just do your best to persevere.

YOT 4, interview 1, caseworker

Some practitioners take small steps, appearing firm and un-fazed in the face of challenges from young people.

Initially I'm just trying to take small steps at a time. With X, I found myself ... making a very conscious effort not to allow myself to appear ruffled in any particular way ... if I turn my back ... he'd walk off, so it would be, "come on back X, come on back, where you going now? Come on back, come on back" and just being consistent, and refusing to stop asking him to do something until we'd actually done it and setting up a standard whereby he would eventually realise that I wasn't going to stop asking him to do something until we actually did it, and then possibly there would be some compromise.

YOT 7, interview 6, YOT worker (and reparation worker)

Having the confidence and faith to practice consistent patience, rather than becoming frustrated or demoralised when faced with challenging young people, is considered by practitioners to be important. Several workers highlighted where perseverance had eventually paid off, as shown by the example below.

We've got someone here who's really quite well known and I had him for six months and the first three months he didn't say a word. And he puts his hood up over his face and his head down on the desk and after about three months into the order I actually managed to get him to do the first page of the What Do You Think?, and I just thought that was such an achievement because he was actually giving us some information.

YOT 9, interview 5, early intervention worker

We had a young man come in and for two weeks he said nothing but "no comment", and I mean nothing at all but "no comment", and we'd have him for a two hour session. So he'd sit for two hours saying "no comment". But the point is we kept him here for that two hours for the session and by the end actually one of the girls who'd been working with him couldn't believe the fact that he actually came and said good morning ... he just had a total misconception of what we were about.

YOT 9, interview 3, ISSP worker

When asked how the breakthrough was made, practitioners struggled to isolate particular factors. However, one practitioner suggested that not embarking on offending behaviour work until the young person was ready helped, while another suggested that meticulously gathering information about a young person can prove effective.

If you start doing the offence focussed work with someone before they're willing to give you any information and talk to you then it ends up being a lecturing intervention. You're sitting there telling them what to do, which they're not going to respond to at all ... hopefully that's why we're chosen to do this job and go to the training and whatever because we're good at spotting that and being able to work round it.

YOT 9, interview 5, early intervention worker

You've got to be patient. You've got to do your homework really. You need to think about where this young person's coming from. Get as much information about this young person as you can and then you have to establish how best they work and how, in what ways you can encourage that really and that does take a lot of homework and it does take a lot of time but I think that pays dividends to do that.

YOT 3, interview 3, senior practitioner (previous probation officer)

Other caseworkers emphasised the importance of reviewing with their supervisee progress since the beginning of the relationship.

It is important to acknowledge when they are achieving something, showing them how things have changed over time, where they were a couple of months ago and where they are now. A lot of them forget that or don't see what they're achieving in the sessions. I think that can be a good technique. Trying to find as many positives as you can.

YOT 4, interview 7, caseworker

Practitioners are often reluctant to accept that any young person can be impossible to engage and only, even very experienced practitioners did confess

that, at times, they feel at a loss as to how to overcome barriers in relation to the most complex young people. The quotes below are just a few examples of the difficulties practitioners face with the most testing young people.

I find it really difficult to know, to be honest, what to do with 16, 17, coming up 18 year old young people, who are just not interested and I've had quite a few in my caseload here ... And that is perhaps a lack of confidence in my abilities in how to get through to these young people who aren't interested.

YOT 1, interview 1, caseworker

I've got one kid who came in, and I've been supervising on the Referral Order for several months and I'm obviously having no impact on his offending at all ... Because psychologically he just is so angry, his life has been so crap, his headspace is somewhere else, he can't function normally for psychological, psychiatric reasons really and so much anger ... But he will come in and see me when he wants to and he'll listen to me and he has some respect for me whereas he doesn't have any respect for anybody else including his mother.

YOT 9, interview 6, early intervention worker

Maintaining engagement

Practitioners cannot predict how easily their relationship with a young person will develop. Less than a third of practitioners (31%) agreed that '*once a young person is engaged in their provision, it is easy to maintain this engagement*' (see appendix 1), although, in interviews, a number of practitioners and young people stated that time had assisted the development of a positive relationship.

I think the more times you've seen the YOT worker, I think the more friendly it gets.

YOT 10, interview 6, young person

I recall a number of young people of 13 or 14 who were very aggressive, uncooperative and essentially didn't want to know, were prolific young offenders and were essentially hard work and by the time they'd reached 17 or 18 I'd reached quite a good relationship with them.

YOT 4, interview 1, caseworker

Of course, for some, the decline in offending may have been influenced more by age, with the behaviour naturally changing as a result of the young person maturing (see e.g. Blumenstein and Cohen, 1987). As a result of such wider influences, it can be difficult to determine the impact of a relationship on offending. However, while a young person's maturation is important, there is clear evidence that positive change can result when offenders are encouraged and supported by a significant other. (Rex, 1999; McNeill and Batchelor, 2002).

Trust and confidentiality

Consistently emerging as central to the formation of good relations was developing a sense of trust. Practitioners in the online survey, when prompted, agreed that 'mutual trust' is important to effectively engage young people (55% said it was very important and 40% quite important). Practitioners were keen to provide young people with the trust that is often missing from other relationships with adults.

He values his friendship with his friends because he hasn't got a lot. His mum and dad don't really care too much. His grandparents do but they're in his face all the time. I don't offer that 'in your face' approach...I give him chance to breathe. And I try and do that with all the young people, sometimes they reveal things that I know for a fact they've not told anyone else which is quite a trusted thing.

YOT 8, interview 2, supervising officer

Similarly, practitioners may need to overcome previous breaches of trust as their work involves some young people who feel 'let down' by agency intervention.

Some young people who have experienced the care system feel like they are just another person to see which can lead to a lack of trust.

YOT 8, interview 14, YOT practitioner

Some young people had developed trust in their worker when they took an honest and frank approach with them. This was particularly true in cases where young people felt other authority figures had not been truthful with them.

[My worker] was the only person who was straight with me, 'you are looking at going to prison', and everyone else was lying, 'no you won't', even my solicitor. And, at first, I hated going because she [my worker] always ended up making me cry and stuff. But I think she's the only person that has been straight with me. Even when the appeal was going on, my solicitor told me I was coming out before Christmas and she was saying 'please don't get your hopes up' and stuff. I appreciate that now. She was telling me the truth all the way along instead of lying to me.

YOT 4, interview 4, young person

Confidentiality is a key issue. Some young people struggle to trust their worker fully, understanding that information shared can potentially be disclosed to other parties.

You still can't really trust them because they have to speak to the police and everyone because that's what they tell you before. They say we can, if you tell us something we can tell the Social Services, police...

YOT 8, interview 6, young person

However, in practice, many practitioners exercise discretion in disclosure which helps to encourage trust from their supervisee.

So I know that I can sit there and that I can trust C and I can have a full on conversation with him and he ain't going to go and blab it to anybody else.

YOT 8, interview 8, young person

A non-directive, empathic approach was felt by some to be effective. A number of practitioners said they aim to 'be able to start where they are' or to 'begin the relationship at their level'. Young people often found it easier to engage with topics that were familiar and relevant to them.

[To be a YOT worker] you have to be young in yourself, you have to know what's going about ... you can't just be like this uptight person ... they just have to be streetwise because if I was stood here with a police officer you'd be stood all just like stood there.

YOT 4, interview 3, young person

Workers frequently referred to the need to be creative and resourceful in establishing a context in which young people feel comfortable talking about their offending behaviour. For example, many practitioners spoke about addressing offending behaviour work within informal activities, such as music groups, playing pool or picking young people up from school. Getting young people to engage in an enjoyable activity helped them to respond to questions and enter into dialogue, and was felt by some to be more effective than face-to-face interviewing at the YOT office.

I think you sometimes hear people say that when they're driving a car with a young person, they're not actually face-to-face in the car, and then the young person relaxes and talks a bit more openly and a bit more freely about things. If you sit someone down and say, right, you've got a problem and we're going to talk about it that instantly makes them feel a little bit uncomfortable.

YOT 7, interview 6, YOT worker (and reparation worker)

I did more offending behaviour work there playing pool with this young lad than I ever would sitting formally, with no paper and exercise book, in an office. I would just never get his attention. So I think you can engage with people in lots of different ways and still make a difference in a way.

YOT 4, interview 1, caseworker

Active listening

Active listening skills emerged as a key in encouraging young people to 'open up' and share their thoughts and feelings.

Well what makes me come here is that I know that I've got someone here to talk to about my problems and everything, so that just draws me to it really. And if I've had a bad day or something, let's say I've had a bad week, I know at the end of the week that I'm going to come and see somebody that I can talk to about it and get it all off my chest.

YOT 8, interview 8, young person

There was an acknowledgement that, in some cases, the YOT worker is one of the few people, if not the only person, the young person is able to speak to if, for example, they feel they cannot talk openly at home.

Because she doesn't know all my family, so it's nice to have something that's private, something that's my own.

YOT 4, interview 4, young person

The only reason I've calmed down is because [my YOT worker] helped me ... My mother hasn't helped me because my mum's got a drinking problem, and like when she has a drink she argues and then that makes me go on to gear more. And like two of my brothers are in prison.

YOT 5, interview 9, young person

Many young people commented that having someone who is 'on your side' is important. The practitioner will also guide and challenge where necessary.

When I was going off the rails they could easily have just said, we'll put you to the side, you can just go down the route that everyone else goes down. But they kept at me. Do you know what I mean? They kept talking to me and getting everything, making sure I was on track and that and have a go at me if I was doing something bad.

YOT 2, interview 11, young person

And they won't judge you on anything, they'll just look at the ways to try and help you, you know.

YOT 2, interview 11, young person

You need to impart to them that you have to be responsible for your own actions. I can only do as much as you allow me to do. So I give them the key and I give them the key to open the door to challenge me and I will say to them, but in a respectful manner, and we can, you can challenge me and we will discuss these issues.

YOT 1, interview 4, caseworker

Case study: effects of a positive worker/young person relationship

L has been with the YOT for one year and describes feeling able to open up to her worker in a way that she cannot with other people. She also appreciates feedback about the positive change that her worker has noticed in her.

I'm normally the sort of person who bottles it up but with B I seem to be able to talk about it ... because she doesn't judge me. She just listens and puts it in a different sort of way, if I take what he's says in the wrong way, she says, well, he might have been thinking this or this might have happened ... She asked me [how I felt about the offence] at the start, before I went into custody, she asked me when I was in custody and then when I come out, and she says she's noticed a difference, how I feel about it. Because at first I was really angry and stuff.

YOT 4, interview 4, young person

The caseworker's contact notes provide further evidence of this positive change in the young person and in her understanding of her offence.

L is now feeling a lot more settled re college and has managed to catch up on the majority of her course work ... we spoke about balancing her time between all her commitments so she does not feel overwhelmed. L more open about discussing some of the tensions at home, especially with her mother – we identified possible reasons for this and discussed possible strategies. This led to L recognising how much of leisure time (before and around time of offence) revolved around alcohol use.

Contact notes

It is clear that the young person has picked up on, and appreciates, the attention and support that her worker(s) gives her. Just like her worker in the above contact notes, the young person too acknowledges that she has become more open about discussing issues. She also feels that her worker goes beyond what is strictly required in her job.

Since I've come out [of prison] B and G have been really supportive and have always remembered what I've said and they've always asked me questions and, how you're doing and stuff, and remember things instead of just, it being just their job ... Just having the time to just talk and stuff because all the rest of my life I'm the sort of person who keeps it really bottled up. From this experience of being inside and stuff, I can talk much more about stuff. I think it's nice having someone to talk to, rather than parents and friends.

YOT 4, interview 4, young person

Difficult relationships

Where relationships are not proving to be effective, YOTs should have a clear procedure that young people are aware of and able to follow if they would like to discuss this with another member of staff. Several young people mentioned that they would like to have a choice about who their worker is.

I think they should ask people after a certain period of time what was bad and what was enjoyable about it and I think they should change it if it's necessary. But I didn't feel like I had a choice back then.

YOT 4, interview 3, young person

The following case study illustrates the difficulties young people face in trying to address a poor relationship with a worker. Similar experiences were echoed by other young people interviewed. It therefore seems clear that there ought to be more straightforward and available procedures for changing a young person's worker where the relationship has clearly broken down.

B had taken the step to speak to his solicitor about changing worker. However, the process seems like a confusing and daunting prospect for a young person to go through without any support – so much so that he gave up.

I tried to get my solicitor to say something and I was just told that the court ain't got nothing to do with it basically ... Or speak, to the manager of the youth offending team. I don't know who he is – I ain't got the details for him, so I know there's no point in ringing.

YOT 10, interview 5, young person

In this case, the young person's poor relationship with his worker resulted in him resisting any attempts by his worker to engage him. Everything appeared to be a struggle, as illustrated by the following comment about filling in a worksheet.

I filled it in and she tried to say my answers weren't to her standards basically, but I'd answered them. She was saying, yeah, you have but it's not good enough basically. But I said, but I've done it and then we got into an argument over that and then, from there, she don't really try doing no worksheets with me now because she thinks I'm just going to start getting angry over it or something.

YOT 10, interview 5, young person

Indeed, the young person himself attributed some of his breaches to his poor relationship with his worker.

Well that's part of the reason why I get breached sometimes though ... We just start clashing, having arguments and then I get breached.

YOT 10, interview 5, young person

This young person contrasts his positive experience with his ISSP workers to his relationship with his YOT worker.

I prefer going to the ISSP than coming to the YOT team. You know that you're doing something and you ain't getting sat in a room and you're getting stressed. Got no problems with most of [the workers], it's just this one. [One of my ISSP workers] helped me sort out opening bank accounts and stuff like that. And what do you do when you come to the youth team? You just get stressed. But it's got nothing to do with [my YOT worker's age], [my ISSP worker is] more clued, he knows a little bit more on how to work with younger people than what she does.

YOT 10, interview 5, young person

And she's the only person that gets me angry, you know. So when I go to court and she puts in her reports, he needs anger management and all this ... I'm just thinking no, I need another YOT worker.

YOT 10, interview 5, young person

Summary

Previous research of the Probation Service highlights that the relationship between supervisor/supervisee can be important in facilitating the process of change. When asked, YOT staff were clear about what they believed constituted a good basis for building a positive working relationship: ground rules, such as setting boundaries and being consistent in dealing with young people were identified, but practitioners noted that it is also important to take a flexible approach. Personal characteristics such as empathy, openness, patience and trust were also considered valuable, but the supervisor/supervisee relationship was perceived to be distinctive from other relationships: while young people frequently identified a mixture of 'authoritative' and 'befriending' elements in their workers' approaches, many practitioners emphasised that their role is neither that of friend nor authority figure. Practitioners also appeared to reinforce stereotypical views about those with 'probation' versus 'social work'

backgrounds, and the influence this had on their practice (the former being more about 'compliance', the latter about 'welfare').

