

CORONAVIRUS AND YOUTH OFFENDING TEAMS

A guide for under 18s



Almost everyone in the world has been affected by the coronavirus outbreak.

For most people, daily life is now very different.

A Youth Offending Team (YOT) – sometimes also known as a YOS or Youth Justice Service, is still an essential service... and we are still open!

Like everyone else, we have made changes to how we do things, in order to keep you safe.

This leaflet aims to explain some of these changes so you know what to expect, and to reassure you.

All YOTs are working in a way that keeps you and others safe from coronavirus, but there may be small differences in how each YOT does that. You can ask your local team about specific changes in your area.



YOT PRIORITIES

What we do and will continue to do



All YOTs aim to look after the safety and well-being of any **young person aged 10-17**, who comes into contact with the criminal justice system, or who is at risk of doing so.



We aim to **reduce and prevent youth crime** and promote **safety and well-being**.



We will **support you** if you are **arrested**, or if you **need to go to court**.



If you are given a **community sentence** or are **being released from custody** we're also **here to support you**.

All of these things are still happening, despite the outbreak.

What have YOTs changed?

In many areas, the buildings YOTs work from will be closed and many staff are working from home.

Where YOT buildings are open, changes will be made to keep everyone safe. This might mean fewer people are allowed in the building to allow everyone to keep their distance.

You might be given a time slot to arrive, and it will be **important to keep to that time**.

With buildings closed or only partially open, a lot of our contact, including panel meetings, will be done **virtually**, such as over the computer or phone.

We may do some face to face visits, but these will only be in cases where it is most needed.

All of our staff have been given training on how to keep information confidential and secure whilst working from home.

All of our computer systems are secure and keep information about you safe.

If we visit you face to face, we will call you beforehand and ask if you have coronavirus symptoms.

If we do visit you, we will follow social distancing. This means we will stand a safe distance away from you and be outside your home.

In some cases, we may wear masks and gloves to protect you.

We might ask to meet you in an outdoor space, like a park, or go for a walk together. This means we can keep our distance, and keep you safe.

If we (YOT staff) develop a symptom or have had contact with anyone who has, then we will stay at home.

If you develop symptoms, or have had contact with someone who has then it is very important to let your YOT worker know.

Those people who are more at risk from coronavirus have been asked to 'shield' and take extra steps to protect themselves. **If you or a member of your family has been asked to 'shield', please let your YOT worker know** so we can help keep you and your family members safe. Some YOT staff in your region may be asked to 'shield' also.

If your YOT worker is not able to work, we will let you know and, if needed, find another YOT worker to support you.

Just because we may not be able to see you face to face, this does not mean our contact is not important.

For many of you, contact will be a requirement of the court so it is important that you continue to take it seriously.



Virtual Appointments - How you can help:

1. Please **work with your YOT** to find a time for appointments that work for you
2. If using a **mobile phone** or computer, please make sure it is **fully charged**
3. If you can, **find a quiet location** where you can talk as freely as possible. We understand this might not be possible for you, and if you do struggle to find a place to talk freely, please tell us.
4. **It is ok to still have someone attend your YOT appointments** with you e.g. parent or carer. We can make this work with speakerphone or video calls.

Virtual contact could include:



Telephone – for calls or texts



Facebook Messenger



Emails



Video conferencing applications like Microsoft Teams



WhatsApp or Facetime



YOT support with court hearings and contact with the police

We will still write reports for court where needed. The interviews for these will be done virtually, where possible.

Some court hearings may now take place virtually. A YOT worker will attend the hearing, in order to assist you and the court, but it may be set up by video in a secure way.

YOTs operate what is known as a 'duty system' for courts, so there will always be someone from the YOT available to support you. Like everyone else, YOT workers in court or at the police station will follow social distancing guidelines.

Some YOT staff may wear masks or gloves as a precaution, in order to keep you and others safe.

All buildings that have remained open are regularly cleaned.



Interventions

We will still offer a range of interventions to you but these will be done virtually and we may send you resources to complete at home.

We will not be running any face to face group interventions, as this would not comply with social distancing.

This means that a lot of reparation activities will be postponed. This will not result in negative consequences or punishment.

Many work, school or college placements will have been stopped. YOTs can work with you and your education provider to find something that works for you. In some cases that might mean being able to physically attend your education setting.

YOTs will still help with housing and accommodation.

YOTs are able to help you with benefits if you need money and are unable to work.

YOTs can still help you with access to substance misuse and mental health services. They will most likely be operating using telephone or virtual appointments as well.

If you are on a Court Order with a YOT and fail to meet your conditions, your YOT officer will try to assist you to re-engage with your supervision. If you decide not to engage, the YOT must still report this as a “breach”, even during the coronavirus outbreak.



If you have any
questions or
concerns please
speak to your
YOT officer.



Youth Justice Board
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Helpful resources

We know that the coronavirus outbreak is very
difficult time for people. Here is a list of resources
you might find useful to help you cope...



nhs.uk/service-search



childline.org.uk
or call 0800 1111



mind.org.uk



youngminds.org.uk

This guide was produced with the support and expertise of youth
offending teams, partners and children & young people.