

‘Spend time with me’: Children and young people’s experiences of COVID-19 and the justice system

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June 2020

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Acknowledgements

With thanks to all the children, young people and practitioners who participated in this project. Particular thanks to Youth Just Us and Ruth Kerracher.

Summary of key findings

This paper details the findings of a short piece of work to gather the views of children and young people who are currently in contact with youth justice services or with previous experience of the youth justice system on COVID-19, and of practitioners working within the youth justice system. In total, 48 responses were received from children and young people, with findings from another organisation who had undertaken their own research with a further 22 children questions incorporated where relevant. Thirty six responses were received from practitioners covering 19 local authority areas, with almost three quarters of respondents social work staff and the remainder from third sector organisations.

Children and young people's experiences

- Children and young people cited **isolation and lack of contact** with others - family, friends and services - as the biggest issue affecting those in contact with the justice system. Other **impacts of COVID-19 restrictions** included boredom, not being able to attend school, managing financially and lack of information and the uncertainty of the current situation.
- **Changes to the operation of the youth justice system** were highlighted as a concern. This included **delays** owing to restrictions to court and Children's Hearings; **progression of plans**; maintaining **contact with services and supports including social work and legal professionals and attending court**; and for those in **custody**.
- **Lockdown** was most commonly described as a **negative experience**, particularly in terms of isolation, the challenge of staying in all the time, getting used to the change and impacts on individual circumstances. Staying **occupied** and **contact** from others helped.
- Views on **physical distancing** were **more mixed** and overall more positive than on lockdown.
- For those who had been in contact with the **police, mixed experiences** were reported, varying between responses being deemed fair and appropriate and more adversarial and negative. A small group of children described negative experiences based on feeling targeted by the police.
- Almost all participants had been able to **stay in touch** with family and friends and many with services and supports, with various means being utilised to do so.
- The impact on children and young people's **mental health** was a key theme.
- Others could help by **supporting contact** with family and friends; **keeping in touch**; having activities and **things to stay busy**; **easing restrictions**; and **supporting particular young people** such as those in custody.

Practitioner's perspectives

- The biggest issues affecting children and young people in contact with the justice system and services were **social isolation**, affecting their health and wellbeing, and **boredom and lack of activity**, affecting routine and substance use. The challenges of **keeping in contact** and increased **difficulties in relationships and conflict within the family home** were also highlighted.
- Changes in **offence types** have been noted in some areas, with particular challenges identified with the **operation of the justice system** across all areas of the Whole System Approach. Some existing challenges such as delays to processes and release from custody have been **exacerbated** by COVID-19.
- Overall children and young people have **complied well with the restrictions** associated with COVID-19 and the approach from Police Scotland is reported to have been **appropriate**. Some issues and **wider criminalisation** concerns have been noted.

- The impact on offence types and compliance with restrictions has **changed** in some areas and for some children as time has progressed.
- A range of factors have worked in supporting children and young people: **keeping in touch** through creative methods; ensuring access to things to keep them **occupied**, **practical resources** and **technology**; working with **partners**; and the **dedication of staff**.

Introduction

COVID-19 has brought unprecedented and challenging circumstances and unimaginable changes to everyone's lives. Although a plethora of work is being undertaken to capture children and young people's views and experiences of COVID-19, as well as those of the workforce supporting these children, CYCJ identified a gap in the insights and information from those involved in the youth justice system. We sought to address this by undertaking a short piece of work to gather the views of children and young who are currently in contact with youth justice services or with previous experience of the youth justice system on COVID-19, and of practitioners working within the youth justice system. The findings from this work along with practice case study examples are outlined in this paper. This evidence has also been used to inform the Alternative Child Rights Impact Assessment about coronavirus, commissioned by the Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland.

Approach

The approach adopted to gather views, experiences and insights varied for the different participant groups:

1. Children and young people who are currently in contact with youth justice services or with previous experience of the youth justice system

A three-fold approach was taken through the use of consistent topic guides developed by CYCJ based on issues that have been highlighted to us by practitioners, research evidence and issues raised and questions developed by the young people of Youth Just Us, the steering group behind the Staf and CYCJ [Youth Justice Voices project](#) (see Appendix 1).

Topic guides and information for children and young people were shared with youth justice practitioners to utilise in conversations with the children they are working with. These materials were shared with CYCJ's existing networks and practitioner contacts via email, such as Whole System Approach (WSA) leads, secure care centre Heads of Service, the Scottish Prison Service, and the [Scottish Government Youth Justice Strategy Implementation Groups](#). Flexible use of the guides was encouraged based on the areas that children were most interested or concerned about and in a manner that best suited them, with slightly different topic guides developed for children in the community, in secure care and in HMP YOI Polmont. Aonymised responses were then shared with CYCJ via email, with a total of 41 responses received. Age information was not received for five of these responses, but for those whom this information was received, all bar one respondent was aged under 18. The gender of six respondents was not identified, but for the remaining respondents, two-thirds were male. Seven respondents had previous experience of the youth justice system, with the remainder currently in contact with youth justice services. In addition, another organisation who had undertaken their own research shared findings from 22 children to slightly different questions, which have been incorporated where relevant.

CYCJ staff gathered the views of young people with previous experience of the youth justice system with whom we have existing and ongoing contact. Responses were received by phone, text or email, with CYCJ staff anonymously documenting them. A total of seven responses were received in this manner, with the young people aged between 20 and 25, four of whom were male and three female. All bar one respondent was currently in the community and along with having previous experience of the youth justice system, almost half of these respondents had some form of current involvement with the justice system.

Information was shared on CYCJ's website and social media asking young people aged over 18 with experience of the youth justice system to get in touch for CYCJ staff to have a conversation guided by the topic guide over the phone or through virtual contact. No responses were received through this means.

In each of these approaches, consistent information about the project, consent, anonymity and how this information would be used was shared with all participants (see Appendix 1). In this paper, the term children is used to refer to those respondents aged under 18 in accordance with the UNCRC, with those aged 18 and over referred to as young people.

2. Practitioners working within the youth justice system.

A small number of questions were posed to participants in two virtual meetings:

- The WSA leads meeting which comprises representatives with responsibilities for youth justice across the 32 local authorities in Scotland.
- The Early and Effective (EEI) Intervention Practitioners Forum, comprising local authority and third sector staff who have responsibilities for leading or delivering EEI processes and interventions across local authorities.