As in previous research, practitioners found it difficult to be explicit about how a positive bond develops with a young person and how this can influence behaviour. Where young people had become engaged after a period of disengagement, staff tended to be unable to pinpoint specific actions on their part that had resulted in the transformation. Likewise, several practitioners admitted being unsure how best to engage the most challenging young people. However – from the young person's perspective – where relationships are not proving to be effective, it seems clear that there ought to be more straightforward and available procedures for changing a young person's worker.

3. Operational factors

Staff training and guidance

Given the importance of the worker in delivering successful interventions and engaging young people effectively, it is clear that staff need training to equip them with the skills they need. Many practitioners felt that they brought training and experience from previous roles into their current work.

I use a lot of simple cognitive behavioural techniques ... that have come from a range of different training and ... there's bits of psychodynamic narrative and bits of systemic thinking as well, that all have jumped together and formed my practice, not necessarily always pre-planned ... That has come from working as a multi-systemic therapy worker, my work, obviously, and training I did ... to be a ... forensic psychologist ... and I've got a Masters in criminology, criminal psychology.

YOT 2, interview 2, YOT worker (and ISSP worker)

However, few formal training opportunities were noted within YOTs although, in one YOT, interviewees were shown a comprehensive intranet system to which each practitioner had access. This included details of how to work with young people, what action to take in different scenarios with young people, as well as more of a general induction to YOT work. In contrast, the staff at some YOTs said that they had not been given sufficient guidance to be able to carry out their role with confidence. They found it difficult to know how to plan the content of supervision sessions as this had been left largely up to the individual worker. One YOT worker summarised the general view, stating that he did not have any training in how to engage young people and, as a result, had to take a personal approach in his work, which could be 'hit or miss'.

I've been qualified seven years, I don't think I've been ever given any training on how to engage, deal with people that are particularly challenging ... it's something that you have to acquire. I don't think there's a consistent approach to how lots of caseworkers approach young people. It's a personal approach and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

YOT 1, interview 1, caseworker

Other practitioners suggested that training in YOTs is poorer than in other related professions such as probation or the prison service. Some staff said they had struggled for a long period before they felt confident supervising young people.

I think, yeah, my role in the prison service, there's a lot of cognitive behavioural, problem solving, decision making and social skills training ... I think it's about organisation. I think it's about identifying need. I think ... sometimes it's a legacy of youth justice having come out of the social work perspective and social workers being slower to take on board the evidence based 'what works' methodology that I think is being grabbed by probation and the prison service much quicker.

YOT 2, interview 2, YOT worker (and ISSP worker)

Allocation of young people to workers

Practitioners acknowledge that matching workers with young people based on the skills of workers may play a role in building relationships, particularly in instances where young people are failing to engage. Further, as shown in Table 5 on page 22 (see 'Perceptions of Engagement'), 36% of practitioners feel that matching caseworkers and young people on characteristics such as gender and ethnicity can be effective when a young person participates but won't engage with staff, making this the most likely technique to be mentioned for dealing with such situations. However, when asked whether *'The characteristics of staff – e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, background affect the engagement of young people'* – although the majority (52%) agree, only 10% agree strongly, suggesting staff feel this is fairly, but not very, influential.

Through in-depth interviews, some young people identified the importance of matching the characteristics of the young person and worker to maximise the effectiveness of the relationship.

I was a bit worried at first coming here because I didn't want to be with someone I didn't know and have them as my worker all the time. But she's all right ... If it was like a 60-year-old woman then I don't think I would take her seriously maybe, because if they're younger, then they can understand you more.

YOT 8, interview 12, young person

Not saying that I'm sexist, but I think it's just to say if you're a girl you want to talk to a girl, if you're a boy you want to talk to a boy.

YOT 8, interview 9, young person

Yet for some workers the reverse applies.

My experience of girls is that they have a natural suspicion of another female. I don't know if it's territorial ... And I engage well with girls, but I find boys [easier], might be because of my son, I've got a son, it might be because I had an older brother, was always used to growing up with boys, I don't know, just it's something personal, I find it easier.

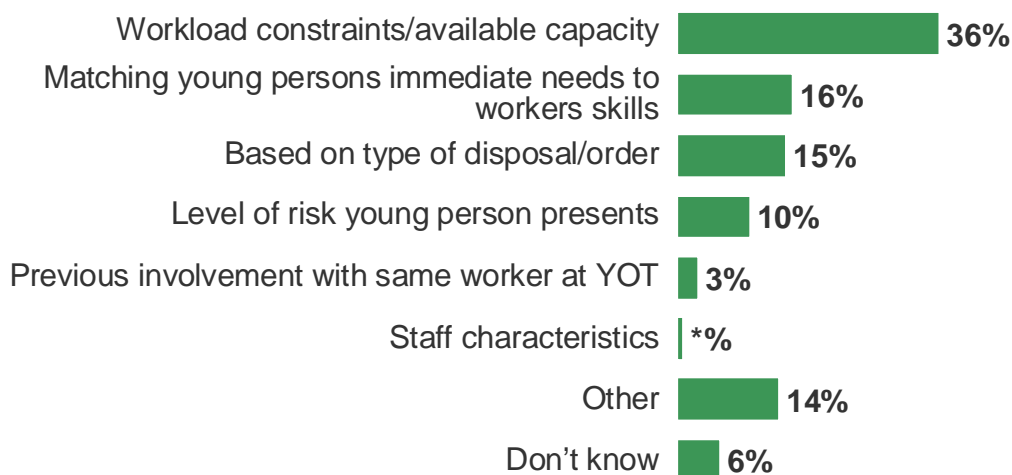
YOT 10, interview 1, caseworker (registered social worker)

In practice, effective allocation was often felt to be hampered by organisational constraints. Over a third of practitioners who responded to the online survey thought allocation was based on available resources and capacity (36%) – see Chart 3 overleaf. This was followed by matching the immediate needs of the young person to a worker's skills (16%), and allocation according to type of disposal (15%).

Chart 3: Case allocation

Case allocation

What usually determines the allocation of cases to a particular case manager?



Source: Ipsos MORI online survey of YOT practitioners. Base: all responding (421); fieldwork dates: 3rd – 19th October 2007

Ipsos MORI

A * denotes a finding of less than 0.5 but greater than zero



While variations in case allocation were evident across regions, and reported below, base sizes are small, making any comparison between regions difficult. However, workload constraints and available capacity were deemed more significant in determining case allocation in the South East (53%) and London (48%). By contrast, a significantly higher percentage of practitioners from the East (26%) and the West Midlands (22%) thought that allocation of cases is usually ‘*determined by the level of risk that the young person is assessed as presenting*’. The practicality of allocation due to resources will always be a constraint and over a quarter of respondents in the online survey felt the method of allocation used in their YOT was not very/at all effective (26%). Many believed that level of experience should be considered in the allocation of cases, with more experienced practitioners being assigned challenging individuals, as voiced by the following practitioner.

In an ideal world social workers would get the child in need, I'd get the ones from areas ... where there's not a lot to do in the community, that's how it would ideally work but it doesn't it's just a case of when they come through from court on a Wednesday morning who can take what really.
YOT 4, interview 8, caseworker

Consistency of worker

Nearly all practitioners (94%) consider it important for young people to work with the same caseworker over the course of their intervention or order. Fewer, but still a majority (64%), also believe it to be important for a young person to work with the same key worker if they return to the service on a subsequent order.

Unless you can't get on with somebody or can't work with somebody particularly well, I think it's really useful to stick with somebody over a period of time. In my experience, time, patience is a virtue in this line of work and that, working with the same individual over a period of years can make a difference in the end.

YOT 4, interview 1, caseworker

However, practical constraints mean that this is not always possible. While 64% felt that it is important for young people to have the same worker on subsequent orders, only 37% said that this happened always or most of the time.

While it is inevitable for some young people that their worker will change, the difficulties that can arise as a result of this should be acknowledged. As noted in this research, workers can adopt very different approaches to practice which can present issues when changes occur. For example, some practitioners adopt a more befriending role compared with more authoritative workers in the team. A young person could start out with a more flexible and sympathetic worker who is then replaced by another who adopts a more structured and disciplinarian approach. Changes in worker and the style of supervision will of course be noticed by young people.

I had the best YOT worker and now I've ended up with the shittiest YOT worker...

YOT 10, interview 7, young person

Young people also reported feeling more comfortable and open with a practitioner who they had got to know and with whom they had time to build a relationship.

He helped me out a lot when I was in school then, and obviously he's helped me out a lot now ... I feel comfortable sitting there and talking to C, because obviously at secondary school I've known him and everything ... C knows how I am and he knows what I've been like in school and everything. And he knows how to handle me and everything, what triggers me off and that.

YOT 8, interview 8, young person

Resource implications for those on long or repeat orders

When the young person is on a long order, it can be difficult for staff to know how to fill supervision sessions, as much of the available material in standard packages and the basic work on offending behaviour will have been covered in the first few months. An example of this was found in one YOT where several young people had been breached on many occasions, and had to repeat their orders. This meant they ended up going over the same material several times, which was boring for them and led to an understandable reluctance to engage. As noted by Sutherland et al. (2007: 89, citing Roberts, 2004): 'Repetition can be an effective learning method if it positively reinforces what has already been learnt. However, it can also create boredom and disengagement'.

Workers often say that they would like to do more quality work and to plan new approaches. There is frequently a need to come up with new approaches, especially with those young people who have been involved in the system for

some time. Some practitioners felt they had managed to develop original resources, but it was clear that this only occurred where resourceful practitioners took it upon themselves to carry out such an undertaking.

I realised that there was a serious lack of resources because, don't forget, that most of the young people that come up through the ranks as it were, Action Plan, Referral Order, or Supervision Order, they've had all the resources all before. So X and I actually started looking, try and look around, and we've created ... a whole big workbook of resources and sheets and things that we can use that we don't think are used by other practitioners. I've contacted the Fire and Rescue Service who have provided us now with two DVDs ... So that's all free resources that are out there.

YOT 7, interview 3, ISSP worker

Other YOTs did not appear to have sufficient resources or new approaches and practitioners felt young people can become 'immune' to work or talk offered by caseworkers. The young person is likely to be very quick to recognise if material is repeated and intolerant of having to give the same information many times over. For this reason, it is particularly important that YOT workers invest time in finding out who else has been involved with the young person and what they have done with them.

There is a wide variation in the extent to which materials and worksheets are used and many YOTs do not have a standard approach that staff are expected to adopt in their sessions. Although some materials, such as 'Jigsaw', 'Teentalk' or 'Constructs', may be available for those who choose to use them most felt that these were limited and, additionally, that no specific programmes were advocated for use in the YOT. Some workers revealed they feel uncertain about what works with young people, and that there is little in the way of practical advice about how to implement theoretical approaches.

The YOT side of it, there doesn't actually seem to be any programmes and whether it's a financial thing or they don't want to buy anything in, whether it's lacking on a wider scale for juveniles, because there's not a lot of research to be honest about how this stuff works with younger people ... theories aren't fully developed yet. It's difficult.

YOT 9, interview 5, early intervention worker

Someone will do an assessment and you get that saying, right, during this order we'll have to look at anger management, consequences of offending, victim awareness and that's all very well and good but where is the stuff that we're actually able to do that? They talk about Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, thinking skills, everything like that but they don't actually give us any resources to actually do that ... It's all very well and good ... I know the theory behind it. Right, now let's put it into practice and give me something practical to actually do with people. We really do struggle.

YOT 9, interview 5, early intervention worker

Summary

It is clear that operational issues – such as staff training and resourcing issues – can act as barriers to the successful engagement of young people. Practitioners note that few formal training opportunities exist within YOTs, resulting in a perception that training is poorer than in related professions such as the prison or probation service. For some staff, this leads to a lack of confidence in their ability to supervise young people and to adopt a suitable approach to their work. It was also noted that additional practical support around how to implement theoretical approaches would be helpful.

Concern was expressed by some staff about the limited resources for young people on longer sentences. However, although resource limitations were regarded as important, individual practitioners reported that they sometimes overcame this by developing their own resources.

It is felt that workload constraints and available capacity most often determine how young people are allocated to caseworkers, but several practitioners felt that allocating young people based on staff skills or experience would help facilitate better engagement. Likewise, consistency of worker throughout the course of an intervention, and for subsequent orders, was felt to be valuable. However, it was recognised that, as the result of staff turnover or the caseload capacity of individual workers, this was not always possible.

4. Putting work with young people in context: wider social factors

While practitioners can use one-to-one sessions to work with young people to address their behaviour and personal circumstances, many acknowledged that this work should be undertaken within the wider social context.

I think one of the biggest problems of our legal system is it's all focused on the young person and the YOT and actually, there's a huge amount of research that shows you that changing an individual, a young teenager, has the least impact, but if you can change the systems around that young person, work with the parents on boundaries or praise or whatever it is, then you can actually produce a much longer lasting [effects].

YOT 2, interview 2, YOT worker (and ISSP worker)

Personal issues can be so significant in some instances that practitioners argue it makes no sense to continue with formal offending behaviour work until the practical problems associated with a young person's personal situation are resolved.

It may be that a young person just is not remorseful, does not want to change – is not interested in what you're saying. Or it could be that a young person has real difficulty grasping what you're talking about, has real complex issues in their life and they've got more going on. So it's about trying to assess why they're not engaging. If they're not engaging because they've got lots of chaotic stuff going on in their life, I think it's really important to try and get some stability in their life. So perhaps the offending behaviour issues are put on a backburner a little bit while you try and work with other professionals to level out the levels of chaos.

YOT 1, interview 1, caseworker

Similar views were also held by many of the young people spoken to, and it was evident that frustration resulted where young people felt wider social factors were not taken into account.

[My worker] like didn't actually come outside the youth offending team and come and have a look what's going on and, I don't know ... just see what our estates are like and ... I think he should come round ... Just to see how hard it is growing up around here and stuff like ... he knows more worries if he talks to my mum and that. He knows what I'm going through, obviously [it] isn't the worst place to be living, yeah, but it's still bad, man.

