



# Taking Account of Maturity

## A Guide for Probation Practitioners

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**T2A**  
TRANSITION TO  
ADULTHOOD

# Who has produced this guide

## UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

The Institute of Applied Social Studies **IASS** at the University of Birmingham is an internationally leading centre for research, teaching and learning. Its research seeks to explore how policy and practice can contribute to making a difference to people's lives – particularly those who may face disadvantage or social exclusion. The Institute draws together expertise from across the fields of social policy, social work and community justice and has extensive experience of undertaking commissioned research for a wide range of funders including Government departments, charitable trusts and third sector organisations.

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The Barrow Cadbury Trust is an independent, charitable foundation, committed to supporting vulnerable and marginalised people in society.

The Trust provides grants to grassroots voluntary and community groups working in deprived communities in the UK, with a focus on Birmingham and the Black Country. It also works with researchers, think tanks and government, often in partnership with other grant-makers, seeking to overcome the structural barriers to a more just and equal society.

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The Transition to Adulthood Alliance [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk) is a coalition of 12 criminal justice, health and youth organisations, which identifies and promotes more effective ways of working with young adults throughout the criminal justice process. Convened by the Barrow Cadbury Trust (BCT) since 2008, its membership encompasses Addaction, Catch22, the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, Clinks, the Criminal Justice Alliance, the Howard League for Penal Reform, Nacro, the Prince's Trust, the Prison Reform Trust, Revolving Doors Agency, the Young Foundation, and YoungMinds.



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The authors would like to thank London Probation Trust and Staffordshire and West Midlands Probation Trust for piloting this guide before publication.

## A word of caution

The Guide draws principally upon the available research concerning maturity as it relates to young adults who offend, research which is captured in Maturity, young adults and criminal justice: A literature review (Prior et al., 2011). The writers of the Guide are aware that there are other bodies of research about the development and behaviour of young adults that may have relevance and practitioners can of course apply such understandings alongside the more focussed content of the Guide.

# Part 1

## Introduction: Taking account of maturity: A guide for probation practitioners

### How to use this guide

#### THE GUIDE CONSISTS OF THREE SECTIONS:

- Part 1 INTRODUCTION** – Role of the guide and an exploration of the concept of maturity, why it is important and its implications for practice
- Part 2 THE GUIDE ITSELF** – A practical guide for practitioners to take account of maturity issues when undertaking OASys assessments of young adults
- Part 3 IMPLEMENTING THE ASSESSMENT** – Explaining the maturity assessment findings in pre-sentence reports (PSR) and then creating the subsequent sentence plan for the young adult

The guide is particularly aimed at supporting probation practitioners completing initial OASys assessments and PSRs on people aged 18-24.

# The concept of maturity and its implications for work with young adults in the Criminal Justice System

Since 2011, adult sentencing guidelines published by the Sentencing Council for England and Wales have stated that consideration should be given to 'lack of maturity' as a potential mitigating factor in sentencing decisions for adults. Furthermore, since early 2013, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), in its new Code of Conduct, has for the first time included maturity as a factor for consideration of culpability as part of its public interest test. These changes to policy and practice have significant implications for agencies working with young adult offenders throughout the criminal justice process, including the police, the CPS, the probation service, sentencers and practitioners delivering services.

## ***What is meant by the concept of maturity***

Maturity is a core, developmental concept which addresses the processes through which a young person achieves the status of adulthood. These developmental processes include the interactions between physical, intellectual, neurological, emotional and social development. Although physical and intellectual development is usually completed during adolescence, for some people emotional and social maturation can continue into the early to mid-twenties. Young adults often differ from each other because of their variable maturity and these differences often show themselves in the ways in which individuals manage the multiple transitions which are associated with the journey to adulthood.

» (The) concept of maturity is self-evidently not the same as biological age. Blowing out the candles on an 18th birthday cake does not magically transform anyone into a fully functioning and mature adult – even without the life disadvantages many young people in criminal justice have experienced (T2A, 2012:2)

## ***Why is this an important concept for criminal justice practitioners?***

In England and Wales, the age of 18 has been the point for determining whether criminal justice agencies respond with either juvenile or adult law. The T2A Alliance and others have argued that this sudden switch between youth and adult justice does not recognise variability of maturity nor that young people in the transition to adulthood require specific, tailored support through this process of change. Maturity can be influenced by life experiences and also individual characteristics. Individual young adults may develop skills and capacities associated with maturity in some areas of their lives more readily than in others. Furthermore, in terms of offending, not only does this age-group experience high levels of recidivism but it is also one when many individuals naturally stop offending (Prior et al., 2011). The late teenage years are the peak age for offending, but also the time when a young adult is most likely to desist from crime.

Young adulthood is a crucial opportunity for criminal justice agencies to get their interventions right. A responsive service that takes into account aspects of diversity should take youth into account to understand offending behaviour and then to plan and deliver appropriate interventions. For the 18-24 year old age group, the level of maturity of an individual, therefore, is a valid and significant factor to be considered when sentencing and subsequently working with them to deliver interventions which support their pathway to desistance.

By understanding how a young person's level of maturity has affected his or her offending behaviour, services can respond appropriately to help the individual develop personal and social resources, and by making the design and delivery of services more effective and encouraging a more engaged response from the young person themselves, breach and reconviction rates can be reduced.