Email versions of these questions were also sent to members of both forums to enable those who were not directly attending to share information. The purpose of the information requests, and their use, including in terms of anonymity and reporting, was explained in all contacts with members of both forums. These questions and information was also shared with members of the National Youth Justice Advisory Group (NYJAG) via email. In some cases, these requests for information were shared within teams, which yielded a number of responses from some organisations/areas. In the same manner, members of all forums were invited to share short case study examples for inclusion in this report. In total 36 responses were received, either in writing or verbally, covering 19 local authority areas (almost 60% of Scottish local authorities), with responses predominantly from social work staff and ten from third sector organisations.

The analysis of these findings is detailed in this report. The findings are presented anonymously and broken down as above. It is acknowledged that this was a small-scale, quickly completed project. The approaches adopted were owing to the short timescales involved but it is recognised this meant the depth and volume of responses that could be received is inherently limited and that participants have largely been sought from CYCJ's existing contacts and networks. In addition, not all respondents answered all questions posed. As such, the findings are best considered as a snapshot of the views and experiences of those who participated as shared in May 2020.

Children and young people's experiences

In capturing the views and experiences of children and young people who are currently in contact with youth justice services or with previous experience of the youth justice system on COVID-19, our focus was on the issues affecting them; experiences of restrictions; maintaining contact with family, friends and supports; and what could be done to help, as differentiated below.

The biggest issues

Children and young people were asked what they thought are the biggest issues affecting young people in contact with the justice system during COVID-19. Overwhelmingly, **isolation and lack of contact** with others-family, friends and services-through visits, face-to-face contact and positive physical contact and affection was cited most frequently. Linked to this, a small number of respondents specifically mentioned

the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people's mental health, including loneliness, the worry about the health of family members, fear of the virus spreading and the impact of people dying:

"I think these circumstances will be creating more anxieties in young people as they won't be able to have regular updates about their families. I think this has also created a lot of stress in young people too because they have taken a lot of their rights away and this will leave young people to feel not in control of a lot of situations" (Young person with previous experience of the justice system).

Only one mention was made of drugs or seeking drugs as the biggest issue.

Other **impacts of COVID-19 restrictions** were mentioned on a few occasions. This included things like children and young people not being able to go out, boredom, needing to *stick to the rules*, not being able to attend school and trying to do school work at home, and managing financially. Linked to this was lack of **information and the uncertainty** of the current situation, with the resulting inability to provide assurance to children and young people. A number of children and young people stated they didn't know what the impact was.

A few children and young people made reference to **changes to the operation of the youth justice system** (aside from police contact which is discussed further below). The impact of **delays** owing to restrictions to court and Children's Hearings and on **progression of plans** (for example, on time out with the secure care centre or custody and ultimately leaving such establishments and being able to go home) was cited. Throughout responses **changes to contact with supports and services**, including social work, third sector organisations, education and legal professionals were mentioned. One young person specifically mentioned the challenges around making contact with their lawyer and in getting to court:

"When I was trying to get in touch with my lawyer it was hard to start with because normally I would just pop into his office. My worker helped me but if I didn't have her I wouldn't have got my bail conditions changed and be able to attend the birth of my child... The court being closed causes problems, I had to borrow money to get to a different town to go to the court there, some people might not have money to get there and then they would get in even more trouble" (Child currently in contact with youth justice services)

Another young person who is progressing from custody described his experience:

"...no contact with friends and family; locked up at 5pm, no information, nothing is getting done, no support, we don't know what's going on, no gym, only £2 been added as credit for phone calls for friends and family, lots of tension, prison politics, no video calls, visits or mobile phones in cells - said this was going to happen weeks ago" (Young person currently in contact with justice services).

Similarly, another respondent specifically mentioned the challenge of not seeing a family member who is in prison.

Experiences of restrictions

a) Lockdown

Respondents were asked how they had found lockdown. Some children and young people were very clear that their experience could be described as one thing, whereas others provided multiple varying descriptions at once, stating "at times this and at others this" or "then and now". The most commonly used

terms described lockdown as a **negative experience** with words like *hard, difficult challenging, terrible, tough, stressful, depressing and frustrating* used:

“Lockdown has been horrible and weird. Not getting out and about feels crazy & when you think something has affected the whole world it feels like a big dream” (Child currently in contact with youth justice services).

“Rubbish, I hate it so much” (Child with previous experience of the youth justice system).

Terms like *alright, ok, and fine* were used by a fewer number of respondents but were still used fairly frequently. On a very small number of occasions, respondents used **positive terms** like *good, decent and better than I thought it would be*.

When asked about what had been difficult, **isolation** and particularly not being able to see family and friends was the most frequently cited issue:

“Not seeing my family or being able to visit my granda when he was in hospital” (Young person with previous experience of the youth justice system).

Conversely, in a small number of occasions the challenges of being “stuck” with family and unable to leave were cited. Many children and young people spoke about the challenge of **staying in all the time**, having nothing to do and not being allowed to do what they wanted. Some raised the subsequent fear of going out in case this led them into contact with other people who were not adhering to restrictions or the police, even when this was for legitimate and permitted reasons such as shopping or daily exercise. A small number of participants specifically mentioned the impact of the current situation on their **mental health**:

“Staying in the house, I get upset all the time and have been crying a lot” (Child with previous experience of the youth justice system).

“I was living myself so I was isolated and it was effecting my mental health - I couldn't go near or speak to anyone and that was so hard coz I'm a social butterfly” (Young person with previous experience of the youth justice system).

Getting used to the change and particularly in respect of the implications for **education, college and university courses, employment and home schooling** for those who are parents was mentioned by a few respondents. Some individual respondents also made reference to the challenges COVID-19 had brought for their **circumstances** such as exacerbating addition issues, the loss of accommodation due to family breakdown, moving between separated parent's homes, residing in a new/different area and managing financially. A small number of respondents stated they had found nothing about lockdown difficult.

When asked about what has **helped**, young people frequently cited things that kept them **occupied and stay busy**, the most commonly cited being exercise or physical activity and being allowed to go out daily, followed by games consoles/computers, having or walking their dog, films/television, music, work/education, cooking/baking, art and reading:

“My dog has gave me purpose to get up, dressed and go for a walk” (Young person with previous experience of the youth justice system)

“Participation groups, keeping busy, having a routine, support, self-care packages” (Young person currently in contact with youth justice services)

“Cooking at home. It’s made me realise that maybe I could be a chef if I don’t get in the army”
(Child currently in contact with youth justice services)

Support and contact from others was also reported to be important. Time with family was cited most frequently, but being able to speak to friends, and the challenges when young people did not have the resources to do so (a phone or credit and residing with others) was also mentioned. Having support from staff who they worked with and services was also frequently cited:

“I re-engaged with addiction services from where I used to live and also my probation officer who I’m not obligated to see anymore to let him know that I was a bit down and needed help” (Young person currently in contact with youth justice services).