YOT 8, interview 6, young person

Some workers mentioned that forcing an issue with young people without considering the context of their situation could damage their relationship in the longer term. Yet it was acknowledged that getting the balance right between addressing personal circumstances and offending behaviour is often difficult.

I think sometimes you have to, especially with the ISSP clients, actually say, OK, well, we'll talk about that for 10 minutes, but for the next 20

minutes we're going to focus on this, because it's very easy to let the chaos of people's daily lives overtake the offending behaviour work, I think ... You're too busy thinking about you're getting through the order and their housing and whether they got drunk last night, but you get to the end and think, Christ, I didn't go back and actually go over the whole offence.

YOT 2, interview 2, YOT worker (and ISSP worker)

Family support

The family was perceived as the greatest influence for getting young people to engage and also stop offending.

I think then the family are the major player in whether they are going to stop offending or not.

YOT 3, interview 1, caseworker (second probation officer)

The online survey reported that 96% of practitioners felt that family support is influential in whether a young person will effectively engage in a programme or intervention. In particular, liaising with 'families, peers and other workers' was considered to be the most important way to improve attendance and engagement at the outset of an order (44% said this would be effective, n=421 – see Table 5).

I know national standards state that you have to do a home visit, I think it's once every four weeks. I find it a lot more useful doing a lot more home visits than that because I think families and relatives have got a lot more influence or certainly as much influence as you will have, so I think working with them is very, very important indeed.

YOT 4, interview 1, caseworker

Involving parents in the review process is seen as key to ensuring positive reports about the young person are passed on, which in turn can help to enhance the motivation of young people.

I think providing positive feedback to parents is really important, because often parents ... might be quite negative about their child's behaviour. And perhaps to provide some positives within that actually helps that young person when they get home, and then it reinforces good behaviour. And so I think it's really important to give feedback and, even if there's a small chink of postiveness – so and so turned up on time or he was only five minutes late – that's quite good. But I think it's equally important to say, well, he's not shown up, what's the problem and be talking to parents quite a lot.

YOT 1, interview 1, caseworker

Caseworkers mentioned that parents can find positive comments refreshing. Young people also seemed to appreciate having someone who highlighted to their parents examples of good behaviour.

[My worker] comes to my house and does weekly planning and that's for an hour and a half I think. Then she has got the chance to talk to my foster carers and see how I've been at home ... it's a good thing really because it puts a better word in for me.

YOT 4, interview 6, young person

At home they'll brag about you. They'll just add extra words that you haven't heard before to please your parents. They'll say he's well behaved – all of that ... you wouldn't really hear it unless it's a home visit.

YOT 1, interview 8, young person

While the advantages of working with families was acknowledged, so too was the complexity this can often bring with it, as voiced by the following practitioner.

I do think it's really helpful to see the way the families work because you then almost understand why the children act in a certain way. But sometimes it can be a hindrance because they do get quite involved. And sometimes they end up not liking you very much ... Sometimes [a young person] is like, are you going to tell my mum? I'm not telling you then if you're going to tell my mum. You have to be clear to them, some of the things that he tells me, you have to tell his mum because of child protection. But sometimes they can clam up a bit, knowing that you've got a relationship with their parents as well, that you've got involvement with their parents. But most of the time it can be quite good because then you've got a reinforcement, so the parents tend to reinforce things that you're talking about and the appointments you have.

YOT 2, interview 3, caseworker (second probation officer)

Yet, the hardest families to engage are often those with whom it is most essential to work.

I guess it depends on the willingness of the parents and a lot of them will want to ring up and find out what's going on. It's easy to let the ones that don't slip even though it's possibly more important that they're the ones you do try and engage.

YOT 8, interview 1, caseworker

While the YJB have introduced guidance ('KEEP' Parenting Guide¹³), practitioners felt that they lacked direction when working with families, and frequently reported that they engaged families as much or as little as they felt able to. This could be because of lack of time, skills or resources or, more specifically, because of the complexity of dealing with family dynamics.

I think it's also about workers feeling confident and that they have enough skills to deal with negative parents and interfering parents ... There's no one way of working for every family and it's very difficult trying to suggest to a mum that she starts being nicer to her son after five years

¹³ The Youth Justice Board has recently updated its Key Elements of Effective Practice (KEEP) guidance for practitioners, one of which relates to parenting and details 'what works' in engaging parents effectively. The document can be accessed on the YJB website: <http://www.yjb.gov.uk/Publications>.

of struggling with him. It isn't an easy thing to do or an easy thing for them to hear.

YOT 2, interview 2, YOT worker (and ISSP worker)

As a result, despite its perceived importance, in reality family work did not usually take priority in practitioners' work with young people.

I think families are actually integral ... in enabling a young person to engage with the YOT. A young person doesn't operate in a vacuum, do they? A young person, although they might have a difficult relationship with their family, they're going to stop offending a lot of the time for their family ... I must say in this job I visit homes less and that is purely time. I know you're probably interviewing people in rural areas, it does take a long time to visit some families ... I think there seems to be more of a drive or a push towards having the offices more kind of probation style, dealing with young people in vacuums more. Get them in the office, do what you've got to do, and I think it's moving away from social work.

YOT 1, interview 1, caseworker

Even so, the majority of young people did suggest their worker had some involvement with their families and also that YOT workers, on occasion, visited them at home. Young people seemed to be divided as to whether they preferred home visits or sessions at the YOT and, connected to this, whether they felt positive about YOT workers involving their families or not. For example, one young person felt the involvement of his parents helped him to remember appointments and helped his family to work together as a team, but he preferred his actual work with the YOT to be kept separate from his family.

She [my worker] used to ring my parents up, let them know how I'm getting on ... I haven't really missed appointment but I used to get a letter in post, my parents used to get a letter in post so they'd remind me. But I like to do my work here ... I just don't want my parents involved really. I'd rather it just be me doing the work with the YOT workers and no one else is around ... It seems more confidential.

YOT 4, interview 3, young person

Another young person supported this view, expressing a similar positive view about her parents being involved, but preferring to visit the YOT for her appointments.

She speaks to them [my parents] now and again ... and sees my Mum every Wednesday or every other Wednesday. Helps my Mum and Dad cope with it as well ... My first day I came out of custody, she came to my house. And [she's] been to my house a few times to see me. But mostly I come here. We went for a final review but that was somewhere else ... I feel more comfortable here. At home I don't, because you know your parents are around and stuff, or there's people walking past and they'll either come in my house ... most of my mates will just walk in anyway. But at least here I've got a bit of privacy.

YOT 4, interview 4, young person

Summary

As well as operational factors, practitioners acknowledge that young people do not 'operate in a vacuum' and that wider social factors, or the lifestyle of the young person, may prevent work being undertaken with them. The crucial 'external factor' was identified as family support – without it, practitioners believed it unlikely that young people would engage with the YOT. However, workers felt it can be difficult to find the time or resources to engage families to the extent they would like – ironically, especially with those families most in need of help (who are often hardest to engage). Young people did not always share the views of their workers, with some preferring that the YOT had little contact with their family. Although not all practitioners shared the same view, some felt that, in certain cases, personal issues were so significant that the practical problems associated with a young person's personal situation had to be the primary focus of supervision sessions; only after these had been resolved could formal offending behaviour work be continued.

5. Enforcement

It is a requirement that young people comply with the conditions of their order, as issued by the court, including attendance at supervision sessions. All workers fulfil a dual role of providing support to the young person and enforcing the requirements of the Statutory Order, and YOTs have a set of rules or guidance, reflecting National Standards, which set out the procedures for non-compliance:

- A first missed appointment leads to a warning
- A second missed appointment leads to a final warning letter, and
- A third missed appointment leads to breach and return to court.

YJB, National Standards 2004

Practitioners feel that using, or threatening to use, enforcement can be effective where young people do not engage well from the outset or fail to attend: the online survey results highlight that over a third of practitioners (37%) believe “setting clear enforcement methods and breaching for non-compliance” is effective in such cases (see Table 5). Male workers appear to be most likely to advocate the use of enforcement procedures with 46% feeling that *clear enforcement procedures* are effective compared with 32% of female workers. Likewise 37% consider breaching for non-compliance is effective compared with 26% of female workers. When young people were asked what made them turn up to appointments, they consistently said they understood the consequences of non-attendance and were keen to avoid being breached and sent back to court.

If I breached, they will have to send me back to court and that's not a place I would want to go.

YOT 1, interview 5, young person

One of the key messages emerging from interviews with both practitioners and young people is the importance of being clear from the start of the order about what the enforcement procedures entail. Practitioners agreed that it is imperative to fully explain the breach procedure and the consequences of non-compliance.

I always try and make sure that they're completely aware that what would constitute a breach and what would be acceptable and what wouldn't be acceptable.

YOT 3, interview 3, senior practitioner (ex probation officer)

What I've found over the past seven years is the majority of the young people we work with thrive on strict guidelines. If you don't give them the guidelines, they will just take it and take it, and continually push the boundaries. Whereas if they've got the guidelines, they start working.

YOT 9, interview 3, ISSP worker

The great majority of young people also said they felt clear about what was expected of them on their order, and about the guidelines within which they were required to behave.

She [worker] explained what would happen if I missed coming, and she explained how long I've got it [my order] for, when I've got to come, and that ... because I had a 12 month one, I couldn't get it extended if I got in any more trouble. So she explained a lot of things that could happen if I got in any more trouble.

YOT 2, interview 13, young person

It is believed that clarity as to why a warning or breach is being enforced encourages young people to take responsibility for complying with their order while also helping them appreciate that practitioners have to do their job.

It's an issue because you can't counsel them as there's a punitive element to the work, but you have to be committed to them and show them you're there for them and they understand it's not your fault if you use enforcement measures.

YOT 1, interview 4, caseworker

This approach seems to work in some cases, with some young people displaying a clear understanding for the reason for their breach and therefore a willingness to accept their part in it.

They've done that because it's their job, they've got to do that ... I don't blame them because ... at the end of the day it's my fault I got breached ... You cannot blame them.

YOT 10, interview 2, young person

Other workers mentioned that breach, or the threat of breach, may be a more effective tool for young people at an earlier stage in their 'criminal career'.

It makes more of a difference when you use it as a threat to gain compliance for people who aren't so familiar with the system or more nervous about the system and don't enjoy the system, the threat of breach is often far more effective than an actual breach. And again it depends usually on where the young person is within their criminal justice career, if you like. Early on or if they're not familiar with it, I think it can be really useful.

YOT 4, interview 1, caseworker

Research suggests that young people's acceptance of enforcement is also more likely to occur in cases where there is strong mutual respect between the worker and young person (Horvath and Luborsky, 1993). This young person has a mutually respectful relationship with his YOT worker which appears to have resulted in him understanding and accepting the rules he must follow.

He told me that actually he's a guy that likes respect and that I should always be on time. If I'm going to be late I should phone him and tell him and not make him wait. And if I want to change appointments, well, I

should tell him beforehand and actually come with an appropriate memo and not be rude. And if I can respect him, he will respect me too.

YOT 1, interview 8, young person

One YOT had developed an innovative way of explaining to young people what their attendance at the YOT meant and what would happen if they failed to comply. An induction programme had been developed which every young person at the start of their sentence would be asked to attend. Details of the content of this programme are discussed in the case study below.

Induction programme:

All young people at the start of their sentence would be asked to attend an induction programme, run by two workers. The group programme was run as two sessions, over two weeks, and lasted an hour. During this time, the workers set out what contact with the YOT entailed, what was required of young people in attending sessions (i.e. behaviour, compliance) and also the implications of failing to attend (enforcement procedures). At the end of each session young people were expected to complete a short quiz to see if they remembered what had been discussed in the sessions. They were also encouraged to participate during the group, responding to issues and questions raised by the workers.

At the end of each session, young people were given information sheets which they were asked to take home and discuss with their parents/carers. All the young people interviewed at the YOT positively referred to the programme and were clear about the information that had been provided. Workers found that the programme greatly facilitated young people's understanding of the role of the YOT and reinforced messages of compliance and enforcement addressed later in one-to-one sessions.

Where young people attend but do not input or participate in sessions, enforcement techniques are believed to be less effective (most probably as they are not seen to be geared at tackling this).

Despite a formalised enforcement procedure being in place in each YOT, its application is often dependent on the discretion of the worker and the circumstances of individual cases. For example, if appointments are missed for reasons that are considered acceptable (e.g. illness or transport issues), a warning or breach is often not given. In other cases, workers initially establish the reasons why a young person's attendance is poor, such as forgetting appointments and issues with appointment times. Workers and young people both spoke of changes being made as a result such discussions; with timings of sessions made later in the day or workers contacting young people the day before to remind them of their appointment.

Some practitioners see breach as a last resort and are reluctant to use enforcement procedures even though it is clear that the young person has reached this stage.

[There is one young person] I've breached once, and he might have to be breached again, but I don't want to, so I'm trying to think of ways into his life and I find that very challenging and I don't even see him, I haven't seen him for three weeks because he won't come in.

YOT 8, interview 2, supervising officer

Although national guidelines are clear, it appeared that some workers find the apparent conflict between enforcing rules and being sensitive to the needs of the young person easier to deal with than others.

It's tricky because the national standards are set and are very stringent and it's basically if they miss [an] appointment, it's court. But I think the personal factor comes into it a lot. And it could be making an inconsistency between people ... you're working with real people and chaotic and quite defensive people sometimes. So it's a professional judgement, I think, hopefully they picked us to work in this area for a reason ... because we do it well.

YOT 9, interview 5, early intervention worker

However, as discussed under 'Consistency of worker', this inconsistency can prove problematic for young people, particularly in cases where there is a change in worker part way through a young person's order: where a young person has, for example, become used to a 'softer' approach, a new worker with a more punitive attitude may be met with consternation.

Interviews suggest that those workers with a 'probation' background find using enforcement more effective and, as a result, often have a reputation for being tougher than others in enforcing the rules on breach.

I think ultimately you always try and strike a balance. But the main aim of this service is about enforcement, isn't it? And although quite often it's difficult to balance that with welfare issues, our role is about protecting the public to the best of our capabilities as well, isn't it?

YOT 3, interview 2, agency caseworker

Furthermore, some young people spoke of the importance of their workers adhering to the same rules that are required of them – i.e. being there for appointments and being on time. This suggests that pro-social modelling can be important in terms of achieving both clarity and consistency for young people, for example, with practitioners being present for every appointment, and expecting the same of the young people, therefore encouraging good behaviour. The example below shows a case where the young person is annoyed at being threatened with breach when his practitioner did not turn up to an appointment.

