6. Foundations for Change

6.1 Purpose

The purpose of this section is to identify positive goals and opportunities in a young person's life and to record the competing influences that are factors for and against desistance.

The section explores:

- personal goals and aspirations,

- the young person's ability to cope with issues,

- prospects or chances the young person has to achieve a positive outcome,

- involvement and progress with previous youth justice services and other organisations; and,

- key factors for and against desistance.

6.2 Overview

This section comprises of four sub-sections:

- **Resilience and goals**

- **Opportunities**

- **Engagement and participation**

- **Factors affecting desistance.**

6.3 Section guidance

6.3.1 Resilience and goals

Q. **What does the young person do to cope with problems and difficulties in his or her life?**

You should provide examples of any particular past or present problems but also identify the positive or negative coping strategies they have used alongside them. There may also be evidence that although the young person has some positive coping strategies, they are still being overwhelmed by a particularly difficult set of problems at a given point in time.

Consider the following positive coping strategies:

- has someone to talk to, knows where to get support,

- uses evading strategies, e.g. activities that take them away from an offending peer group; and

- uses sport, music or other positive interests to deal with stress.

Also, consider the following negative coping strategies:

- substance misuse that might be linked to self-medication or escapism,

- aggression, e.g. damaging property, lashing out; and,

- self-harm.

Q. To what extent does the young person understand the potentially negative consequences of further anti-social behaviour or offending for his or her future?

This includes both short-term consequences such as arrest and custody and longer term consequences such as difficulty getting a job with a criminal record. Does the young person have an awareness of the potential negative consequences of further offending? Can the young person think about the future see any positives?

Q. To what extent does the young person think it is possible to achieve positive change or avoid further anti-social behaviour or offending?

Consider factors such as:

- whether the young person perceives themselves as having a criminal identity,

- whether they can see any other choices or options in life outside of offending or anti-social behaviour; and,

- whether they have some understanding of the causes of their offending or behaviour and know that, until some things change, repeated incidents or reoffending is likely.

You should use this question to reflect the young person's belief about what can be achieved in the future.

Use the details box to outline the factors influencing the young person's optimism about the possibility of change or their feelings about further offending.

Q. Does the young person have some positive goals and aspirations?

These could be short-term goals such as wanting to avoid upsetting a parent, or longer-term goals such as being keen to get a particular job after leaving school. Those of a younger age may only be able to identify short-term goals, but these are still significant and can be built upon during a period of intervention. Also, consider how realistic the young person's goals or aspirations are and whether the young person understands the steps they need to take to achieve them

The information gathered here may help to identify potential factors affecting desistance and/or key areas of intervention for Pathways and Planning.

Q. Details

Where possible, you should give more information to support your answers to the above questions and give examples of the young person taking steps towards or showing an active interest in achieving positive goals.

Sub-section flags:

ACTION FLAGS, SIGNIFICANT LIFE EVENTS AND DESISTANCE FACTORS	
Resilience and goals	
Flag for further action	e.g. young person has a strong relationship with a teacher at school and it would be useful to involve them in planning interventions.
Add significant life event	e.g. the young person loses their job.
Add desistance factor	Factors for desistance e.g. the young person has positive coping strategies including playing a musical instrument. Factors against desistance e.g. the young person uses cannabis to cope in difficult situations.

6.3.2 Opportunities

This sub-section looks at resources and opportunities that could help the young person to achieve the goals and aspirations identified.

Q. **Opportunities and external resources to help the young person achieve positive outcomes:**

- What is currently available? What is currently missing?

This relates to the availability or unavailability of resources that can include statutory and voluntary services, family or other networks, one-off or longer-term opportunities. Where opportunities are available for the young person to achieve their goals or aspirations you should record what those opportunities are and what resources are available to support the young person. Conversely, if there are goals or aspirations that cannot be met due to a lack of resources or opportunities, you should record what is missing and what, if anything, you can do to try and help the young person.

- How much does s/he know about what is available and how to access it?

You should find out how much a young person thinks they know about available community resources. For example, a young person may know about a particular service but not realise that they are actually eligible for it.