Two mentions were also made of having information about COVID-19.

A small number of responses also cited the **benefits** of lockdown as having less to do and more time to relax, being able to sleep longer, having greater energy, more time at home, bonding with family/carers, and the chance to enjoy hobbies, learn new skills and focus on future. This was often with the caveat that they would still prefer to be doing the things they did previously:

“It’s made me realise how much I appreciate my mates since we haven’t been with each other in ages you like there company” (Child currently in contact with youth justice services)

“Being in has made me stop smoking so I’ve not been thinking I need to go outside for a fag. That’s reduced my contact with people as it’s a communal smoking area” (Child currently in contact with youth justice services).

b) Physical distancing

Children and young people had **mixed views** on physical distancing. The main terms that were used to describe physical distancing were that this was *alright*, *fine* and for some young people *easy*. Respondents often added that this was because they had not been going out, seen others out with their family/household, found other ways to keep in touch, and there was no choice in this matter:

“Everyone is the same so we just keep apart when going past people” (Child currently in contact with youth justice services).

A very small number of participants made reference to them or other young people still meeting up and not adhering to physical distancing rules.

A smaller but still large number of respondents described physical distancing in negative terms. These included *hard*, *difficult*, *annoying* and *awkward*:

“I have found social distancing really hard because I feel awkward because naturally I’m just daft and in my own world and now I need to be aware of everything around this makes me drained and overwhelmed after being out especially to the shops” (Young person with previous experience of the youth justice system).

Linked to this, a small number of young people made reference to the behaviour of others that could make physical distancing more challenging, for example when out for walks or in the supermarket. It was

reported this could put people off going out or make this more difficult, particularly where the young person lacked confidence to ask others to move out of the way or challenge non-compliance with restrictions.

c) Police contact

Children and young people were specifically asked about their experiences with the police when they were out, with **mixed experiences** reported. The overwhelming majority reported having no contact with the police and one respondent contact for a non COVID-19 related matter. A few participants reported having seen a police presence when out but had no direct dealings with the police. A small number advised that they made particular efforts to avoid the police:

“I have seen the police around but have not directly spoken to them but the thought of them approaching me asking why I’m out gives me so much anxiety and makes me not want to go anywhere” (Young person with previous experience of the youth justice system).

A small number of children and young people reported that they had been in contact with the police but that this response had been fair and appropriate. A similar number reported more adversarial and negative contacts including being arrested, charged or that they knew people who had been fined. A few children and young people reported feeling unfairly targeted by police officers:

“Nasty they approach me most times I am out” (Child currently in contact with youth justice services)

“I’ve made an effort to stay in and keep my head down and the police have still be at my door blaming me for things” (Child currently in contact with youth justice services)

Keeping in touch with family, friends and services

Specific questions on keeping in touch with people were asked, albeit contact and more specifically restrictions on contact with others was cited throughout responses, arguably evidencing the significance of this issue for children and young people. Almost all respondents reported having been **able to keep in touch with family and friends** either through face-to-face contact (including using physical distancing/PPE as appropriate), phone calls and texts, video calls, virtual platforms such as Skype and Zoom, Snapchat, social media, games consoles, and WhatsApp. Such contact, whilst welcomed, for some children and young people brought additional challenges and the sense that this was not the same as previously:

“I have been keeping in touch with family & friends on the phone through calls, texts, snapchat & Facebook. I’m really glad I can do this but it also makes me feel sad because I can’t see them” (Child with previous experience of the justice system).

“I use my phone to phone/text/video so that’s allowed me to keep in touch with people. I’ve had a socially distanced visit each week with my kids, it’s been hard but at least I see them on video and once per week” (Child currently in contact with youth justice services).

“Friends and family video calls and texts but it’s not the same” (Young person with previous experience of the youth justice system).

Many children and young people made reference to **maintaining contact with services and supports** such as social work, third sector organisations, lawyers and education, through a similar combination of

methods to those detailed above. Face-to-face contact and home visits with appropriate safeguards were also mentioned and clearly appreciated.

When asked what **more could be done to support keeping in touch**, the most common response was nothing, often owing to children and young people reporting that they had what they needed to do so, but expressed they were acutely aware not everyone did. A few young people specifically mentioned that they could benefit from having devices or better devices, like mobile phones, laptops and computers, and internet access:

“Not me but there should be more support for other people that can’t. So some charities are doing grants and things to help buy a phone or communication device. That’s all well and good but if you can’t afford internet there should be more support around that. Especially for young people”
(Young person with previous experience of the youth justice system).

“Enough data or Wi-Fi. Everyone having same technology” (Child currently in contact with youth justice services).

Many children and young people specifically mentioned that it would help to continue to utilise methods of keeping in touch as detailed above. A small number specifically stated they did not know what else could be done and a similar number for COVID-19 to go away and for restrictions to be eased.

What can those around you do to help?

When asked what could help, most respondents said **nothing** with the rationale behind this varying between they were ok, often highlighting their fortunate position in the current situation, and that they had the help and support they needed. A number of children and young people mentioned supporting **contact** with family and friends, including through the provision of devices and internet data, and professionals **keeping in touch**:

“Just keep in contact with me, I’ve been getting a lot of phone support and it’s good to know people are still there and able to help me” (Child currently in contact with youth justice services).

In doing so, the provision of positive support, motivation and encouragement appeared as important for some respondents:

“Spend time with me...Encourage me to do things even though I mostly say no, but I really like it when a few staff come in & sit with me, make me laugh & even discuss my past” (Child with previous experience of the youth justice system).

Individual children and young people mentioned more specific things staff could do to improve their circumstances such as supporting contact with siblings and gaining suitable accommodation.

Having **activities and things to stay busy** was also identified as an important help. Two young people made specific reference to improvements for people currently in **custody** including the use of video link to enable family contact; more things to keep them occupied and time out with their cell; and increase privileges in recognition of the current situation, such as more money for food or new items on their canteen sheets.

Two respondents made specific **recommendations for the Scottish Government**:

“I think the government should be putting a fund in so there is more things to offer help to people at this time” (Young person with previous experience of the youth justice system).