When I come here I have to wait 10, 15 minutes for her to come down ... One time I waited a whole hour for someone to come and see me and they didn't, and then I was going to leave after 15 minutes and I told the people at the front [desk] there, 'make sure you've put my name down, you know that you know I've come, because I ain't waiting no longer' ... half an hour and I'm still there. I was like, no, ... wait, because you don't want to be getting in trouble and that, and I waited a whole hour and still no one come, so I just left and then she tried to say something to me the following week about that and I was like, no. I just walked out How can you try dictating when I was waiting there for an hour for someone to come and see me and then no one come, not one single person ... If I'm 15 minutes late I get breached ... An hour, that's not right man.

YOT 10, interview 5, young person

Finally, practitioners pointed out that breaching can be hindered by the courts not always supporting YOT workers in endorsing the action. This means that threats of breach action may be undermined if young people believe that courts will not enforce the penalty.

I'm thinking of somebody actually that I had on a Supervision Order. He was notorious ... for non-compliance, and I was relatively shocked and disappointed when he came my way and he just failed to turn up. I think he came once, he just really, well, he just didn't comply at all. And I took it back to the court which is quite time consuming ... and essentially this young person learnt that the court weren't going to send him into custody and he knew that ... he knew the system, he knew how it worked, he knew how to get adjournments, he knew how to bullshit the magistrates as well. He was just adept at playing the system.

YOT 4, interview 1, caseworker

Summary

Enforcement procedures are clearly set out for practitioners in national standards and practitioners recognise the importance of being clear from the start of the order about what is expected from young people. Although many practitioners believe that enforcement and breach can be effective, they vary in their adherence to formal procedures, with some more willing to overlook non-attendance than others. If appointments are missed for reasons that are considered acceptable (i.e. illness, transport issues), a warning or breach may not be issued. But what constitutes a 'reasonable' excuse for missing an appointment varies between workers. This inconsistency seems to prove particularly problematic in cases where there is a change in worker part way through a young person's order: where a young person has, for example, become accustomed to a 'softer' approach, a new worker with a more punitive stance may be met with resistance. Findings suggest that young people respond better to being breached when they are clear about the rules and are encouraged to acknowledge their responsibility for their actions. It is also important for practitioners to act as positive role models for young people, for example by ensuring they too are on time for appointments.

6. Examples of promising practice

Group work

A number of practitioners noted that group work can be valuable for some young people. One reported advantage of group work was seen to be its ability to help young people develop their capacity to manage social interactions.

At the end of the day if you do nothing but one to one then you're in difficulties because how is a young person ever going to get back into society, because they've got to be with other people at some stage in their life. So you need to heighten up their social skills, and being on your own in a room with them is not necessarily the best way of doing it. But I do understand that some young people, they're not ready for that.

YOT 7, interview 1, senior YOT worker

Other workers point out that group work can help young people to learn from each other, provide a diversion thereby keeping young people out of trouble, and help young people explore conflicting opinions.

I think some things can be useful in a group, in terms of helping them understand that they're not alone or that they're not different and to learn from other people's experience.

YOT 2, interview 2, YOT worker (and ISSP worker)

I think you can get a lot more effective work done through discussion than you can through worksheets and that's the good thing about groups. If you've got two young people who have got different views, like, for example, yesterday at my drama group, the YOT kids were each allocated to a drama student, and they had to mould them so they were stood in the position of a criminal. And now that got a really good discussion going with the three girls from the YOT, who had totally different views about what a criminal looked like, and whether they saw themselves as a criminal. That's a lot more effective isn't it than me and one young person saying "so what's a criminal?"

YOT 4, interview 8, caseworker

However, some practitioners caution that young people need to be clear and transparent about a group's purpose.

I saw a RAP group and it was, on the one hand, based around leisure activities, which was the carrot, but, it was also based around drug and alcohol and offending work. But it had never been made clear to the group that this is what was on offer and if they were going for one half of this they had to accept that they'd be involved in the other half and basically they just point blank refused, so they wouldn't engage, they wouldn't work. They were abusive, they were aggressive and it just ended in total collapse. So I think you've got to be very clear what the group's about.

YOT 4, interview 1, caseworker

A number of practitioners also expressed concern that negative peer associations could be formed in groups, particularly if lower and higher level offenders are in the same group.

The downside of group work is it's not ideal to have someone who's at the early stage of an offending career in a group with someone who's a persistent offender, but we do try to avoid that.

YOT 4, interview 8, caseworker

Similar concerns were expressed around mixing low and higher level offenders. In fact, overall it was considered that group work can be most effective with those on lower tariff orders. Nonetheless, others felt that positive peer associations could sometimes be formed by mixing offenders and non-offenders within a single group.

I do think it's good to mix. We have a dance group that we tried to get some of the young offenders involved in, and that involves non offending kids as well. I think that's quite positive because then they get some positive associations. But, yeah, if they could make peers that weren't involved in youth offending then that would be good. As long as it didn't go the other way and the non offending kids ended up offending.

YOT 2, interview 3, caseworker (second probation officer)

The young people interviewed also expressed mixed views about group work. Several felt nervous about interacting with others and about whether they would be able to fit in or feel confident within a group.

It's being with other people, you don't act the way you normally are, you can get through to them easier if it's just one on one. And once you get to know them it's a lot easier than going into a group where you don't know people and stuff like that.

YOT 4, interview 3, young person

I like being one to one. When there's a group I can't speak as well in a group.

YOT 4, interview 4, young person

However, some young people enjoyed the group dynamics.

I prefer groups to being on my own, but some days I don't mind working on my own, I don't mind working in groups it doesn't really bother me, it depends what I'm doing ... in a group you can hear different opinions from different people, when you're one-to-one you can still discuss it, but I like to hear what other people's views are, what they've got to say.

YOT 4, interview 10, young person

Young people were also keen to be asked what activities they would like to be involved in and try to schedule programmes accordingly.

Ask the young people what they want and what would they really, really like to do, but they can't do it. The young, because it's stuff like music, football, all of that stuff, everything, there's loads of things what young people want to do but probably, I don't know if YOT can provide it or not, but yeah just. I just think they should ask what they want really and see what the feedback is and what they can do.

YOT 6, interview 5, young person

During the interviews, several practitioners mentioned difficulties in referring young people to programmes and groups. Practitioners recognise that not all young people will be suitable for particular programmes, and acknowledge that an activity that might suit one young person will not necessarily suit all young people.

We've got one ISSP lad that really did, it just really didn't ring his bell, which is absolutely pointless, forcing them to do it something that they're just not interested in. So he's gone off to do something else.

YOT 7, interview 1, senior YOT worker

It's meeting their individual needs and also you've got to look at who's in the group and whether they would fit in with the group, and if they wouldn't, then they wouldn't go in the group and they'd see me on a one to one basis.

YOT 6, interview 3, substance misuse worker

Where a young person is not suitable for group work, the onus appeared to be on their caseworker to deliver the same material in one-to-one sessions. But, this can present a challenge to workers, who do not always feel well equipped to do so.

I've got a number of kids that aren't suitable for group work and I've found this difficult because I'm not trained in those programmes. But if the programmes team aren't available to do it on a one-to-one basis, they'll give you the literature and try and guide you through it, which I struggle with ... I'm not confident in delivering it and I think if you're not confident about something, it shows.

YOT 3, interview 2, agency caseworker

Some practitioners feel that individual factors such as needs and offence type are taken into account when referring young people to groups.

If it's a violent offence I'd refer to the Violent Offenders Group. If it's a car offence, I'd refer to Car Offenders Programme. If it's a possession of a knife, penknife, cannabis, Section 5 Public Orders, you'd be looking at the general offending behaviour group work programme.

YOT 3, interview 2, agency caseworker

However, others point out that practical and resource constraints mean that the process of referral can sometimes seem back-to-front – in other words, young people are assigned to activities that need filling up, rather than considering their needs.

At the moment we run groups and we fill groups up with people as and when they come into the system, but the reality is we should be looking at the people, seeing what the need is, and then deciding where we put the help.

YOT 7, interview 2, YOT worker (and parenting worker)

Some practitioners feel that groups sometimes either do not run frequently or long enough, often due to lack of funding.

I referred a lot of my young people [to the girls' group] because I see the merits of it ... But I've been here eight months and I've not got one person onto a group yet ... I think there needs to be more rolling groups here ... there needs to be two groups going on at the same time – the same sessions per week – so that you can get twice as many people through to group work process. And that's about resources, isn't it, and the fact that there's not been the staff, perhaps the funding. I think there's issues about funding on groups.

YOT 1, interview 1, YOT worker

The use of reparation schemes

Some of the YOTs visited run reparation schemes where young people carry out a fixed number of hours of work to help repay the damage caused by their offence. A range of reparation opportunities have been developed, including a bike workshop, cooking in a shelter for homeless people (which proved very popular in one YOT), work at a mental health day centre and work in the immediate community where the young people were living. Positive views were expressed about the merit of reparation, which some practitioners feel is undervalued.

My personal feelings up until this point in time are that reparation is seen as the poorer cousin of the interventions. In fact, I'm not even sure it's seen as an intervention as such, it's just seen as something that needs to be done.

YOT 7, interview 6, YOT worker (and reparation worker)

A key value of reparation schemes is seen to be their clear and logical purpose, meaning that young people and society can grasp reparation as a concept with a defined aim: namely, you do something wrong, you put it right. In addition, reparation is also seen by some practitioners as a way for young people to gain new skills, and to tackle their offending behaviour in alternative ways.

I'd be saying let's do more reparation because the kids understand it, society understands it, but it doesn't mean we've got them going in fluorescent jackets mowing lawns ... it means doing something very creative that is community based that allows them to feel better about themselves. The public understand it, they [young people] understand it, their parents understand it. So many hours, but make sure within that, hidden within that are the interventions – which, at the moment, we deliver one to one across the desk, in a little interview room – and almost deliver the stuff without them realising it's happening.

YOT 7, interview 2, YOT officer (and parenting worker)

However, it is also clear that it is not straightforward to run successful reparation schemes and, as a result, there is great variation in effectiveness. Practitioners pointed out that it is difficult to find suitable tasks for young people to carry out where organisers are willing to tolerate poor attendance and young people with challenging behaviour. Equally, while it is felt by many that reparation should ideally be connected to the offence committed, it was noted that it is difficult to achieve this in practice. In reality, most YOTs appear to run a limited number of reparation schemes, and young people are fitted into the available reparation schemes, regardless of their offence.

If we can fit in with something that's relevant to the offence, so for instance, if they damaged something in a public place, and we can then possibly make something that can be donated back to a public place, it might not be the exact place, it might not be direct reparation, but for instance, if they've damaged some sort of street furniture, and we can donate maybe a wooden plant or two to a village hall, to sit outside, then obviously we would do that. It will also depend on what projects we have available in their geographical area as well, so sometimes that can go out of the window.

YOT 7, interview 6, YOT worker (and reparation worker)

The reparation schemes available in some YOTs appear to be much more imaginative and engaging than others. One example of a seemingly successful reparation scheme is discussed below. The particular success of this scheme – a bike workshop where young people build bikes for the community – appears to lie in its multi-faceted nature: not only do young people repay the community, but also they develop transferable skills. It should be noted that it appeared that the success of the bike workshop was significantly influenced by the skills of the worker delivering it. This supports the comments made earlier about the need for YOT workers to have the necessary skill set to engage young people effectively.

Bike workshop

One YOT ran a multi-faceted intervention as a reparation scheme. This was a bike workshop where young people learnt to build bikes, which are subsequently distributed to disadvantaged children in the community. This activity resulted from using the skills of an existing YOT worker to develop a scheme that would be useful and appealing to young people, while fulfilling the dual aim of repaying the community.

My philosophy has always been to do what the young people are into, not try and put ... a round peg into a square hole. Also, in this case maximising a particular member of staff we've got here who is a complete cycle nut ... And also how we can develop skills that young people have got around mountain bikes and BMXs and how to get them an accreditation on it.

YOT 7, interview 1, senior YOT worker

Having had the idea, the YOT then involved the young people in applying for funding to set up the scheme.

There's a thing called the Youth Opportunities Fund and the Youth Capital Fund, which the government have given every Local Authority, and the young people have to apply for it to set up a project. So what we did with the ISSP crew is that we sat down with them, and we had a lot of staff saying you'll never get this off the ground, because they won't give you more than ten minutes' attention span. Well actually they did, they did

the whole thing ... Put the application in and got £7,500 which was just for this year's funding, to start us off, to get all of our tools, get all the basics to build ten bikes. A trailer to make the project mobile, and then we've been invited for the next three years to apply every year to carry the project on for another three years.

YOT 7, interview 1, senior YOT worker

It was notable that, unlike many schemes, the bike workshop managed to combine repaying the community, with providing young people with an accreditation, engaging them in what they were doing, and giving them responsibility (e.g. handling tools or making decisions). Practitioners and young people alike spoke extremely positively about the bike workshop and its ability to inspire young people and increase their confidence.

So there is a huge amount of transferable skills from what they're doing in the workshop that they will hopefully be able to take forward into their own life if they think to themselves, God, I can't afford this, how do I..? I can make that, I think, and I can have a bash at that, and if I use the same things that I did when I was making that with the YOT, then that'll do the job, and it'll save me some money. Or, if they're in a work situation, then there's a small amount of, OK, this is going to take four hours until I have my lunch break, then there's going to be another three hours before I can go home, how to pace themselves in that kind of mode.

YOT 7, interview 1, senior YOT worker

I like doing that do you know what I mean? Just I know everything about bikes so I don't know how to explain it really ... I suppose it puts your mind on something else doesn't it? And then, especially if you're going out to do up a bike, if you do up a bike and then take you somewhere on a good track or something that's going to keep you out of trouble isn't it? On a weekend or something, yeah it's good stuff.

YOT 7, interview 9, young person

I think the bikes are given to people that can't afford bikes really. People that badly need them ... might as well just sort them out with a bike. Fix them up and give them away like To be honest with you I didn't even know how to put a bike together ... and I just basically just done a whole bike now, so that's pretty sound.

YOT 7, interview 11, young person

Other successful reparation schemes referred to included one YOT where practitioners tried to do work in the community where the young people live to empower and engage them better in the work. However, the difference between the various reparation schemes in operation across different YOTs was, at times, quite marked, particularly in terms of the enjoyment or skills gained by the young people. As mentioned, this is frequently due to the difficulty in finding suitable reparation activities.