Sub-section flags:

ACTION FLAGS, SIGNIFICANT LIFE EVENTS AND DESISTANCE FACTORS	
Opportunities	
Flag for further action	e.g. the young person has indicated that they would like to join a class at college – refer to Connexions worker for support with this.
Add significant life event	e.g. the young person is excluded from school.
Add desistance factor	Factors for desistance e.g. the young person engages with positive activities. Factors against desistance e.g. there are high levels of unemployment in the area making it difficult for the young person to get a job.

6.3.3 Engagement and participation

This sub-section focuses on how to gain the young person's willing participation in interventions.

Positive engagement is more likely when you:

- focus on and work with a young person's strengths,

- understand what factors might be influencing the likelihood of offending/reoffending, future harmful behaviours and safety and well-being concerns,

- understand the young person's development and use it as a strength, e.g. identifying opportunities to develop identity; and,

- start with the young person's needs, goals, values and aspirations.

Trigger question for further exploration

Q.

Does the young person have experience of previous YOT supervision or contact?

Being aware of the positive and negative aspects of any previous contact between the YOT and the young person is important for planning current and future interventions.

If the answer is 'Yes', you should complete the further exploration to capture the details around the previous involvement or contact:

Further exploration

Please provide as much detail as possible here, for example:

- any particular actions or interventions that the young person particularly engaged with or did not engage with,

- any particular strategies that were particularly successful that could be repeated or were particularly unsuccessful that should be avoided in future,

- any key relationships that played a critical role in successfully reducing risk and building their resilience,

- the extent of previous compliance or non-compliance including any identifiable reasons for the young person complying or failing to comply with any previous interventions,

- any particular actions that were taken to assist them with compliance and participation; and,

- anything which the YOT did or didn't do that made engagement more difficult.

Trigger question for further exploration

Q.

Has the young person been involved with restorative processes before?

If the answer is 'Yes', you should complete the further exploration to capture the details of engagement with previous restorative processes:

Further exploration

Please provide details of type of previous interventions including:

- face-to-face mediation,

- video conferencing,

- direct or indirect reparation; and,

- any successes or problems that can be identified within those previous internventions.

Q. **What is the young person's current attitude towards supervision or contact with the YOT?**

You should consider whether anything has changed since the last period of contact that might contribute either to improved engagement and participation or to a reduced willingness or ability to engage. Having considered the past, it is important not to assume that the young person's attitudes or behaviour towards supervision or the YOT will be the same this time.

Q. **What areas is the young person motivated to work on or change and which things does s/he not want to address?**

This question enables you to record the young person's current motivation in relation to change in different areas of their life.

When completing the table on 'Motivated to work on' and 'Resistant to work on', you should take account of motivation in relation to:

- strengths or positives, e.g. a young person who is making good progress at school and is motivated to continue improving and learning,

- addressing offending or anti-social behaviour; and,

- dealing with other difficulties, problems or needs.

This table should inform sequencing of interventions and priorities in Pathways and Planning.

Q.

Where known, provide information about the young person's preferred learning style.

Note any specific tools used with the young person, preferred types of activity and any other learning preferences.

Trigger question for further exploration

Q. **Have particular barriers to engagement and participation been identified?**

If the answer is 'Yes', you should complete the further exploration question to capture the details around the barriers to engagement identified:

Further exploration

Please provide as much detail as possible here:

Consider possible sources for barriers to the young person's engagement:

- young person, e.g. language or communication difficulties,

- family or carers, e.g. parents actively discouraging young person from working with YOT,

- community or neighbourhood, e.g. territorial disputes that make it difficult for the young person to attend a project in a particular part of town; and,

- diversity factors, e.g. health needs, requirement for an interpreter or signer, learning needs, disability

Consider also the different types of barriers:

- practical, e.g. lack of transport,

- time commitments, e.g. work or caring commitments that clash with appointments; and,

- relational, e.g. a young person has previously had difficulties in relating to particular members of staff and is reluctant to work with them again.

Any barriers that have been identified will be important considerations in the Pathways and Planning (tailoring interventions) section.

Practice Point

As part of a wider analysis of each reoffending cohort, the YJB 'disproportionality tool' allows YOTs to see at a glance the level of any over-representation of any of the five main ethnic groups in their local youth justice system, which can greatly assist when considering issues around diversity in individual assessments https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-reduce-reoffending-by-children-and-young-people

Q. **Where the young person is, or has been, involved with other services, please comment on any particular positives or problems with regards to their engagement.**

Important information to record here would include:

- What, if anything, is different between the way the young person engages with other services and the way they engage with the YOT? Why is/was the young person's engagement different?

