

COVID-19 Recovery Plans: guidance for youth offending teams

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Innovation and Engagement Directorate, Youth Justice Board

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Youth Justice Board for England and Wales 2020

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to provide a framework for youth offending teams (YOTs) to consider when developing plans for transitioning towards recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this instance the Youth Justice Board (YJB) defines recovery as “*a return to normal state of health or strength*”¹ and that to transition is a “*process of changing from one state to another*”². However, we recognise that different local authorities and agencies have adopted different definitions and are at variable stages of recovery.

The YJB recognises that the outbreak of the pandemic has been very challenging for the sector with YOTs having to urgently restructure services, interventions and partnership arrangements. This period of transition to recovery presents an opportunity to reinstate activity which worked prior to COVID-19, but also to incorporate some of the innovative practices which have developed, which the YJB fully supports.

2. Overview

This guidance recognises that COVID-19 recovery plans should be developed to best fit local needs and that current circumstances remain changeable. Many YOTs have started to develop recovery plans in line with local arrangements. The submission of a recovery plan is a condition of the YJ Grant for 2020/21 (see [appendix a](#)) and will support the YJB’s oversight of recovery across the youth justice system.

The information we are presenting here is intended to be a guide and includes an optional template which can be used (see [appendix c](#)).

We do, however, recommend considering a two-stage approach:

- Developing a high-level narrative of the impact of COVID-19 *and*
- Consideration of the transition to recovery based on the child’s journey through the youth justice system, underpinned by the outcomes outlined in the [Standards for children in the youth justice system](#)

The YJB is committed to a Child First approach encouraging the voice of the child to guide meaningful engagement with the development of services.

¹ ([LEXICO](#), Oxford 2020)

² OED Online. June 2020. Oxford University Press.

<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/159940?rskey=2vncpB&result=1>, [accessed 1.7.2020]

We emphasise that this should be considered as an integral part of the recovery process.

This guidance also recognises the distinct delivery landscape in Wales. The Welsh Government has responsibility in relation to health, education, social services, housing, local government, language and culture and public services.

Youth Justice Partnerships are made up of devolved and non-devolved organisations working together. The Welsh Government and Public Health advice on the lifting of coronavirus restrictions differs from that in England and will affect what YOTs in Wales are able to do and when.

3. High-level summary of the impact of COVID-19

This is designed to assist YOTs to complete a summary narrative of the impact of COVID-19. The YJB recognises that these may have already been addressed as part of your contingency planning.

The summary could include:

1. An overview of the impact on governance and service delivery including ongoing challenges and success.
2. How the local youth justice partnership overcame barriers to delivery and maintain service provision.
3. The impact on your local priorities and the priorities you will be setting for the remainder of the year.
4. The impact on your resources including a breakdown of your resource allocation for the year (ref [appendix b](#)) plus, details of how you intend to spend the YJ Grant and confirmation of compliance with the minimum staffing requirements set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

Where this cannot be confirmed, the plan should set out the steps being taken to ensure compliance with this requirement, the impact on operational practice between the YOT and local partners who contribute specialist services to support children in the youth justice system and how this relationship may develop during the period of recovery.

5. How the partnership will meet the continued or emerging risks of COVID-19 including measures to mitigate these risks and maintain service. Any plans to provide ongoing monitoring or development of service including any planned service reviews, self-assessments, peer reviews or audits that the service intends to undertake, including those related to thematic inspection findings.

4. The transition to recovery

This section recommends that you consider transition to recovery from the perspective of the child's journey through the youth justice system. The standards within the standards for children provide a framework for supporting this.

Additionally, consideration for children held in police stations, ensuring access to appropriate adults and legal advice as well as the need to ensure that the services to victims are provided are key considerations.

YOTs are encouraged to reflect how any learning from the recent self-assessment may be factored into considerations for the transition towards recovery.