We offer a very limited variety of opportunities, if truth be told. That's as a consequence of, I suppose, the people that have been running the reparation relying upon sites, which are low maintenance, and have very low risk thresholds ... So we've got litter picking at one of the main recreational areas ... So we're relying very heavily on menial tasks ... and that's, as far as we're concerned, not good. But it's been convenient because of the staffing issues ... Actually in the previous YOT that I worked at we had some reparation schemes, which were I have to say a lot more interesting and attendance at reparation was very, very high as a consequence ... it's just changing the culture and the mindset away

from, well it's much easier to have them sweeping streets because it's easier to organise and the chances of it going wrong are much less.

YOT 9, interview 7, reparation manager

The suitability of the reparative work needs be considered alongside the expected benefits that young people can get from it. In one YOT, young people were observed making poppies for the British Legion Poppy Appeal. However, this was 10 months in advance of 'Poppy day' and young people appeared somewhat distanced from the cause. At another, young people were observed taking part in an archaeological dig. One young person on the archaeological dig said that she had always hated history and found the reparation boring and stressful.

I think they should do more activities that I wouldn't get bored or stressed out on. When I'm stressing out, to me they're sort of persuading me to breach by giving me something I don't like. Yeah, I know it's a punishment, but at the end of the day, what's the point of giving me something I really hate? Like, I've walked out on that archaeological dig because I've never liked history ... You shouldn't do that; I don't think it's fair. I thought it was going to go on for ever and ever.

YOT 4, interview 11, young person

Range and quality of available resources

YOTs vary significantly in the range and quality of activities, resources and group work that workers can draw upon. This can lead to discrepancies in the variety of interesting and engaging work available to young people, and consequently a difference between levels of engagement between YOTs. Workers in YOTs that offered fewer options for young people tended to believe that this was the case across all YOTs.

I think you'll probably hear that as well from other people, that actual intervention-based programmes and courses and things are very much lacking and I think that's throughout all YOTs rather than specific to this one.

YOT 9, interview 5, early intervention worker

Additionally, some young people are catered for better than others by YOTs. For example, in some YOTs the focus appeared to be on boys more than girls, with activities largely geared to catering for the needs and interests of boys (this supports other research that has been conducted in this field – see Rex, S (2001)). Likewise, in some YOTs, young people from ethnic minorities were catered for separately, on the basis that they may face distinct issues while, in others, no distinction was made by ethnicity.

Some programmes are directly related to addressing offending behaviour, e.g. workshops on drug and alcohol misuse, anger management, or victim awareness. Others either involve small groups of young people talking about relevant issues, e.g. 'girls groups', or entail young people developing new skills and trying out new things, e.g. education programmes, music groups, dance groups, a graffiti workshop, a bike workshop, fishing, cooking, horse-riding and camping. There is some question around the actual benefit when there is limited direct offending behaviour work. In this case a practitioner points out that while

some young people were engaging, he did not know if the activities had tackled their offending behaviour.

Whether they were still offending or not, some were and some weren't, but a good relationship and a good rapport had developed.

YOT 4, interview 1, caseworker

Practitioners reported little in the way of set guidance as to how much a scheme should relate to offending behaviour, or how much of a young person's time should be spent learning a new skill, such as horse-riding, that may be beneficial to them, but may not directly address their offence. While this allows for greater flexibility, and for experienced and talented workers to make best use of their skills without feeling restricted, it also results in variability in the services provided to young people between individual workers and YOTs. Some YOTs do have adequate resources and the effect of this is evident in the attitude of the young person towards the YOT facilities.

There's just loads of stuff to do. Pool table, ping pong table, music and playing with decks and that. There's like activities every now and then. Every other week or something, they have activities.

YOT 2, interview 5, young person

Further examples of promising practice

Little evaluation of the schemes and methods used appears to take place in YOTs, making it difficult to assess how effective they are. However, during case study visits, a few schemes and approaches used by workers stood out as particularly well regarded by practitioners and young people alike. These are discussed below, as examples of promising approaches. However, it is important to note that, while these were considered promising in terms of engaging young people and teaching them new skills, their impact on changing offending behaviour was not assessed.

Rapid English Programme

The Rapid English Programme aims to help young people to engage in learning and make quick progress. Practitioners expressed a belief that the enthusiasm of the people behind the programme rubs off on the young people. Realisation that they can gain a new skill also helps to build their confidence. Indeed, the success of the programme appeared to hinge on young people realising that they had succeeded quickly in gaining a new skill.

I think it gives them something they thought they were never going to get. I think they felt given up on or failed by the education system. And although they're sometimes resistant to start they realise they can do it. We pick groups, making sure we know they can do it and we're going to sit with them while they do it ... and you watch them, watch them just grow while we're doing it. I love Rapid English. I have to say, I think it's one of the best things that's happened to us.

YOT 8, interview 1, caseworker

Music project

In one YOT a practitioner had developed a music project. In her one-to-one work with young people, she found that two young people were struggling to discuss their offences in any depth. However, she managed to encourage them to take part in the music project and express their thoughts through the medium of song. This appeared to be a success both from her perspective and the perspective of the young people involved.

A couple of lads couldn't get across what they felt about their offences. So then I thought right, do they have an interest in music? So I thought I'd do this music project and they're doing their own lyrics. And all throughout the session I was doing some bits on awareness work, and then I said, do you think you could bring this work into some lyrics? "Oh yeah, we can do that." So they come up with this whole victim awareness CD. And now if you talk to them, now they recount it off. But just doing it on the one-on-one sessions, they're unable to do it.

YOT 2, interview 1, YOT worker

We had to make a track and that and I put some lyrics together. It's great or, I think it's good stuff ... it's about the police and stuff. Just saying how I offended and stuff and how I was in the dark and couldn't come out.

YOT 2, interview 5, young person

Summary

Group work programmes, while not popular with some staff, appear to offer an efficient means of supervision as long as these are well organised with a clear aim. Reparation programmes are also regarded as useful tools for staff to choose from – these both offer a clear conceptual focus on paying back a 'wrong', and in some cases allow young people to gain valuable transferable skills. As is common with research on YOTs, practitioners report that limited resources make adequate provision of services difficult. But as illustrated in this chapter there are many varied ways in which practitioners attempt to overcome these problems and engage with young people.¹⁴ However, while staff demonstrated creativity in overcoming local resourcing problems, they also reflected on the fact that there appeared to be little in the way of standardised guidance as to how much a scheme should relate to offending behaviour or how much of a young person's time should be spent learning new skills which may be beneficial and fun for them, but do not directly address their offending behaviour (other than by reducing time available to commit offences).

¹⁴ More details of the programmes mentioned are provided in appendix III.

7. Sharing best practice

Sharing good practice with colleagues in the YOT

Where positive practice does exist and is proving successful with young people, there seems to be limited opportunity to share it with colleagues. Through the course of this research, several YOT workers noted that they did not have much occasion to discuss matters of practice with their colleagues, even those in the same team. Some teams do not sit together in the same office, so informal communications can be also limited. In one YOT, workers have to share 'hot desks', which further limits the opportunities for regular communication.

We can sometimes be like ships that pass in the night. If I came in the office with a huge issue ... and I need to share it, there might be nobody there.

YOT 8, interview 1, early intervention worker

Everybody has gone round and they've made up their own little things about how they work with young people but it hasn't been given out across. I mean I might be doing something that somebody else isn't doing but there's no crossover ... you could argue that it shouldn't really be down to the individual practitioners to do that, that should be done on a higher level.

YOT 9, interview 5, early intervention worker

Time is also a limiting factor. On a day-to-day basis, many workers do not have time for much discussion with colleagues.

A lot of my time is out there with the young people, so to sit down and share something with a colleague is not on.

YOT 9, interview 1, early intervention worker

I like practice training anyway and the opportunity to do joint sessions, I think, and get that feedback and that happens very rarely. It's something that I really enjoy ... It's very difficult to make time to do joint visits and get to observe other people.

YOT 2, interview 2, YOT worker (ISSP worker)

Although teams generally have regular meetings every week or fortnight, they often lack the time to deal with matters of detailed practice or individual case examples. Such practice issues are dealt with in supervision with the line manager, but this relies very much on the professional style of the manager. Even very practical matters, such as which interview rooms are found most amenable for communicating with young people in a relaxed way, are not necessarily shared. These may not become standard practice unless staff members communicate with each other about them.

A constraint in some YOTs is that youth justice and social work professionals can sometimes be reluctant to discuss with colleagues details of their approach. It can be especially difficult to share examples of when things go wrong, and to

ask for suggestions of approaches that might work. Many teams have occasional team days or half days in which such matters are discussed, but these are usually fairly infrequent and the agenda may fill up with issues other than professional practice. This means that good ideas are not necessarily shared and the YOT or team has no standard approach to practice.

Sharing good practice between YOTs

Currently the sharing of good ideas between YOTs tends to be very informal. The YJB arranges regular meetings between YOT managers on a regional basis, in which issues of policy can be discussed. Some staff highlighted that there are currently no similar regional meetings for other staff, such as reparation managers and operational managers to discuss specific matters of practice. However, as previously mentioned, some practitioners noted that the YJB does provide information for practitioners on its website, aiming to encourage the exchange of ideas about effective practice, although due to the lack of input from practitioners this is found to be very limited.

The YJB ... has a [web]site where you can input effective practice things, but at the moment there only appears to be four or five things on it the last time I checked. And it's all group based stuff, which we don't generally do – it's one-on-one stuff that we need. It needs to be quite specific as well...I think there was one that was there aimed at fire setters, which was probably a very good programme but in a YOT where we've got however many hundred kids on the books, there's going to be two or three of them that are fire setters. It needs to be more individual based.

YOT 9, interview 5, early intervention worker

One YOT manager encouraged workers to go and visit other YOTs in person to look at how they successfully run schemes/approaches. In another YOT, practitioners had taken it upon themselves to arrange a meeting with other YOTs and had found this to be very successful.

We've just held our first ... Regional ISSP meeting and ... because it was the first one, a lot of them couldn't attend. But the next one is in April and a lot more of them will attend. We had A YOT, B YOT, C and D, and we all sat there, griped about our common gripes and shared resources which is brilliant ... I've just sent off a lot of our programmes on disk to all the other YOTs so they can use them.

YOT 7, interview 3, ISSP worker

The specific skills and interests of individual workers could also be shared more effectively. Practical matters that could be shared might include, for example:

- Techniques for reminding young people about sessions, such as by phone or text.
- When it might be appropriate to take the young person out for a walk or to a cafe instead of staying in the office
- Using the local library for sessions with a young person.

- How to get young people to speak where they are silent in sessions and how to get a sense of how they are feeling, remind them why they are here and try to make sessions more conversational. If they feel listened to and their anxieties recognised, they may be more willing to engage.
- How to work with families and encourage them to be involved.
- How to handle an initial interview when the parent is present in the room.

Summary

While individual practitioners reported working to develop their own resources, the opportunity to share resources and ideas with other staff either within their own team or from other teams, appears to be limited. Although the YJB has the facility on its website for sharing emerging practice, few staff discussed this. While managers' meetings, which are facilitated by regional managers, are believed to be useful, no such equivalent exists for other staff, such as reparation managers and operational managers. Although teams generally have regular meetings, they sometimes reported lacking the time to deal with matters of detailed practice or individual case examples. A further constraint in some YOTs was that practitioners were sometimes reluctant to discuss details of their approach with colleagues, especially where things had gone wrong.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

This final chapter brings together the emerging findings from this research in an attempt to pinpoint some elements that have reportedly had an impact on young people's engagement in youth justice services. Table 6 summarises some of the techniques used by practitioners to engage young people who are participating to different extents. Many reinforce the practice messages set out in the YJB's KEEP on engaging with young people who offend.

Table 6: Summary of effective techniques for engaging young people

Behaviour of young person	Method most highly perceived by practitioners in the online survey to be successful in engaging young person
Those who fail to engage from the start of the order	Practitioners suggest liaising with their family, friends or peers to encourage engagement. Breaching for non-compliance where necessary is an option.
Those whose attendance is poor	Collecting the young person where possible is advocated by YOT workers in this instance. Breaching for non-compliance where necessary is an option.
Young people are not fully participating, but are engaging with the YOT to some extent.	Involving young people in their intervention plan is important in this circumstance to try to get their 'buy-in'. For example, where young people turn up but fail to fully participate, YOT workers think this is essential – as is the use of creative ideas to try to encourage participation.
Where the young person has a good relationship with their worker, but still fails to fully participate with their order.	Practitioners advocated involving the young person in the planning of the intervention/supervision session. Also important to ensure clear objectives are set from the start of the order.
Young person is participating but not fully engaging with YOT staff	In this case, the YOT/young person relationship could be explored in more detail, and possible allocation of a different worker could be considered.

It should be re-iterated that the concept of '**engagement**' is **multi-faceted** and can be interpreted differently by practitioners. Coupled with the emphasis on national standards and breach, the acceptance by some practitioners of minimal input from young people creates a degree of confusion and disagreement over what worthwhile contact with a young person is, and what constitutes actually being 'engaged'. This is reflected in the difficulties that practitioners had when responding to the online survey – many were unable to differentiate engagement and participation from one another. As noted earlier, this makes the use of definitions such as Mason and Prior's (2008) problematic, as young people may not be able to demonstrate 'engagement' without desisting from reoffending.

The relationship between a young person and their worker is vital to their engagement and relies on the ability of staff to be 'firm but fair' in their approach; achieving a mix of friendliness coupled with appropriate boundaries within which rules can be enforced where necessary. Where relationships are working well, it is important that there is as much consistency as possible in who is working with the young people as changes can be unsettling. For many young people, **having someone to talk to** is judged as especially positive, particularly as, in some cases, the YOT worker is one of the few people, if not the only person, the young person is able to speak with openly. However, while active listening and conversation between young people and workers has been shown to assist the relationship and help engage young people, it is unclear whether supervision sessions which heavily rely on general chat actually encourage behavioural change.

The skills of the worker are important in developing a positive relationship with a young person but also in directly engaging them in interventions. Indeed, the worker should be seen as a resource, and the delivery of sessions should be recognised to be just as important as the tools or programmes themselves. Among the key skills mentioned are excellent communication skills and demonstrating an interest in the young person as an individual.