“It would be helpful if Nicola Sturgeon could reassure care experienced young people that police are still corporate parents and they have a responsibility to make sure we are safe and can confide in the police. I worry that a lot of care placements will be breaking down and young people will feel helpless in these situation” (Young person with previous of the youth justice system).

More generally, a number of children and young people stated that **easing restrictions** would help them, with many stating they wanted to get back to normality and have things to look forward to:

“Just want things to go back to normal and all my workers and family can visit me at the house without me being embarrassed to phone if I need anything” (Young person with previous experience of the youth justice system).

Practitioner’s perspectives

Biggest issues for children and young people

As with children and young people, **social isolation** from friends, family, and regular supports was one of the most commonly cited issues by practitioners when asked what they thought are the biggest issues affecting young people in contact with the justice system and services. Similarly practitioners also highlighted the impact of this on children and young people’s **health and wellbeing**, stating that for some children and young people the impact on their mental health has been significant. Linked to this, **boredom and lack of activity** was cited as another major issue for children and young people, with many respondents also citing the struggle with the **lack of routine and structure**. In some areas, increased **alcohol/stance use** was cited, with local variations in the type and availability of usage noted. This is illustrated:

“The most common thing young people I have worked with have complained about is being bored at home. Limited things to do and limited access to activities that they would normally do. Some miss having face to face contact with relatives and friends, particularly ones they are close to” (Respondent from a third sector organisation).

The next most common issue, which is probably unsurprising given the participant group, was the changes to, and **challenges of, keeping in contact** with children and young people, given the limits to face-to-face contact and fewer people seeing these children. As such, many participants reported it was difficult to get a real sense of what is going on for children, young people and families and how they are managing. This was reported to be particularly difficult where there are not established existing relationships with children, young people or their family; children and young people did not have access to their own technology or a private space to talk to staff; or where maintaining trust was more challenging. Linked to this, challenges of undertaking focused work, group work, maintaining the usual robustness of support, and signposting/supporting access to other services were cited. Collectively it was reported that this could make it difficult for practitioners to be able to intervene before **crisis point** is reached.

Increased **difficulties in relationships and conflict within the family home** (with and between children, siblings and parents), relationships breaking down and at times owing to the lack of natural respite and supports, young people being accommodated in local authority care or presenting as homeless were frequently mentioned. It has been noted that some of this conflict is owing to the challenges and stresses associated with COVID-19 (particularly the inability to go out and natural respites such as school and work), children's compliance with restrictions along with parents/carers enforcement of restrictions, and coping mechanisms of parents as well as children and young people:

“Being at home with family. Often relationships are strained at home and lockdown is forcing people together for longer periods of time. Types of offences we are seeing during lockdown are online or fights with family, within the family home” (Respondent from a local authority)

“Higher level of concerns for mental health of young people, anxiety impacted often by deterioration in parent's mental health, parental substance misuse and spikes in domestic violence” (Respondent from a local authority).

The risks of these experiences to children and young people were cited, such as abuse, neglect, domestic abuse, coercive control, criminal exploitation or sexual exploitation. In some areas this has resulted in increased demand for placements and accommodation, which in turn was reported to bring challenges in terms of availability, access and willingness for providers to take young people who might present difficulties in terms of compliance with restrictions.

Ensuring children and young people have activities to do to keep them **occupied and practical** things like food, phones, laptops/tablets, phone credit, and internet data was also highlighted. The basic practical difficulties for some families of going shopping, only having access to public transport, lack of childcare, and finances were cited. **Access to technology** has been really important and where children and young people are not able to access this it can be challenging for multiple reasons. In particular, some participants reported that most **education** resources are online and where these cannot be accessed options are more limited. Alongside access issues, practitioners highlighted the difficulties of keeping children motivated to engage with education, and concerns about missing out on schoolwork.

While some areas specifically stated that offences being committed by children and young people had reduced, in others **changes to offence types** (particularly increases in shoplifting, antisocial behaviour and COVID-19 related offences such as coughing and spitting) were reported. Latterly, some areas have highlighted an increase in offences and particularly in more serious offences such as driving offences, serious assaults and possession of drugs and weapons.

Changes in the **operation of the justice system** were also cited by some respondents. Issues such as travel to and from **courts** where physical appearances were necessary and **delays** and postponement court cases were highlighted as bringing stress, uncertainty for young people and challenges in knowing and thinking about what the future may hold:

“He was detained on remand in February and thereafter “fully committed” a week later. However last week his case was reviewed (virtually) by the Court and his solicitor (copied in) made the case for his release. The Sheriff deferred decision-making for a further 7 days to allow the matter to be considered again today. In the intervening period I provided as comprehensive an overview of the multi-agency package of support that would be made available to the young person as possible... Furthermore the court would have had the option to impose a robust bail curfew. Alas, it made no difference. His remand was continued. Moreover, the next Court date is now not scheduled until August 2020 and no trial date has been set. I am deeply concerned about the impact upon this

young man's well-being and how this decision interacts with his human rights" (Respondent from a local authority).

It would appear that COVID-19 has exacerbated existing challenges with delays to processes. In addition, two respondents reported an increase in the use of recorded police warnings and another in young people being held in custody for COVID-19 related offences (see below for further on this). In respect of EEI, in one area challenges in ensuring children and parents knew of a charge, referral to EEI, had access to information and were able to participate in decision-making were cited as problematic, with the same issues with participation noted in respect of Care and Risk Management processes in another area. A further area cited delays in undertaking diversion from prosecution and another in undertaking diversion work. A further respondent highlighted that if technological issues could be addressed, changes could potentially bring positive approaches such as the use of virtual courts and hearings:

"Virtual Court Hearings are a new development too. As long as legal representation is provided, I think these have the potential to be a positive development. For some time I have bemoaned how depressing the Custody Court is in any large Sheriffdom on a Monday morning. Young people go to Court as a social activity to see friends appear, hang out, do deals, noise people up etc. If a lot of the background noise can be taken away through Virtual Hearings and the spectacle removed I think this could help children and young people to focus on more healthy social pursuits"
(Respondent from a local authority).

Participants were asked about supports for children and young people **leaving secure care and custody**, although only a few responses were received which may reflect the low numbers of children currently experiencing such transitions. It would appear that issues that could ordinarily be challenging - such as release from court, which while positive, impacts on planning support packages and accessing suitable accommodation quickly - continue and are even more challenging in the current context. Moreover, matters that would ordinarily be more straightforward, such as ensuring items such as clothing, furniture etc are available; travel home/meet at the gate; and opportunities for home leave/mobility prior to returning to the community, are more problematic owing to COVID-19 restrictions. Two respondents cited regular and positive contact with, and information sharing by, Young Offender Institution (YOI) staff and the high response rate to the use of the Email a Prisoner resource. Creative approaches to accommodation, ensuring practical support is available such as phones, care/liberation packages, clothing, furniture and utilities for accommodation, as well as things to support people to stay at home were cited as important, with further information contained in the case studies below.