- Are there any features of the young person's engagement with other services which:
    - suggest strengths that could be built on during their period of contact with the YOT or secure establishment?
    - suggest any particular concerns, e.g. risks to the safety of the young person or other people that staff need to be aware of? These should then be reflected in Explanations and Conclusions (future behaviour and safety and well-being sub-sections).

Sub-section flags:

ACTION FLAGS, SIGNIFICANT LIFE EVENTS AND DESISTANCE FACTORS	
Engagement and participation	
Flag for further action	e.g. referral to Speech and Language Therapist.
Add significant life event	e.g. the young person changes foster placement.
Add desistance factor	Factors for desistance e.g. the young person has engaged well with previous interventions. Factors against desistance e.g. the young person is mistrustful of professionals and doesn't want to work with the YOT.

6.3.4 Factors affecting desistance

This sub-section provides the opportunity to record the factors in the young person's life that are influential and will act either for or against desistance. In the Explanations and Conclusions (understanding offending behaviour/ understanding behaviour) section the factors will be rated according to the strength of their influence.

Definition - Desistance

Desistance research focuses on the routes out of offending – in the AssetPlus rationale document Dr Kerry Baker[39] describes desistance in the following terms:

- Firstly, desistance is best viewed as a process rather than a one-off event.

- Secondly, understanding desistance involves taking account of both individual factors (such as goals and attitudes) and social context (such as the opportunities available to a young person in their community).

- Thirdly, it is useful to distinguish between 'primary desistance' i.e. 'any lull or crime-free gap in the course of a criminal career' and 'secondary desistance' which relates to adopting a new 'non-offender' identity.

Factors for desistance (those which will be influential in the young person desisting from offending) and against desistance (those which will be influential in the young person persisting in offending) are identified throughout the Information Gathering sections of AssetPlus.

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[39] AssetPlus Rationale document – GOV.UK

Q. **Based on your assessment, summarise the key factors for and against desistance in the young person's life**

Key factors for and against desistance are entered as free text into the desistance table and should be worded as simple statements that clearly describe what the factor is. You should focus on the **key** factors rather than every factor which may have an impact on desistance in order to avoid overpopulating the table and losing the key factors. You must consider information gathered during self-assessment in order to complete this table

Table 5: Desistance Table

Factors affecting desistance				
Based on your assessment, summarise the key factors for and against desistance in the young person's life:				
Category	Factors for desistance:		Factors against desistance:	Category
Please select		Desistance / reduced offending		

Key factors **for** desistance should reflect any individual, family or community influences in the young person's life that could support them in desisting from further offending in the future, e.g. both parents are supportive.

Key factors **against** desistance should reflect any individual, family or community influences in the young person's life that could encourage further involvement in offending in the future, e.g. involved in a gang.

In some cases, certain influences could be both for and against desistance at any one time. For example, parents may be supportive but also involved in offending themselves. Alternatively, learning martial arts may be a positive activity but it may also potentially increase the risk of harm to others where young people use what they have learnt inappropriately. These influences should be recorded as separate factors in the table.

A desistance category should also be recorded against each factor which is the sub-section in AssetPlus where more detailed information about the evidence for the factors can be found.

If a desistance factor is associated with multiple areas of the assessment it should be recorded against the category which has the most significant impact. For example, where a young person is known to associate with a particular gang and as a result of their association they are involved in substance misuse and display particular behaviours, the desistance factor category should be recorded as family and wider networks.

Desistance categories are;

- Attitudes of Offending/Behaviours

- Living arrangements, housing and finances

- Social and community neighbourhood

- Parenting, Care and Supervision

- Family and wider netwroks

- Care history

- How the young person relates to others

- Physical health and development

- Speech, Language, Communication & Neuro-disability

- Emotional development and mental health

- Substance misuse

- Features of lifestyle

- Self-identity

- Young person as a parent

- Thinking and behaviour

- Learning, Education, Training & Employment

- Resilience and goals

- Engagement and participation