Effective allocation of cases to workers ideally considers each young person's needs on an individual basis; however, workers did not believe that matching on characteristics such as gender or ethnicity is important. Instead, practitioners and young people identified **characteristics** such as being humorous or approachable as important. Other qualities include being flexible, creative, having the ability to develop mutual respect and to inspire trust and being persistent and prepared to go the extra mile with young people. However, it is not possible to be prescriptive about these as possessing these skills may not necessarily be essential. Some experienced workers for example did not adopt a 'humorous approach', but were able to engage young people in alternative ways, such as through demonstrating their ability to identify with the young people. Practical constraints dictate that allocation is based, more often than not, on available resources and therefore neither needs based allocation or consistency are always achievable.

There is a clear **need for clarity of enforcement rules** at the outset of the order so that young people are clear about what is expected of them and are able to feel responsibility for their own actions should enforcement be required. Enforcement procedures are clearly set out for practitioners in national standards and these are explained to the young person during initial contact. However, both practitioners and young people interviewed for this research noted that there is variation in practitioners' use of warnings and breaches. Some are more willing to overlook non-attendance than others, and what constitutes a 'reasonable' excuse for missing an appointment varies between workers (even within the same YOT). This inconsistency seems to prove particularly problematic in cases where there is a change in worker part way through the young person's sentence. A number of young people spoke of instances where changes in caseworker had led to a 'softer' approach being replaced by one that is more punitive, which was met with consternation.

Indeed, **consistency is key** to engaging young people in the following ways:

- Consistency by workers in their expectations of what is achievable for young people in adhering to the rules of enforcement and implementing these in a consistent manner.
- Consistency in the worker's approach to the young people, indeed in the advocated approach of the YOT as a whole.
- Consistency in the worker for young people in order to build an effective relationship.

Pro-social modelling can be important in terms of achieving both clarity and consistency for the young people, for example, with practitioners being present for every appointment, and expecting the same of the young people, therefore encouraging good behaviour.

The confidence and skills of practitioners could be improved through **training and guidance** which is seen as inadequate by practitioners, with many relying on training or experience from previous roles to carry out their duties.

There are a range of **reparation schemes** in YOTs, some more 'engaging' than others. For example, some seem to be teaching transferable skills, while others seem more about filling time. Where young people gain skills, reparation schemes appear to be much more engaging to young people, while other schemes are viewed simply as a punishment. The varying quality of reparation schemes and the difference between those that enable young people to develop skills and those that do not brings to light issues around the purpose of reparation: should reparation be seen as an opportunity to teach skills and engage young people, or should it be simply used as a punishment?

A key barrier to engagement is the discrepancy in the range and quality of a variety of aspects of YOT work. This includes the extent to which a young person's needs are considered when allocating them to a worker, the planning of supervision sessions, and the variety of group work on offer. In general, supervision sessions are left up to individual workers to plan, with different approaches evident. Likewise, there is a reliance on individual staff members being particularly creative and resourceful to develop schemes and resources for use in the YOT. This results in some YOTs offering a better range and quality of activities and resources than others. It can also place a burden on newly qualified staff that may be less confident about what to cover in supervision sessions.

It does not seem sensible to dictate practice across YOTs and the variety of activities designed by individual practitioners should be acknowledged as a positive development. Despite this, practitioners see little opportunity to share practice either within or between YOTs, meaning that good ideas are not passed on, and newer staff can struggle for a long time before feeling confident about the approach they are taking¹⁵.

Being realistic about what YOTs can achieve is essential and what is clear when considering engagement is the need to view young people in the context of their wider circumstances. **Involving families is vital** and should be done as

¹⁵ The YJB's directory of emerging practice aims to address this through enabling YOTs to share practical experience.

much as possible. Practitioners admitted that this is sometimes difficult – ironically, especially with those families who are in most need of help – but they acknowledge that more should be done to engage with families.

Suggestions for YOTs and the YJB arising from this research

Suggestions for policy and practice

Based on the findings from this report these suggestions are separated into those that could be considered by YOTs/YOT managers and those which are applicable to the YJB.

YOTs and YOT managers

1. Family support is central to addressing offending behaviour and engaging families is vital; YOTs should support workers in **engaging and involving families** in their work with young people to stop offending. However, it is important that young people feel the YOT offers them confidentiality and privacy from their families and therefore not always supportive of engaging families. Thus, alongside family engagement, a focus on working individually with young people must also be maintained.
2. YOT Managers could **facilitate discussion about how to engage young people**, including the sharing of ideas between those who have different professional backgrounds and preferred styles of work, in order to maximise the range of approaches available. It may help if Team Managers identify which staff members have been trained in approaches such as Motivational Interviewing and arrange for the others to receive 'cascade' training from this person (or persons).
3. Where there is a change of worker, managers should ensure that there is adequate hand-over and the new worker is fully briefed about what has been covered previously. Managers should also encourage staff to contact others who have previously worked with the young people they supervise, whether within or outside of the YOT.
4. While the success of schemes can be variable, there is evidence to suggest that **reparation work** can achieve high levels of engagement and fulfil aims beyond punishment if it is imaginative and offers young people transferable skills (although it should be noted that the impact of reparation on offending behaviour was not assessed in this research). Where reparative work was made both meaningful and enjoyable, such as repairing bicycles or landscape gardening, young people were often more willing to engage.

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5. The importance of achieving a balance between consistency and flexibility must be noted and could be assisted by a **core set of minimum standards which allow scope for flexible practice**. Arguably, this already occurs with the use of worker discretion in relation to breach and non-compliance, and whether to work outside national standards in specific cases. Given the forthcoming amendments to national standards, overly prescriptive measures relating to working with

young people may prevent staff from exercising their professional discretion which seems to be key for maintaining flexible working.

6. Given the current limited opportunities to **share effective practice** – both *within* and *between* YOTs – and the variation of working practices (which can be largely dependent on individual YOTs and the particular experience and skills of staff), consideration should be given to mapping evidence of promising practice across YOTs.
7. YJB regional managers could arrange or **facilitate meetings for YOT operational managers/senior practitioners on specific topics**, in which practical matters could be discussed and good practice ideas shared. Specific meetings could be arranged for reparation managers, for example, to enable them to share ideas and experiences of types of reparation work that can work well, in which young people participate at a high rate.
8. **Training:** particularly around specific techniques for engagement and intervention was highlighted by practitioners. Although engagement can be largely dependent on the relationship between the worker and young person, equipping practitioners with knowledge about relevant guidance, techniques, training and tools can facilitate and encourage best practice.

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Appendices

Appendix I – Online survey results

Topline results	Actual	Percentages
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1. Firstly, what is your role within the YOT? Please select the option that applies to you.

Manager (Strategic) – Full-time	25	5.9%
Manager (Strategic) – Part-time	0	0.0%
Manager (Operational) – Full-time	35	8.3%
Manager Operational – Part-time	0	0.0%
Senior practitioner – Full-time	51	12.1%
Senior practitioner – Part-time	4	1.0%
Practitioner – Full-time	255	60.6%
Practitioner – Part-time	45	10.7%
Administrative	4	1.0%
Sessional	2	0.5%
Student/trainee	0	0.0%
Volunteer	0	0.0%
Total	421	100.0%

2a. And in this role, what practice area do you work in within the YOT? Please select all the options which apply.

Prevention	116	27.6%
Final warnings/reprimands	74	17.6%
Community court orders	188	44.7%
Custody (DTOs, Sec 91s)	129	30.6%
ISSP	82	19.5%
Specialism	117	27.8%
Other – please specify	108	25.7%
Total	42	100.0%

2b. Please specify which specialism your role relates to. Select all the options which apply.

Education	44	37.6%
Mental health	22	18.8%
Health	19	16.2%
Substance misuse	32	27.4%
Accommodation	15	12.8%
Parenting	23	19.7%
Offending behaviour programmes	28	23.9%
Victim liaison	17	14.5%
Reparation	27	15.4%
Other specialism	27	23.1%
Total	117	100.0%

3. How long have you been working directly with young people in the Youth Justice System? Please select one option only.

Less than a year	42	10.0%
1 to 2 years	68	16.2%
Over 2 years but less than 5 years	132	31.4%
Over 5 years but less than 10 years	121	28.7%
More than 10 years	58	13.8%
Total	421	100.0%

4. In an average week, what percentage of your time would you estimate is spent on the following responsibilities? Please select all the options that apply to you.

Working directly with young people on a one-to-one basis		29.4%
Working directly with groups of young people		4.9%
Preparation for supervision/intervention sessions		12.9%
Administration tasks (including data collection, updating records)		37.3%
Managing a team/colleagues		17.0%
Other		24.9%

Q5. What do you think your optimum caseload would be? Please enter the number of young people that would make up your optimum caseload.

NUMERIC VALUE (mean)	16	
Don't know	50	11.9%
Not applicable	111	26.4%
Total	421	100.0%

6. How many young people do you currently have on your caseload?

NUMERIC VALUE (mean)	19	
Don't know	2	0.5%
Not applicable	108	25.7%
Total	421	100.0%

7a. Thinking about the young people in your caseload, on average, how many practitioners in the YOT work with each young person?

1 worker	56	17.8%
2 workers	113	35.9%
3 workers	89	28.3%
4 workers	31	9.8%
5+ workers	18	5.7%
Don't know	8	2.5%
Total	315	100.0%

7b. And how many members of staff from external agencies work with each young person?

None	19	6.1%
1 worker	128	40.9%
2 workers	94	30.0%
3 workers	42	13.4%
4 workers	9	2.9%
5+ workers	7	2.2%
Don't know	14	4.5%
Total	313	100.0%

8. What usually determines the allocation of cases to a particular case manager or worker? (Please comment on the method used most frequently in your YOT) Please select one option only.

Decided by matching the young person's immediate needs to the worker's skills	68	16.20%
Determined by workload constraints or available capacity	152	36.10%
Based on staff characteristics (including gender and ethnicity of staff)	2	0.50%
Based on the type of disposal or order that the young person is on	63	15.00%
Determined by the level of risk the young person is assessed as presenting	41	9.70%
Determined by the young person's previous involvement with that same worker in the YOT	11	2.60%
Other (please specify)	57	13.50%
Don't know	27	6.40%
Total	421	100.0%

9. How effective do you feel this allocation process is at ensuring that the specific needs of young people are met? Please select one option only.

Very effective	52	12.4%
Fairly effective	230	54.6%
Not very effective	93	22.1%
Not at all effective	16	3.8%
Don't know	30	7.1%
Total	421	100.0%

Q10. This question aims to establish whether or not you think there are any differences between engagement and participation. Please specify which of the following forms of behaviour by young people you see as signifying engagement, participation, both or neither?

Turning up when required

Engagement	129	30.6%
Participation	121	28.7%
Engagement and Participation	103	24.5%
Neither	61	14.5%
Don't know	7	1.7%
Total	421	100.0%

Turning up but having minimal input in sessions

Engagement	116	27.6%
Participation	154	36.6%
Engagement and Participation	28	6.7%
Neither	114	27.1%
Don't know	9	21.0%
Total	421	100.0%

Developing a positive interpersonal relationship with case holder

Engagement	128	30.4%
Participation	12	2.9%
Engagement and Participation	271	64.4%
Neither	4	1.0%
Don't know	6	1.4%
Total	421	100.0%

Communicating effectively in sessions

Engagement	66	15.7%
Participation	47	11.2%
Engagement and Participation	302	71.7%
Neither	1	0.2%
Don't know	5	1.2%
Total	421	100.0%

Completing worksheets and other activities set

Engagement	31	7.4%
Participation	141	33.5%
Engagement and Participation	237	56.3%
Neither	4	1.0%
Don't know	8	1.9%
Total	421	100.0%

Meeting agreed targets as part of intervention plan

Engagement	50	11.9%
Participation	62	14.7%
Engagement and Participation	294	69.8%
Neither	6	1.4%
Don't know	9	2.1%
Total	421	100.0%

Being motivated to change

Engagement	116	27.6%
Participation	20	4.8%
Engagement and Participation	258	61.3%
Neither	21	5.0%
Don't know	6	1.4%
Total	421	100.0%

Acknowledging consequences of their behaviour

Engagement	105	24.9%
Participation	39	9.3%
Engagement and Participation	252	59.9%
Neither	18	4.3%
Don't know	7	1.7%
Total	421	100.0%

Being proactive in attempts to stop offending

Engagement	66	15.7%
Participation	27	6.4%
Engagement and Participation	307	72.9%
Neither	9	2.1%
Don't know	12	2.9%
Total	421	100.0%

11. On average, how frequently do you experience the following in your direct work with young people? Please select one option for each row.

Young person fails to engage or participate from outset

All the time	0	0.0%
Frequently	41	9.70%
Sometimes	189	44.90%
Rarely	162	38.50%
Never	11	2.60%
Don't know	18	4.30%
Total	421	100.00%

Poor attendance

All the time	1	0.20%
Frequently	78	18.50%
Sometimes	244	58.00%
Rarely	74	17.60%
Never	6	1.40%
Don't know	18	4.30%
Total	421	100.00%

Young person turns up when required but gives minimal input into the session

All the time	1	0.20%
Frequently	50	11.90%
Sometimes	234	55.60%
Rarely	108	25.70%
Never	9	2.10%
Don't know	19	4.50%
Total	421	100.00%

Young person has a strong relationship with staff but won't comply with intervention plan.

All the time	1	0.20%
Frequently	35	8.30%
Sometimes	174	41.30%
Rarely	156	37.10%
Never	28	6.70%
Don't know	27	6.40%
Total	421	100.00%

Young person complies with intervention plan but has difficulties engaging with staff.

All the time	1	0.20%
Frequently	8	1.90%
Sometimes	158	37.50%
Rarely	193	45.80%
Never	35	8.30%
Don't know	26	6.20%
Total	421	100.00%

Young person has no problem engaging at all – turns up and engages with staff and intervention plan activities fully

All the time	4	1.00%
Frequently	211	50.10%
Sometimes	139	33.00%
Rarely	41	9.70%
Never	7	1.70%
Don't know	19	4.50%
Total	421	100.00%

12. To what extent, if at all, do the following factors influence whether a young person will effectively engage in a programme or intervention? Please think about the majority of cases that you work with and select one option for each row.