Experience of restrictions

Overall children and young people were reported to have **complied well** with the restrictions associated with COVID-19 such as lockdown and physical distancing. However as time has progressed, it has been reported that children and young people have found the restrictions more challenging, with boredom, isolation and understanding the importance of restrictions and their rationale cited. Overall practitioners reported that the **approach from Police Scotland** had been appropriate and cited beneficial help and support to partners. Numerous respondents mentioned interactive, communicative and encouraging as opposed to enforcement or punitive responses being adopted. However, some individual cases were highlighted of children and young people being made subject to Fixed Penalty Notices with the implications this brings and of carers threatened with being made subject to such measures, which have been raised with Police Scotland locally and nationally. Another cited:

"We are having a bit of a spike in ASB and a few police reports have been issued where all have been charged as due to the pandemic charging and questioning all in person was not possible"
(Respondent from a local authority).

The use of EEI in responding to offending has also varied across areas but so too has the operation of EEI processes. Some examples of **wider criminalisation** issues were shared such as children in residential childcare being charged when previously this would have been managed differently; parental contact of the police when situations in the home escalate; and the visibility of children and young people meaning they were more likely to come to the attention of services. In addition, it was reported that reluctance to comply with restrictions has at times impacted on placement decisions and resulted in questioning of the suitability of placement types and suggestions that more restrictive placements were needed. As with the responses from children and young people, practitioners report that there have been some concerns from young people about the fear of leaving their home even for legitimate reasons as this may bring them into contact with the police.

What is working to support children and young people?

Keeping in **contact, communicating with and continuing to support** children and young people was cited as being of the utmost importance in the current situation:

“I believe the young people and parents appreciate weekly contact from me, this is just a welfare check in and they’re, most of the time, happy to chat with me. I enquire after their health, safety, mental wellbeing, family relationships and finances. Some of them are asking questions or like to discuss the coronavirus, they seem interested and wanting information about it” (Respondent from a third sector organisation)

“Weekly check - ins via video or audio chat. Just listening to what the young person has to say or what they are thinking about at the time. I think it just helps to know that there is someone there and the option is there if they want to talk about anything” (Respondent from a third sector organisation)

“Regular contact and encouragement, and being able to explain that we are all in the same boat regarding the difficulties about having to stay in and social distance. To be able to explain to families that the difficulties that they may be experiencing are common (trying to get Young People to stay in etc.) and that they are not alone in facing this experience as they may feel isolated” (Respondent from a third sector organisation)

A range of **creative methods** were cited as being utilised, alongside the importance of an individualised approach and providing the level and type of support as necessary. In addition to phone contact, various technological platforms are being utilised, to keep in touch but also to run activities, competitions, games, eLearning/digital awards and projects. This ability to provide light-hearted and fun support has been identified as particularly important for young people’s morale, wellbeing and mental health. Doorstep, garden or home visits and walks maintaining physical distancing and utilising PPE as appropriate have been important in supporting face-to-face contact and connection. Such contact has been particularly important for more isolated children, and where there are concerns for children’s welfare and wellbeing, or less monitoring and support is available. The benefits of such contacts for children and young people have been clearly evident to practitioners. There have also been creative methods utilised to ensure children who are residing away from family can maintain contact. The case studies below provide further examples of such practice.

The provision of **practical support** has been important, as has signposting and support to **access other services**. Contactless drop-offs of food and supplies; provision of mobile phone credit and data; fuel; phones, tablets and laptops; clothing; monies; and accessing benefit agencies and charitable funding has been particularly crucial given the issues identified above. The provision of information, including on

COVID-19 and tips on staying safe and well, was cited. Participants also reported sending personalised parcels to young people including vouchers for supermarkets, phone top up, or Amazon; magazines, activity and colouring books; activities and worksheets which could be completed independently or virtually with workers have also proved effective in people staying connected, addressing social isolation and ensuring children and young people continue to feel cared for:

“As I’ve mentioned before there are issues around food security, fuel poverty and boredom and if we can do small things in the meantime to address these issues it’s seen as a big help”
(Respondent from a third sector organisation).

Further examples are provided in the case studies below.

Participants stressed the crucial importance of **working with partners** and teams around the child, with positive reports of working across teams within services and across sectors having been shared. This includes sharing information, communication, offering and joining up support to young people and families but also to each other, joined up approaches and trying new approaches. Work with other social work teams, police, education, housing, mental health services, drug and alcohol supports and third sector agencies was cited.

The **dedication of staff, availability, consistency and responsivity** was cited as being crucial in the ability to support children and young people during this time:

“Dedication of staff who are desperate to see young people and visit them brings real benefits”
(Respondent from a third sector organisation).

As such the importance of **supporting staff** and maintaining staff morale was highlighted.

Conclusions

The above information has provided an overview of the responses of children and young people who are currently or have previously been in contact with the youth justice system and practitioners working within the youth justice system to a series of questions posed, with the limitations noted. In total, 48 responses were received from children and young people, with findings from another organisation who had undertaken their own research with a further 22 children questions incorporated where relevant. Thirty six responses were received from practitioners covering 19 local authority areas (almost 60% of Scottish local authorities), with almost three quarters of respondents social work staff and the remainder from third sector organisations. The findings enhance our understanding of the impact of COVID-19 and associated restrictions on these groups.

Across both children and young people and practitioners, the biggest issues reported to be facing children and young people in the justice system are isolation and lack of contact with others. This is in spite of almost all children and young people reporting they have been able to stay in touch with family and friends and many reporting contact with services and supports. Practitioners have developed a variety of welcomed and creative methods to sustain contact, communicate with and continue to support children, young people and their families, the benefits of which are clear. However, the challenges in doing so and particularly understanding what was really going on and how people are managing, along with the difficulties of intervening prior to crisis point being reached, have been highlighted. Such impacts of complying and living with the new restrictions have significantly impacted on children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing across participant groups. While the [Scottish Government’s Route map for moving out of lockdown](#) will see the easing of some restrictions, which these findings would suggest will be welcomed by children and young people, the impact will be understandably gradual and is unlikely to

be universally experienced by all children, young people and their families. In addition, we need to be prepared that the challenging circumstances and the mental health and wellbeing difficulties that COVID-19 has brought or exacerbated may not reduce as Scotland progresses out of lockdown. This reiterates the fundamental importance of practitioners maintaining efforts to keep in touch with children, young people and their families and continuing to provide individualised practical and emotional support. In addition, support to maintain contact with others such as family and friends, including through the provision of devices and the necessary resources to do so, will remain important.