The YJB suggests that you consider three areas as priorities for recovery planning:

a. The needs of children

The highest priority in the transition to recovery is that the needs of children are met and that successful outcomes are achieved. Any recovery plans will need to include how you will engage with children to deliver interventions, provide access to services and any other forms of support they may require.

Specific considerations should be given to, for example, where there are safeguarding concerns, where there may be public protection risks, or where the direct impact from the backlog of cases held in police and court systems; alongside other issues which may have arisen from the COVID-19 restrictions.

The risks children face from Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) e.g. violence in the home, child exploitation and abuse has been further exacerbated during lockdown, and potentially loss and bereavement as a result of the virus. Measures to mitigate the impact of these ACEs should be reflected as an integral part of recovery planning.

The evidence of the disproportionate impact on the black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) community of COVID-19 is now well established, and will need consideration alongside the known overrepresentation of black children within the youth justice system.

The recovery plan needs to consider the impact of some of the changes in practice which have emerged through the COVID-19 period and the local response e.g. how the needs of children will be met through the introduction of virtual courts ensuring that the welfare of the child always prioritised.

b. The needs of staff

The YJB recognises the impact that COVID-19 has had on YOT staff who have worked hard to maintain a service in very challenging and often dangerous circumstances showing a high degree of commitment for the children that they work with to safeguard them and to protect the public.

The recovery plan for staff is likely to be affected by several factors including access to YOT premises and local authority policies. The practices and procedures relating to other environments that staff work in will also be relevant such as the police station, the court and home visits to children and their families. The availability of staff may also be an issue either for health-related reasons or because of the availability of schooling for key worker's children during the forthcoming months.

The [UK Governments COVID-19 strategy](#) aims to save lives and minimise harm, evidence from the sector shows that there are concerns regarding safe working, access to PPE and testing. Enabling staff to work safely will be a high priority.

c. Strategic Partnerships

The YJB has worked closely with YOTs and partner organisations to identify issues and work proactively to develop solutions. Now, YOTs are transitioning towards the recovery stage with COVID-19 there is an opportunity to review how partnership working has evolved during recent months and what it will look like going forward from the perspective of both criminal justice and non-criminal justice partners.

This might include consideration of how protection of the public and risk of harm continues to be managed through forums which are concerned about missing and exploited children, county lines, violence prevention and MAPPA. Other areas relate to safeguarding, management of out of county placements, identification and support for vulnerable children and families and relationships with children's services regarding looked after children.

The YJB acknowledges that the pandemic has had a significant impact on resources across local authorities and youth justice partnerships. The transition to recovery will present significant challenges especially in coordinating and resourcing responses to backlogs in prevention and [court](#) work. Similarly partner agencies such as children services will have a peak in referrals and education providers face significant logistical issues.

The standards for children place emphasis for delivery on YOT management boards and therefore any transition to recovery planning will need to include the whole youth justice partnership.

5. Effective Practice

The YJB recognises that the journey to recovery has already begun and have worked with the sector to identify and share effective practice. The [Youth Justice Resource Hub](#) has a specific section related to [COVID-19 practice](#). We welcome any further [contributions](#) to the hub from the sector.

Examples of recovery planning are included within this section with contributions from areas such as [Wrexham YOT](#) or [Hillingdon YOT](#) who, for example, have adopted a three-stage model for recovery:

- “Restore” considering whether to bring back a service that has been on hold,
- “Reinvent” which is the opportunity to reshape or deliver something differently to improve the offer to children,
- “Retain” considering whether to continue to operate in a new way because of new approaches.

We would encourage you to consider whether within the period of transition any work that you are undertaking could be enhanced using Sector Improvement and Sector Support Partnership, examples include:

- Youth Justice Sector Improvement Partnership (YJSIP) involvement
- YJB Developing Practice forums
- workforce development
- becoming a Peer Reviewer or coach
- reciprocal auditing offer to neighbouring YOT
- a mentor to new YOT Managers
- Pathfinder involvement.