Family support

To a great extent	258	61.30%
To some extent	147	34.90%
Not very much	10	2.40%
Not at all	1	0.20%
Don't know	5	1.20%
Total	421	100.00%

Peer support

To a great extent	125	29.70%
To some extent	223	53.00%
Not very much	57	13.50%
Not at all	9	2.10%
Don't know	7	1.70%
Total	421	100.00%

Age of the young person

To a great extent	51	12.10%
To some extent	223	53.00%
Not very much	99	23.50%
Not at all	41	9.70%
Don't know	7	1.70%
Total	421	100.00%

Maturity of young person

To a great extent	156	37.10%
To some extent	209	49.60%
Not very much	35	8.30%
Not at all	15	3.60%
Don't know	6	1.40%
Total	421	100.00%

Offence committed

To a great extent	20	4.80%
To some extent	142	33.70%
Not very much	172	40.90%
Not at all	69	16.40%
Don't know	18	4.30%
Total	421	100.00%

Sentence type

To a great extent	34	8.10%
To some extent	185	43.90%
Not very much	129	30.60%
Not at all	45	10.70%
Don't know	28	6.70%
Total	421	100.00%

Gender of young person

To a great extent	7	1.70%
To some extent	77	18.30%
Not very much	170	40.40%
Not at all	149	35.40%
Don't know	18	4.30%
Total	421	100.00%

Ethnicity of young person

To a great extent	5	1.20%
To some extent	59	14.00%
Not very much	160	38.00%
Not at all	166	39.40%
Don't know	31	7.40%
Total	421	100.00%

Living arrangements of young person

To a great extent	204	48.50%
To some extent	178	42.30%
Not very much	25	5.90%
Not at all	7	1.70%
Don't know	7	1.70%
Total	421	100.00%

Education attainment of young person

To a great extent	97	23.00%
To some extent	229	54.40%
Not very much	76	18.10%
Not at all	13	3.10%
Don't know	6	1.40%
Total	421	100.00%

Level of engagement/involvement in education training or employment

To a great extent	129	30.60%
To some extent	231	54.90%
Not very much	40	9.50%
Not at all	12	2.90%
Don't know	9	2.10%
Total	421	100.00%

Substance misuse

To a great extent	162	38.50%
To some extent	210	49.90%
Not very much	30	7.10%
Not at all	5	1.20%
Don't know	14	3.30%
Total	421	100.00%

Attitude to authority

To a great extent	166	39.40%
To some extent	223	53.00%
Not very much	26	6.20%
Not at all	1	0.20%
Don't know	5	1.20%
Total	421	100.00%

Motivation to change

To a great extent	245	58.20%
To some extent	160	38.00%
Not very much	10	2.40%
Not at all	1	0.20%
Don't know	5	1.20%
Total	421	100.00%

Openness to change/listen

To a great extent	231	54.90%
To some extent	172	40.90%
Not very much	13	3.10%
Not at all	0	0.00%
Don't know	5	1.20%
Total	421	100.00%

Young person's interests

To a great extent	84	20.00%
To some extent	213	50.60%
Not very much	103	24.50%
Not at all	14	3.30%
Don't know	7	1.70%
Total	421	100.00%

Young person's involvement in own intervention planning

To a great extent	165	39.20%
To some extent	195	46.30%
Not very much	42	10.00%
Not at all	7	1.70%
Don't know	12	2.90%
Total	421	100.00%

Positive relationship with YOT worker – mutual respect

To a great extent	285	67.70%
To some extent	125	29.70%
Not very much	4	1.00%
Not at all	0	0.00%
Don't know	7	1.70%
Total	421	100.00%

Rewarding young person for engagement

To a great extent	114	27.10%
To some extent	206	48.90%
Not very much	74	17.60%
Not at all	11	2.60%
Don't know	16	3.80%
Total	421	100.00%

Feelings of remorse

To a great extent	80	19.00%
To some extent	229	54.40%
Not very much	88	20.90%
Not at all	7	1.70%
Don't know	17	4.00%
Total	421	100.00%

Recognising that young person needs support		
To a great extent	184	43.70%
To some extent	205	48.70%
Not very much	23	5.50%
Not at all	1	0.20%
Don't know	8	1.90%
Total	421	100.00%

Intensity of intervention		
To a great extent	113	26.80%
To some extent	241	57.20%
Not very much	54	12.80%
Not at all	5	1.20%
Don't know	8	1.90%
Total	421	100.00%

Young person's learning style		
To a great extent	150	35.60%
To some extent	197	46.80%
Not very much	52	12.40%
Not at all	10	2.40%
Don't know	12	2.90%
Total	421	100.00%

Q13. Young people engage with YOTs to varying degrees: some fail to turn up, while others attend but do not engage with the staff. Which of the following methods do you think are most effective in addressing different levels of engagement and participation?

Fails to engage or participate from outset		
Personally collecting them and bringing them to the YOT	97	23.00%
Liaising with family/peers/other workers about their difficulties	185	43.90%
Pro social modelling	46	10.90%
Setting clear objectives for progress	85	20.20%
Setting clear enforcement methods and breaching for non-compliance	157	37.30%
Breaching for non-compliance	126	29.90%
Encouraging frequent and consistent contact with YOT staff	68	16.20%
Involving them in their intervention plan	86	20.40%
Matching case worker based on ethnicity/gender for example.	57	13.50%
Using worksheets to help engage them in sessions	8	1.90%
Using rewards/incentive schemes for their engagement/achievements	55	13.10%
Using creative interventions such as videoing and artwork	66	15.70%
None of these	14	3.30%

Don't know	37	8.80%
Total	421	100.00%
Poor attendance		
Personally collecting them and bringing them to the YOT	178	42.30%
Liaising with family/peers/other workers about their difficulties	170	40.40%
Pro social modelling	30	7.10%
Setting clear objectives for progress	58	13.80%
Setting clear enforcement methods and breaching for non-compliance	175	41.60%
Breaching for non-compliance	136	32.30%
Encouraging frequent and consistent contact with YOT staff	84	20.00%
Involving them in their intervention plan	59	14.00%
Matching case worker based on ethnicity/gender for example.	16	3.80%
Using worksheets to help engage them in sessions	15	3.60%
Using rewards/incentive schemes for their engagement/achievements	73	17.30%
Using creative interventions such as videoing and artwork	41	9.70%
None of these	6	1.40%
Don't know	32	7.60%
Total	421	100.00%
Turns up but minimal input		
Personally collecting them and bringing them to the YOT	23	5.50%
Liaising with family/peers/other workers about their difficulties	84	20.00%
Pro social modelling	94	22.30%
Setting clear objectives for progress	140	33.30%
Setting clear enforcement methods and breaching for non-compliance	44	10.50%
Breaching for non compliance	22	5.20%
Encouraging frequent and consistent contact with YOTstaff	70	16.60%
Involving them in their intervention plan	184	43.70%
Matching case worker based on ethnicity/gender for example.	51	12.10%
Using worksheets to help engage them in sessions	95	22.60%
Using rewards/incentive schemes for their engagement/achievements	80	19.00%
Using creative interventions such as videoing and artwork	163	38.70%
None of these	5	1.20%
Don't know	32	7.60%
Total	421	100.00%

Strong relationship with staff but wont participate

Personally collecting them and bringing them to the YOT	21	5.00%
Liaising with family/peers/other workers about their difficulties	94	22.30%
Pro social modelling	85	20.20%
Setting clear objectives for progress	140	33.30%
Setting clear enforcement methods and breaching for non-compliance	72	17.10%
Breaching for non compliance	34	8.10%
Encouraging frequent and consistent contact with YOT staff	52	12.40%
Involving them in their intervention plan	195	46.30%
Matching case worker based on ethnicity/gender for example.	31	7.40%
Using worksheets to help engage them in sessions	89	21.10%
Using rewards/incentive schemes for their engagement/achievements	89	21.10%
Using creative interventions such as videoing and artwork	171	40.60%
None of these	5	1.20%
Don't know	30	7.10%
Total	421	100

Participates but won't engage with staff

Personally collecting them and bringing them to the YOT	23	5.50%
Liaising with family/peers/other workers about their difficulties	111	26.40%
Pro social modelling	113	26.80%
Setting clear objectives for progress	63	15.00%
Setting clear enforcement methods and breaching for non-compliance	39	9.30%
Breaching for non compliance	13	3.10%
Encouraging frequent and consistent contact with YOT staff	133	31.60%
Involving them in their intervention plan	111	26.40%
Matching case worker based on ethnicity/gender for example.	151	35.90%
Using worksheets to help engage them in sessions	47	11.20%
Using rewards/incentive schemes for their engagement/achievements	51	12.10%
Using creative interventions such as videoing and artwork	104	24.70%
None of these	6	1.40%
Don't know	33	7.80%
Total	421	100.00%

14. Looking at the following statements, please say whether you agree or disagree with each? Please select one option for each row.

In the case of young people subject to court orders, clearly setting out enforcement methods and procedures from the outset can encourage engagement.

Strongly agree	130	30.90%
agree	209	49.60%
Neither agree nor disagree	49	11.60%
Disagree	12	2.90%
Strongly disagree	2	0.50%
Don't know	19	4.50%
Total	421	100.00%

The skills of staff directly affect the engagement of young people.

Strongly agree	253	60.10%
agree	139	33.00%
Neither agree nor disagree	17	4.00%
Disagree	7	1.70%
Strongly disagree	1	0.20%
Don't know	4	1.00%
Total	421	100.00%

The characteristics of staff – e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, background affect the engagement of young people.

Strongly agree	43	10.20%
agree	175	41.60%
Neither agree nor disagree	150	35.60%
Disagree	38	9.00%
Strongly disagree	6	1.40%
Don't know	9	2.10%
Total	421	100.00%

Most young people who are difficult to engage initially will be hard to engage throughout their provision.

Strongly agree	4	1.00%
agree	27	6.40%
Neither agree nor disagree	73	17.30%
Disagree	236	56.10%
Strongly disagree	76	18.10%
Don't know	5	1.20%
Total	421	100.00%

There are some young people whose lives are so chaotic that nothing I do will engage them.

Strongly agree	22	5.20%
agree	72	17.10%
Neither agree nor disagree	59	14.00%
Disagree	198	47.00%
Strongly disagree	61	14.50%
Don't know	9	2.10%
Total	421	100.00%

Developing a positive staff/young person relationship is necessary for effective engagement.

Strongly agree	213	50.60%
agree	182	43.20%
Neither agree nor disagree	16	3.80%
Disagree	6	1.40%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00%
Don't know	4	1.00%
Total	421	100.00%

Once a young person is engaged in their provision, it is easy to maintain this engagement.

Strongly agree	18	4.30%
agree	111	26.40%
Neither agree nor disagree	124	29.50%
Disagree	151	35.90%
Strongly disagree	10	2.40%
Don't know	7	1.70%
Total	421	100.00%

Involving a young person in their sentence planning gives them a sense of responsibility and ownership and usually increases their levels of engagement.

Strongly agree	96	22.80%
agree	217	51.50%
Neither agree nor disagree	74	17.60%
Disagree	15	3.60%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00%
Don't know	19	4.50%
Total	421	100.00%

Assigning mentors can strengthen young people's engagement.

Strongly agree	89	21.10%
agree	222	52.70%
Neither agree nor disagree	83	19.70%
Disagree	8	1.90%
Strongly disagree	0	0.00%
Don't know	19	4.50%
Total	421	100.00%

15. In your opinion, how important, if at all, are the following methods or approaches used by staff in effectively engaging young people? Please think about the variety of cases that you work with and select one option for each row.

Openness

Very important	286	67.90%
Quite important	124	29.50%
Not very important	6	1.40%
Not at all important	1	0.20%
Don't know	4	1.00%
Total	421	100.00%

Flexible approach

Very important	251	59.60%
Quite important	157	37.30%
Not very important	11	2.60%
Not at all important	0	0.00%
Don't know	2	0.50%
Total	421	100.00%

Sense of humour

Very important	180	42.80%
Quite important	197	46.80%
Not very important	39	9.30%
Not at all important	2	0.50%
Don't know	3	0.70%
Total	421	100.00%

Authoritative

Very important	48	11.40%
Quite important	260	61.80%
Not very important	83	19.70%
Not at all important	23	5.50%
Don't know	7	1.70%
Total	421	100.00%

Patience

Very important	288	68.40%
Quite important	127	30.20%
Not very important	2	0.50%
Not at all important	1	0.20%
Don't know	3	0.70%
Total	421	100.00%

Empathy

Very important	247	58.70%
Quite important	158	37.50%
Not very important	8	1.90%
Not at all important	3	0.70%
Don't know	5	1.20%
Total	421	100.00%

Mutual trust

Very important	233	55.30%
Quite important	170	40.40%
Not very important	11	2.60%
Not at all important	4	1.00%
Don't know	3	0.70%
Total	421	100.00%

Consistency in approach

Very important	335	79.60%
Quite important	80	19.00%
Not very important	3	0.70%
Not at all important	0	0.00%
Total	3	0.70%
Don't know	421	100.00%

Being a positive role model

Very important	293	69.60%
Quite important	120	28.50%
Not very important	5	1.20%
Not at all important	0	0.00%
Don't know	3	0.70%
Total	421	100.00%

'Going the extra mile' such as picking a young person up from home

Very important	136	32.30%
Quite important	173	41.10%
Not very important	85	20.20%
Not at all important	13	3.10%
Don't know	14	3.30%
Total	421	100.00%

Being a 'friend'

Very important	14	3.30%
Quite important	66	15.70%
Not very important	145	34.40%
Not at all important	176	41.80%
Don't know	20	4.80%
Total	421	100.00%

Establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries

Very important	371	88.10%
Quite important	46	10.90%
Not very important	1	0.20%
Not at all important	1	0.20%
Don't know	2	0.50%
Total	421	100.00%

16. Which of the following, if any, do you think would make a key difference to being able to engage young people more effectively?

More staff training	123	29.20%
More focus on one to one sessions rather than group work	67	15.90%
Additional links with other agencies	63	15.00%
Availability of more targeted interventions	202	48.00%
Additional agencies taking responsibility and working more effectively	165	39.20%
Parental support	245	58.20%
Increased motivation of young people	114	27.10%
Increased enthusiasm of staff	89	21.10%
Additional networking with other agencies	35	8.30%
Smaller caseloads	196	46.60%
Supportive manager	83	19.70%
Strong team working	156	37.10%
Other (please specify)	33	7.80%
Don't know	5	1.20%
	421	100.00%

17. In order to encourage engagement and participation, how important do you think it is for a young person to experience consistency, e.g. to work with the same case holder over the length of their order or intervention programme?

Very important	239	56.80%
Fairly important	158	37.50%
Neither/ nor	13	3.10%
Fairly unimportant	4	1.00%
Very unimportant	1	0.20%
Don't know	6	1.40%
Total	421	100.00%

18. In order to encourage engagement and participation, how important do you think it is for a young person to experience consistency, e.g. to work with the same key worker if they return to the service on subsequent orders?