Similarly, boredom, lack of activity and been stuck at home were reported across all participant groups to be significant issues for children and young people in complying with restrictions. As a result, issues in terms of children's and young people's mental health, family conflict, breakdown of home circumstances, substance use and the risks associated were noted. Conversely, the provision of practical support to address basic needs; materials that communicate care; activities to stay busy, including education, training and employment; and access to technology and devices was highlighted as crucial and should continue. In providing such support, the dedication of staff, support to staff and the importance of a partnership approach has been identified as key. Support to families will remain important if the identified potential risks to children are to be avoided, as will the utilisation of [child protection](#) processes as necessary to support and safeguard these children.

The challenges of complying with COVID-19 restrictions but also the positive efforts of most children and young people to do so is another key finding. Children and young people reported that some restrictions were more challenging than others, such as lockdown compared with physical distancing. Likewise, there was suggestion from some practitioners that as time has progressed this has become more difficult, with the benefits of phased reductions of restrictions likely to be particularly felt by respondents but also likely to bring new challenges. It would also appear that there are some children and young people for whom the impact of COVID-19 and associated restrictions has been even more significant, often exacerbating previous experiences and issues such as addictions issues, mental health concerns, lack of support, and care experience, as well as for those with their own children, or without/with insecure accommodation. Particular attention and support to the needs of these children and young people is key.

Overall the findings would suggest that children and young people have had limited contact with the police during this time and that practitioners have largely found the responses by police have been appropriate. It is concerning that some children and young people have reported fear of, and making active efforts to avoid, the police and that a similar number of children and young people who had had contact with the police reported that this had been fair and appropriate as those who had advised this had been a negative experience. This may be owing to the nature of this contact (i.e. resulting in charge, fixed penalty notice or arrest) but the finding that some children and young people reported feeling targeted by the police is an important one. As identified in the [Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime](#), the Police have a key role as gatekeepers to the youth justice system and when children are identified as "usual suspects", as the children and young people in this piece reported feeling, they can become drawn into a cycle of contact with the system, with the negative impacts and outcomes this brings, not least in inhibiting desistance and accelerating transitions into the adult justice system. Moreover, the police have a fundamental role in supporting and safeguarding children and young people, made even more important when we know children and young people involved in a pattern of offending, or who are involved in more serious offences, are almost always our most vulnerable, victimised and traumatised. Therefore, the longer-term consequences of negative experiences with the police as reported have further significance. Furthermore, some practice issues have been highlighted by practitioners which have been raised with Police Scotland locally and nationally.

The risks of non-compliance with associated restrictions have however been highlighted as broader than this, for example in terms of wider criminalisation and placement decisions, the risks of which are well

established. It is vital that everyone involved in supporting children and young people adopts a measured, rational position when responding to those who are struggling with the emotional and practical challenges of restrictions. Developing clear plans for responses and contingency plans in conjunction with children, families, and team around the child, so that there are agreed responses with everyone in agreement about their roles and responsibilities within, including the child, is important. Methods to promote consistency of, and rights-based, approaches are important and all practitioners should understand the legislative basis for all decision-making, including [admission to secure care](#) and that deprivation of a child's liberty should be the [last resort](#) if children's rights are to be upheld.

The impact of changes to the operation and processes of the justice system were also mentioned by children, young people and practitioners with these impacts evident in both the short and longer-term. In attempting to mitigate these affects, the monitoring of changes to offence types, responses and ensuring where possible for all offending by children and young people, a response that does not resort to judicial process (such as through EEI and diversion from prosecution) is utilised remains crucial, meaning such processes, supports and timely interventions need to continue to be available. The impact of changes and delays to process, particularly the Children's Hearings System and court, for children and young people cannot be underestimated and should be minimised as far as possible.

Upholding children's rights to participation in youth justice processes are also key. In such uncertainty, the provision of information and support, including to broker the support of other services, remains important. In addition, particular attention should be paid to the experiences of children and young people in and leaving secure care and custody. These findings further support reducing the number of children and young people entering custody and the recent recommendations of the [Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland](#) that the Scottish Government ensure all children detained in YOIs are individually assessed for release using a human rights-based approach, and children in secure care centres should also have their situation reviewed, allowing a rights-based assessment of whether detention continues to be in their best interests. They also support understanding of the physical, emotional and psychological effects of the pandemic on children and young people and the particular recommendations of the [UN Committee on the Rights of the Child](#) on what governments should do to take a children's rights-based approach to the crisis in respect of protecting children in detention and in breach of government rules.

CYCJ will continue to offer practitioners the support they need to continue to work with children, young people and their families at this time. We will continue to provide our practitioner support service; host regular opportunities for practitioners to meet virtually and share practice, such as WSA leads; forums including on EEI, diversion from prosecution and risk formulation; and update our paper on [Practice implications of Coronavirus for children in conflict with the law](#) and list of websites and resources on [COVID-19: Guidance on supporting young people in conflict with the law](#). CYCJ would also like to undertake a more detailed piece of research to capture the impact of COVID-19 on those involved with the youth justice system, particularly given the changes to such impacts already evident, and the longer-term implications for the system as a whole. We will continue to assess where else we can offer support.

Practice examples

As well as responding to the questions posed, WSA leads, EEI practitioners and NYJAG members were given the opportunity to share short case study examples on how their agency is responding to, and supporting children, young people and families during, COVID-19 for inclusion in this report. The information below is as written and shared by practitioners from local authorities and third sector organisations.