More information is available [here](#).

The National Probation Service has also produced a [Roadmap to Recovery](#) which sets out their key principles and objectives for recovery. The three step recovery model provides examples of how [UK Governments COVID-19 strategy](#) can be applied protecting staff health, maintaining public protection and resettlement as well as providing sufficient capacity including restarting interventions. The feedback that we have received from the sector indicates that the Roadmap provides solid incremental foundation for service recovery.

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) is undertaking a thematic inspection in the summer of 2020 to review YOT work under COVID-19 restrictions. HMIP will report in the Autumn of 2020 and lessons learnt can be incorporated in to the recovery process.

For the 2020/21 the submission of a COVID Recovery plan is a condition for receipt of your Youth Justice Grant.

Completed plans should be submitted through your YJB Regional or Welsh lead and copied to CBU@yjb.gov.uk by **4 September 2020**.

Additional enquiries can be sent to: jerry.kirk@yjb.gov.uk

Appendix a. Legal Requirements

[Section 40 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#) sets out the youth offending partnership's responsibilities in producing an annual youth justice (YJ) plan. It states that it is the duty of each local authority, after consultation with the partner agencies, to formulate and implement an annual youth justice plan, setting out:

- How youth justice services in their area are to be provided and funded
- How the youth offending team (YOT), or equivalent service, will be composed and funded, how it will operate, and what functions it will carry out.

And submitted to the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB).

Given the pressures faced by YOTs during the COVID-19 pandemic, the YJB sought legal advice to support the reduction of burdens on YOTs. With support by the Secretary of State for Justice we have consequently used our discretion around the expectations for YJ Plans. In lieu of the full annual YJ plan we are requesting a higher level YJ Plan for the 2020/21 financial year which we describe as Recovery Plans.

The terms and conditions of grant were amended to reflect this change and incorporated the conditions for the current financial year. The discretion applied in relation to the submission of the YJ Plans reflects the uniqueness of the current circumstances; the requirement for the annual YJ Plan remains a requirement for future periods.

Appendix b. Partner contributions to the youth offending partnership pooled budget 2020/21

Agency	Staffing Costs	Payments in kind	Other Delegated Funds	Total
Youth Justice Board				0
Local Authority				0
Police				0
Police and Crime Commissioner				0
Probation				0
Health				0
*Welsh Government				0
Other				0
Total	0	0	0	0

*Welsh YOTs only

**For multi-authority YOTs, the totality of local authority contributions should be described as one figure.

***Any money from the police and crime commissioner that has been routed through a local crime reduction partnership should be included here.

****It should be noted that the 'Other' category is for additional funding that the YOT can use for any general youth justice activities which are funded through other routes with governance sitting with the YOS Partnership Board

Appendix c. Recovery Template

This template is to assist the YOT to consider how to map their transition to recovery. The use of this template is entirely optional.

Introduction:
At the Police Station: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) The needs of childrenb) The needs of staffc) Strategic Partnerships <u>Recommendations and Actions:</u>
Out of Court Disposals: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) The needs of childrenb) The needs of staffc) Strategic Partnerships <u>Recommendations and Actions:</u>
At Court: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) The needs of childrenb) The needs of staff

<p>c) Strategic Partnerships</p> <p><u>Recommendations and Actions:</u></p>
<p>In the Community:</p> <p>a) The needs of children</p> <p>b) The needs of staff</p> <p>c) Strategic Partnerships</p> <p><u>Recommendations and Actions:</u></p>
<p>Secure Settings:</p> <p>a) The needs of children</p> <p>b) The needs of staff</p> <p>c) Strategic Partnerships</p> <p><u>Recommendations and Actions:</u></p>
<p>On Transition and Resettlement:</p> <p>a) The needs of children</p> <p>b) The needs of staff</p> <p>c) Strategic Partnerships</p> <p><u>Recommendations and Actions:</u></p>
<p>Sign Off:</p>