Very important	88	20.90%
Fairly important	181	43.00%
Neither/ nor	115	27.30%
Fairly unimportant	14	3.30%
Very unimportant	6	1.40%
Don't know	17	4.00%
Total	421	100.00%

19. If a young person returns to the YOT, how often are they assigned the same YOT worker as they had previously? Please select one option only.

Always	5	1.20%
Most of the time	151	35.90%
Sometimes	151	35.90%
Rarely	36	8.60%
Never	4	1.00%
Don't know	65	15.40%
Not applicable	9	2.10%
Total	421	100.00%

20. Would you find receiving guidance and/or training on ways to best engage young people in youth justice services helpful? Please select one option for each row.

Guidance		
Yes	345	81.90%
No	46	10.90%
Don't know	30	7.10%
Total	421	100.00%

Training		
Yes	341	81.00%
No	49	11.60%
Don't know	31	7.40%
Total	421	100.00%

22. Are you male or female?

Male	156	37.1%
Female	265	62.9%
Total	421	100.0%

23. Which of these age groups do you fall into?

Under 18	0	0.0%
18–24	15	3.6%
25–34	126	29.9%
35–44	121	28.7%
45–54	123	29.2%
55+	36	8.6%
Total	421	100.0%

Q24. How would you describe your ethnic origin?

White	356	84.60%
Mixed	16	3.80%
Asian or Asian British	10	2.40%
Black or Black British	24	5.70%
Chinese or other ethnic group	3	0.70%
Refused	12	2.90%
Total	421	100.00%

Appendix II – Focus group topic guide

Techniques for effective engagement and participation – pilot focus groups

Discussion guide

In order to identify the factors that encourage engagement and participation, and ensure enforcement is used effectively, it is vital that the views of practitioners, as well as young people who are in contact with the Yots are captured. The research aims to:

- Investigate the extent to which YOTs are engaging young people effectively and what methods are being used to engage them
- Observe what takes place within supervision sessions in terms of participation
- Identify the factors that contribute to effective engagement of young people – this would be through using:
 - examples of promising practice and
 - exploring barriers to engagement in participation
- Explore ‘who’ works in the effective engagement of young people
- Examine the links or overlaps between enforcement and voluntary participation in engagement, and how this impacts on young people’s motivation to participate
- Explore the contributing factors in young people’s participation, including:
 - attitudes and perceptions towards their current and future participation
 - and involvement in designing interventions and activities.

Section	Purpose and timings
Introductions	5 mins
<p>Interviewer introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce self, Ipsos MORI, and timings 1hr ½ – 2 hours. <p>Explain aim of the group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of Ipsos MORI in the research/pilot exercise for the survey of YOTs to be undertaken – use the groups to identify key themes for the national questionnaire • Confidentiality: reassure interviewee that any information provided not be attributed to them and their details are kept solely by us. Their views are anonymous • Ask permission to record 	<p>Introduce self and research programme, gain permission to record. Sets parameters of discussion group. Introduces people and makes them feel comfortable</p>

<p>Interviewee introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name, job title, and brief description of work and responsibilities General housekeeping – fire exits, mobiles, toilets Go round group introducing selves – first name, role in YOT, how long been in YOT 	
<p>What do we mean by engagement and participation?</p>	<p>10 mins</p>
<p>How do you define engagement and participation?</p> <p>(probe – i.e. attends as required, complies with minimal standards/requirements and/or active participation, shows willingness to learn or change)</p>	
<p>Methods of engagement</p>	<p>30 mins</p>
<p>Can you tell which young person will be hard to engage at initial meeting and/or assessment stage?</p> <p>If so, how?</p> <p>How does this insight inform the assessed level of risk/approach adopted/sentence plan?</p> <p>What methods do you use to engage young people? (according to demographics, risk, offence, sentence). Is it important that cultural and racial issues are taken into account – if are how is this done? Does it assist engagement?</p> <p>How prevalent is the problem of language? How often do you work with young people who are non-English speakers? How is this responded to? Do language barriers affect engagement/formation of relationships?</p> <p>How effective are these methods in engaging young people and gaining their participation?</p> <p>Who works – skills, qualities, experience, and professional background of workers?</p>	
<p>Contact time</p>	<p>30 mins</p>
<p>Consistency of contact? Frequency of contact? How important to engaging with young people?</p> <p>Befriending vs authoritative role</p> <p>What does contact time entail? Interpersonal relationships, risk led?</p> <p>Role of different workers in sentence management – success/problems with this?</p> <p>Impact of circumstances changing – i.e. in and out of custody?</p> <p>Time management constraints – quality of contact time vs meeting performance targets/national standards requirements.</p> <p>Methods of recording information i.e. 1-1 supervision, work undertaken with</p>	

<p>other agencies.</p> <p>What could be done to enhance the way you engage young people? i.e. support workers/mentors.</p>	
Use of enforcement	10 mins
<p>What methods of enforcement are used to get young people to attend?</p> <p>Does this vary according to specific types of offenders (referral orders vs supervision order)?</p> <p>How successful are these in gaining compliance?</p> <p>Does enforcement/compulsion to attend hinder or help engagement and participation?</p> <p>Can you provide examples of either side?</p>	
Informing the research design	10 mins
<p>Suitability of using different qualitative techniques in case study approach with a range of young people (life books, video diaries).</p> <p>Feasibility of observing supervision sessions – what objections would you have? What assurances can we give to enable this to happen? Use of video, researcher sitting in, tape recording – preferred approach?</p> <p>Possibility of post-supervision questionnaire/video diary.</p>	
Thanks and Close	5 mins
<p>Is there anything we haven't discussed this afternoon that you think would be useful to consider in this research?</p>	

Appendix III – Examples of positive practice

Activity	Aim	Target Audience	Set Up By	Run By	Funded By	Duration	Occurrences
Bike Workshop	To get young people interested in mainstream things again. Help them gain transferrable skills and accreditation. Reparation - giving something back to the community	Targeting young people before they get seriously involved in the criminal justice system. Age 14+	A senior youth worker - on secondment from youth services	Youth worker, his colleague (who is a bike expert) and appropriate adult volunteers	Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund. Supplied by government, managed by local authority youth services and applied for by young people.	1 year and ongoing - funding can be reapplied for yearly and covers 3 year period	Ongoing
Music and Graffiti Workshops	Prevention and deterrence. Give young people an interest in something they don't want to lose by reoffending. Lyric writing can help with communication and Graffiti zone provides a non-criminal environment to do graffiti	Young people at risk of (re)offending	YOT Worker	YOT Worker and colleagues	2/3 by YOT; 1/3 by locality team. Youth centre funded separately. Additional police funding from the Crime and Disorder Budget to cover discos on Friday nights.	6 months and ongoing	Youth centre open most days.
Reading Programme	To help overcome problems with literacy and communication skills in young people. Eventually to re-engage them with education	Most involved have been excluded from school and are on court orders	Created by Rapid English Consultants. Set up by Youth Offending Service	Youth workers, teachers and volunteers	Youth Offending Service within the Department of Education and Children Services	Ongoing	Individual study plans created. E.g. one hour either once or twice a week – dependent on young person's needs

Appendix IV – Statistical reliability

The respondents to the online survey are only a sample of the total ‘population’ of YOT practitioners. This means that we cannot be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those we would have if everybody had been interviewed (the ‘true’ values). We can, however, predict the variation between the sample results and the ‘true’ values from knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of times that a particular answer is given. The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95% – that is, the chances are 95 in 100 that the ‘true’ value will fall within a specified range. The table below illustrates the predicted range for different sample sizes and percentage results at the ‘95% confidence interval’.

Overall statistical reliability			
Size of sample on which survey result is based	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	\pm	\pm	\pm
200	4	6	7
421	3	4	5
500	3	4	4
1,000	2	3	3

Source: Ipsos MORI

For example, with a sample of 421 practitioners, where 30% give a particular answer, the chances are 19 in 20 that the ‘true’ value (which would have been obtained if the whole population had been interviewed) will fall within the range of plus or minus 4 percentage points from the sample result.

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be ‘real’, or it may occur by chance (because not everyone in the population has been interviewed). To test if the difference is a real one – i.e. if it is ‘statistically significant’, we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentage giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. At the 95% confidence interval, the differences between the two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below.

Statistical reliability between subgroups			
Size of sample on which survey result is based	Approximate sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% or 90%	30% or 70%	50%
	\pm	\pm	\pm
100 vs. 100	8	13	14
100 vs. 250	7	11	12
100 vs. 500	7	10	11
250 vs. 250	5	8	9
250 vs. 500	5	7	8
500 vs. 500	4	6	6

Source: Ipsos MORI

Appendix V – Practitioner interview schedule

Engaging young people, a study commissioned by the Youth Justice Board.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR YOT caseworkers

Introduction

- This study has been commissioned by the Youth Justice Board to understand “what works?” in engaging young people in youth justice services.
- We are talking to young people and their workers in a range of youth offending teams.
- We initially held a focus group and an online survey of YOT practitioners.
- This is your opportunity to help set the agenda and to help the YJB to identify best practice and understand the key issues you face when engaging young people.
- Everything you say will remain confidential and will not be attributed to you or your YOT.
- Ask for permission to record the interview.
- Find out from the YOT a full list of all of the activities that they offer for young people. Take a note of different schemes they run, trips, activities and subjects and exercises from the workbooks they use in one to one sessions and group work.

Personal details (Interviewer to complete)

Reference number:

Name:

Gender:

Ethnicity:

Job title:

Length of interview:

1. Background of YOT worker

- 1) Please can you explain your role and responsibilities in the YOT?

- 2) How long have you worked at the YOT? Where did you work previously?

2. Working practice/case allocation

- 3) How many cases are you supervising at present? Please can you provide examples of the range of cases you are involved in (*is it usual, how compares to others*)

- 4) How are cases allocated?

- 5) Do you have responsibility for certain types of case, such as final warnings, DTOs, or does it vary?

- 6) a. Do you generally see the same young person if they come back to the YOT for a subsequent order? (*importance of this*)

- 7) Are you able to quantify how much time you spend per young person/what is most of your time spent on? (*preparation, 1-1 work etc*)

- 8) Do you find involving young people in planning their intervention engages them more, or is this not possible?

- 9) What do you see as the most challenging part of your job?

3. One-to-One Work

- 10) How regularly do you meet with young people on a one to one basis?

- 11) Does a young person have the same case manager throughout their case?
 - a) How important do you think this is? Why/why not?
 - b) When there is need for a change, how are the young people informed? Do you have any examples of when this has happened and how the young person reacted?

- 12) Have you had any specific training since joining the YOT on techniques to engage effectively with young people? If so please can you explain when and what this entailed and whether useful?
- 13) What generally forms the content of one to one sessions? (for example do you use worksheets, please probe for examples for different cases supervising)
- 14) How flexible are the 1-1 sessions, for example, are they responsive to the needs of each young person? Do young people input into what is covered in one to one work?
- a) How important is this and how does it vary with each young person, for example, do those with more needs engage more fully with you because you help them with these needs?
- 15) Do you have a certain working style that you adopt in your approach to 1-1?
(*engagement techniques*)
- a) How do you vary your approach according to the needs/characteristics of the young person?
- 16) To what extent do you think your approach to working with the young people is welfare orientated or more punitive?
- 17) How significant a role do you think 1-1 work has on motivating young people to change their behaviour?
- 18) What do you see as the biggest influence in getting young people to stop offending?

4. Engagement in one-to-one work

IN FIRST VISITS, ASK RESPONDENTS We've been asked to explore engagement and participation. Do you think there is a difference between engagement and participation? Why?

19) Do most young people turn up for sessions

20) Do you think young people understand the enforcement procedures and what they mean? (*explained from outset*)

21) When you have to use enforcement, how effective/ineffective is this (probe specifically in relation to worker/young person relationship and the sample of young people we have selected)

22) We know there are different levels of engagement for different young people, how would you define the level of engagement young people may have in 1-1?

a) Can you give any examples of different young people?

23) Does attendance/engagement tend to get worse/better the longer young people are in contact with the Yot (e.g. more problems at start?/examples of this).

24) Do you notice any pattern in who will/wont engage (probe girls/ boys/ younger/ older)?

25) How do you encourage young people to participate?

26) Are there established methods used by the YOT or is it up to the individual workers?

27) What do you feel are the key barriers to engaging young people? (e.g. in home life, if young person re-offends, etc.)

28) And what do you feel are the key factors that *help* engage young people? (*skills of worker, family support*)

29) Are you able to help with practical matters that aren't necessarily linked to the YOT (such as finding college places/jobs/housing problems etc).

a) Do you have any examples of this?

30) How do you balance supporting them in other aspects of their lives that they might see as more important and tackling their offending behaviour.

31) Do you believe it is possible to engage all young people, or are the lives of some just too chaotic?

32) How about the support you get within the YOT – what can colleagues and managers do to help support others in engaging young people?

33) How does compulsory attendance or voluntary participation make a difference to a young people's engagement?

34) Does it affect the approach you take to encourage engagement – i.e. a final warning case compared to a supervision order?

5. Caseworker – young people relationship

35) How would you describe your relationship with the young people you supervise?

a) Can you give any examples of how your relationship varies across your cases?

36) How important do you think it is for you to form relationships with the young person? Why?

37) What skills are needed to develop a good relationship with young people? (*taught or inherent*) (probe do you even need to do other things that might be 'beyond the call of duty', such as picking people up, etc.)

6. Groupwork and involvement of others

38) Do you try to encourage the involvement of parents/carers? If yes in what way? (For example by HOME VISITS? Are these effective/do they help engagement/why are home visits different?)

39) a. How important, in general, do you think family is in a young person's motivation to change? b. How do you think it compares to influence of peers?

40) How much influence do you think the YOT contact can have compared to other factors? (such as family/friends/situation, et.c)

41) a. What extent do you think your work can be supported by volunteers (such as mentors) and/or sessional workers?

b. In what way can they strengthen the work delivered by YOTs and you in 1-1 work?

42) In addition to 1-1, what programmes/services are available to young people attending the YOT?

43) If young person is not appropriate for group work to what extent are the same issues covered in 1-1 work?

44) If a young person fails to engage with group work are you informed of this?

45) How is it decided when a young person should attend a group work programme?

THANK AND CLOSE

46) What do you think the key message is in engaging young people?

47) Do you have anything else to add to what we've been discussing, or any questions?

THANK THE RESPONDENT AND CLOSE