Perth and Kinross Council

In Perth and Kinross, staff in the WSA team have been utilising creative methods to maintain contact with children and young people. We have increasingly utilised technology with Google Duo used for video calls, with children and young people phoned each week, with texts and email used too. In recognition of digital exclusion, we have utilised our Social Isolation Strategy to support children and young people to access laptops/mobile phone and credit/data. In doing so, we have encouraged engagement via Twitter and Facebook. Posts include daily music challenges, pictures of what young people and staff have been up to during lockdown, latest information and support on Covid 19, quizzes, talent and photography competitions etc. This remote support has enabled one young person to access a Level 2 Health and Hygiene qualification due to his work being closed and apprenticeship being put on hold. We have also sent things to young people to show we care and stay connected such as Amazon gift vouchers, including using our C200 fund which is a fund for care experienced young people which staff can voluntarily contribute directly from their salary towards. We have not stopped physical contact with young people, utilising physical distancing measures to for example drop off food to young people in need and helping one young person move from a hostel to a tenancy, with this contact with familiar staff helpful for young people's mental health and wellbeing, particularly where contact with the team is usually weekly. We have also been able to engage young people who we struggled to previously, including one young person who we were able to support to complete a CV and in job hunting. Working with partners has been crucial and in particular we have worked closely with the community police, who are using a restorative approach to support young people who are finding the COVID-19 restrictions more challenging or are needing additional support. In recognition of the importance of caring for staff during this time, we communicate daily on Microsoft Teams and run weekly quizzes to keep morale up.

East Ayrshire Council

East Ayrshire social work recognise the importance of supporting the children and their families during this period of restrictions and limitations in place due to COVID-19. There has been a clear recognition and understanding that the emotional and psychological health of these children will be impacted and that maintaining relationships and contact is crucial to the well-being of these children and young people. Creative methods to support some of the most vulnerable children and young people across different age groups have included:

- Using Joe Wicks to create exercise sessions on digital platforms to do with children, young people and their families but also as part of virtual family contacts.
- For younger children that struggle to grasp the importance of physical distancing or the required 2m separation, practitioners have been using hula hoops as a creative way of physically demonstrating the space that needs to be kept, utilising play to help the children adhere to the restrictions.
- Creating film challenges between practitioners and their young people, involving choosing a film and critically evaluating a theme which both then discuss at their next virtual session. An example was of the role of females in Disney animation Mulan.
- Providing support to those young people who are particularly vulnerable or living on their own, including to cook at home together using PPE, often involving a high level of daily visits and contact during the day and night.
- Liaising with others parts of the local authority to access vehicles that can allow the practitioners to maintain physical distancing whilst picking up and driving young people to attend important appointments such as for mental health, pre-natal care and crucially pick up any young people being released from custody and bringing them home.
- East Ayrshire Justice services are providing COVID-19 packs for individuals returning to the community. This includes a holdall with a folder with information about COVID-9 and safe

practices/telephone numbers or contact details for a number of local services; soap and hygiene/sanitary products; hand gel; anti-bacterial spray; food; and activities such as crossword/word search book. Arrangements are made for a food parcel to be delivered and a home visit is completed for everyone, with information provided on rights to voluntary throughcare.

As the way of working provides limited contact as teams are split to provide rotational cover 1 week in three, then contact with colleagues is also significantly reduced. Some practitioners live alone and the only people they see will be colleagues in the office. Opportunities to have fun within the same limitations as their work with young people but across the teams is supporting morale. In addition testing is in place such that practitioners can be tested within 72 hours to reduce time off and worry as to whether they have COVID-19 or not. The dedication and resilience of the practitioners has been commended and also of the children and young people in how they are responding and managing these difficult times.

Aberdeen City Council

The [youth team in Aberdeen](#) have changed their strategy on use of social media to maximise engagement with young people during COVID-19 and build and maintain a human connection. On March 2, just before the lockdown, the Youth Teams Facebook page had 61 followers; this has increased to 163 on May 20, 2020. The page has regular posts to inform and entertain young people, ranging from video clips from the Chief Social Work Officer, Virtual Head Teacher and one of the Children's Rights Development Assistants, to TikToks demonstrating a therapy idea using items that they think the young people will have available in the home. Staff have listened and responded to what young people tell us they need. For example, young people reported they didn't always know who was answering their comments or who they were taking to online; now workers have their pictures on the page and sign off every post and comment. In addition, the provision of financial supports and food parcels has been vital for many young people. Food parcels contain meals made by staff as we all know the value of a homemade meal to make us feel cared for and the team do this to show the young people that that they are cared for even when they can't be seen in the usual way. This is supported by TikTok videos to show the recipes they have made, which the young people have enjoyed and thanked workers for, with workers taking their feedback on board and ensuring the parcels only contain the meals the young people like.

The Barnardo's RAFT service in Aberdeen has risen to the challenges of the lockdown conditions to maintain contact and engagement with their young people and families. RAFT's has continued to ensure at least weekly face-to-face contact with their young people and families. PPE has been used to allow workers to visit homes, undertake physical distancing walks as well as the occasional kick about in back gardens. However brief the level of contact, the positive impact on young people is obvious in their reaction and continued engagement rates. Young people have responded well to the use of social media and we continue to be surprised by how well so many have adjusted to the current challenges. Workers have used a wide range of forums to engage young people remotely, such as FaceTime and WhatsApp, with examples of young people who weren't engaging pre-lockdown starting to engage, preferring the use of technology to communicate than face to face meetings.

Barnardo's services in Stirling and Clackmannanshire

Barnardo's delivers a range of services across Stirling and Clackmannanshire and the work is supported by volunteers. Services include Youth and Adult justice, substance service and an under 12's service. On March 18, following government instruction Barnardo's took the decision to close their premises, instructing all staff to work from home. Detailed guidance was circulated to all social work departments and relevant external agencies to advise them of the plans to continue to support families in crisis, along with contact details for all managers and a secure email address to ensure confidential information can continued to be shared safely. For every young person/family open to each of the services, an

assessment was completed, to assess risk, identify agreed means of contact and the level of support required during these challenging times. This is reviewed weekly. In addition to creative approaches to maintaining contact with children and young people and the undertaking of support sessions, activities and games, Barnardo's staff have had a pivotal role in directly providing or in brokering access to practical support. The financial difficulties of families have been exacerbated by COVID-19, enhancing the challenges of day-to-day living and impact on physical and mental health, wellbeing and relationships. Support has included accessing Barnardo's funds, Scottish Government Emergency Support Payments, foodbanks and other community based supports. Such support has enabled the provision of:

- Food
- Health and hygiene products including female sanitary products
- Fuel
- Clothing and shoes
- I pads – to enable young people to connect and complete school work
- Mobile phones – to enable continued contact with young people and families
- Mental health and wellbeing packs, including lockdown activities, games, and toys; baking and craft materials; school supplies; and beauty products
- Easter and birthday gifts to communicate care and help children celebrate these milestones
- Computer games – to help keep young people entertained

Rossie Young People's Trust

Young people from Rossie have contributed to a local initiative coordinated by Voluntary Action Angus where paper [compassion goodie bags](#) were made up to be provided to people in the local community. This has included the local Doctor's surgery, Dentist, Sheltered Housing complexes, [Montrose Community Trust](#), young people's family and friends, and to the neighbours of staff who are vulnerable or self-isolating. The bags contained brownies, arts and crafts, badges and rainbows made by the children and young people at Rossie. The young people have also written lovely letters to go in with the compassion goody bag to brighten up the recipient's day and they have enjoyed receiving letters back. On National Nurses Day goody bags were also sent to Fordmill Nursing home in Montrose, Arbroath MIU and Springfield dentist to say "thank you" for all their hard work. In addition, for National Mental Health week, young people added information on various helplines to the bags. Supported by staff from care, education and catering, our young people have also made batches of lentil soup, spaghetti bolognese, bread, rolls and tray bakes to be distributed by Volunteer Action Angus to local people in need.

Rossie have also won the cycling friendly schools award, which particular given the current pandemic is a great achievement. They have shared these inspiring pictures;



Appendix 1

Topic Guide: Experiences of COVID-19 for children and young people in contact with youth justice services

This topic guide has been created to capture the views of children and young people who are in contact with youth justice services or with previous experience of the youth justice system on COVID-19. It focuses on experiences of lockdown, access to services and support, and justice specific issues and experiences. It has been compiled by the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice (CYCJ) based on issues that have been highlighted to us by practitioners and the issues raised and questions developed by the young people of Youth Just Us, the steering group behind the Staf and CYCJ Youth Justice Voices project. It is intended as a guide for practitioners to use in conversation with young people.

We are keen to hear what children and young people with justice experience think, and to share this information with others. We are aware that, although there are many similar surveys taking place at this time, there is currently a gap in knowledge about the specific experiences of children and young people supported by youth justice services and with youth justice experience. We are very conscious of the pressure that is currently on children, young people and practitioners and how busy people are; however, we believe it is important that these children and young people are heard.

We intend to publish these findings in a CYCJ report, and include them in an Alternative Child Rights Impact Assessment about coronavirus, which is being organised by the Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland. All responses will be anonymised in any reporting and only CYCJ staff will have access to the specific information shared.

Using the topic guides

We would like you to use these resources as prompts to guide conversation between you and the child/young person. The intention is that they are used flexibly based on what children and young people are most interested or concerned about and a manner that suits them best. There are three slightly different topic guides for children in the community, in secure care and in HMP&YOI Polmont. However, you may want to ask questions from each list depending on specific experiences.

We would appreciate if you could record information anonymously for each conversation using the template below (or another format that may work for you) and share this with CYCJ by **May 26, 2020**. In doing so, we request that you explain the project to the child/young person using the information sheet below and verbally gain their consent and agreement to this information being shared anonymously with CYCJ. We will also assume that you have explained to the child or young person that if they tell you information that they, a member of their family or someone else is at immediate risk of being hurt or harmed, you have a duty to share this information. You can send any responses to us via cycj@strath.ac.uk or we can arrange to take these verbally over the phone by calling 0141 4448622.

Information for children and young people

The Centre for Youth & Criminal Justice want to hear from you!

We know that you don't often get a say in matters that affect you. We want to change this. Right now COVID-19 is affecting everyone and we want to hear about your views and experiences of lockdown, what has helped and what could be better. We'd like to be able to share this information with the people who can help to improve the support. This includes the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland, whose job it is to protect and promote children's rights.

We have asked the people that work with you to talk about COVID-19 and see if you would like to take part. If you are happy to do so, they will ask you some questions and write down your views, so they can share this with CYCJ. We will read all the information you and other young people give us and write about this in a short report. We will put the report on the CYCJ website and share it with people who can help make things better.

We don't need to know your name, but some details about you like your age and gender will help us compare if different people say different things. Apart from CYCJ, your worker will only share the information you give us with other people if you tell them that you, a member of your family or someone else is at immediate risk of being hurt or harmed, as they have a duty to share this information. CYCJ will not share your information and will keep this safe, making sure no one else can see it or can tell who it belongs to.

Your worker will support you, but other sources of support are:

[Breathing Space](#)

[Childline](#)

[NSPCC](#)

[SAMH](#)

[See Me – Pass the Badge](#)

If you are happy to participate, please let your worker know.

Thank you

Topic Guides

Children and Young People in the community

1. How have you found lockdown?
2. What has been difficult?
3. What has helped?
4. What do you think are the biggest issues affecting young people in contact with the justice systems during COVID-19?
5. How have you found social distancing?
6. Have you been able to keep in touch with friends, family and services? If so, how?

7. What would help you to keep in touch with people and involved in things?
8. What, if any, experiences have you had with the Police when out?
9. What can those around you do to help?

Children and Young People in HMPYOI Polmont

1. How have things been in HMPYOI Polmont since COVID-19?
2. What has been difficult?
3. What has helped?
4. What do you think are the biggest issues affecting young people in contact with the justice systems during COVID-19?
5. How have you found social distancing?
6. What do you think would help young people in Polmont at the moment to get through this time? Are there activities or things they could be given?
7. Have you been able to keep in touch with friends, family and services? If so, how?
8. What would help you to keep in touch with people and involved in things?
9. What can those around you do to help?
10. What do you think would help young people when they are released from Polmont during COVID-19? What supports and things should they receive? Are there things that have helped you in the past?

Children and Young People in Secure Care

1. How have things been in secure care since COVID-19?
2. What has been difficult?
3. What has helped?
4. What do you think are the biggest issues affecting young people in contact with the care and justice systems during COVID-19?
5. How have you found social distancing?
6. What do you think would help young people in secure care at the moment to get through this time? Are there activities or things they could be given?

7. Have you been able to keep in touch with friends, family and services? If so how?
8. What would help you to keep in touch with people and involved in things?
9. What can those around you do to help?
10. What do you think would help young people when they leave secure care during COVID-19? What supports and things should they receive? Are there things that have helped you in the past?

Template for recording responses

Child/young person's information:

Age: Gender: Setting: Community/HMPYOI Polmont/Secure Care

Experience of the youth justice system: Current/Previous

Responses to topic guide (as applicable):

How have you found lockdown/things been?	What has been difficult?	What has helped?	Biggest issues?	How have you found social distancing?	What would help in you get through?	Have you been able to keep in touch?	What would help to keep in touch?	Police experiences	What would help?	Help when going back to the community