» Despite making up only 9.5% cent of the population, young adults represent a third of people sentenced to custody each year and make up a third of the Probation service's caseload (T2A, 2012: 21)

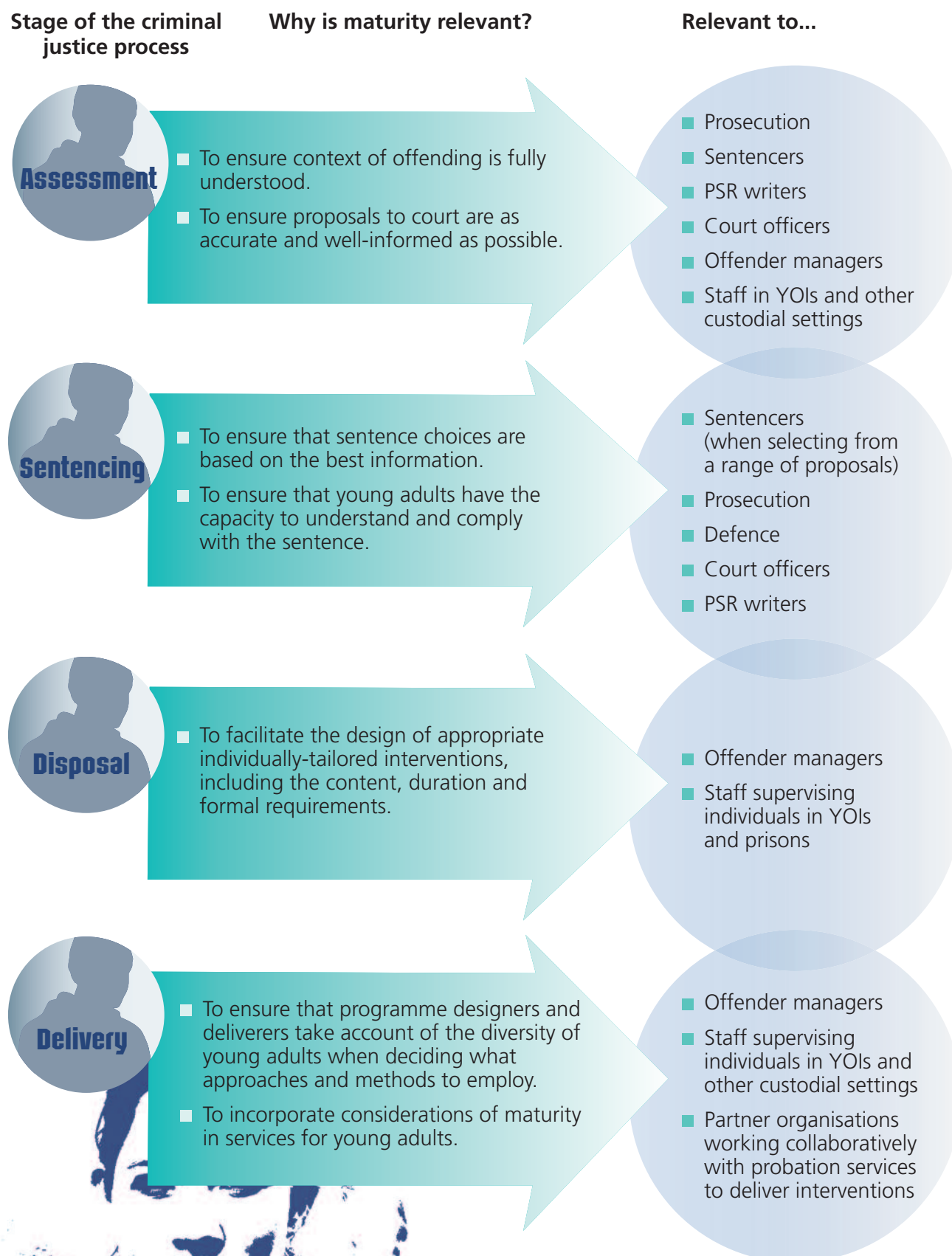




23% of those sentenced in Magistrates' Courts in 2010 were young adults aged 18-24...and 35% of those sentenced in the Crown Courts. (T2A, 2012: 21)

## When and how is maturity relevant in the criminal justice process?

Judgements about the level of maturity need to inform decisions about:



# Role of the guide

## ***Positively supporting young adults in the Criminal Justice process: the Guide***

Understanding maturity as it affects the behaviour of young adults will help probation service staff and other criminal justice professionals to make more rounded and informed assessments, provide programmes of intervention and engage individuals and make a positive contribution to their longer term desistance from offending.

## ***How can the Guide help practitioners to do this?***

The guide is intended to enable probation practitioners, using the OASys tool, to recognise and obtain evidence that a young adult's level of maturity may be relevant to their offending behaviour and form judgments about how this might inform the information analysis and proposals in PSRs and the initial sentence/supervision planning process.

The Guide equips assessors to reach a professional judgment about maturity, informed by up-to-date research and theory. The current knowledge base in this area supports the inclusion of an understanding of maturity within a holistic assessment of the individual.

The knowledge base is still developing and assessors should be aware that more needs to be known about maturity and how it is linked to other theoretical perspectives. For example, how is maturity influenced by family experiences, including the strength of attachments, by culture or by a variety of developmental difficulties such as learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autistic spectrum disorders, and traumatic brain injury. For these young adults, maturity may be significantly hindered or delayed. It is not within the scope of this guide to cover such difficulties in detail. Practitioners need to be aware of their potential influence and any indicators of possible undiagnosed developmental or learning difficulties should be referred for specialist assessment. Hence, this guide is not meant to be exhaustive and is likely to be superseded by new learning over time.

It should also be noted that currently there is not sufficient evidence to make definitive statements about the significance of gender differences or the influence of race and culture upon maturity.



The Guide therefore encourages an individualised approach which emphasises understanding the specific ‘lived experiences’ of each young adult. A psychosocial understanding is important for all young adults but may be especially relevant to young women and young adults from different racial and/or cultural backgrounds.

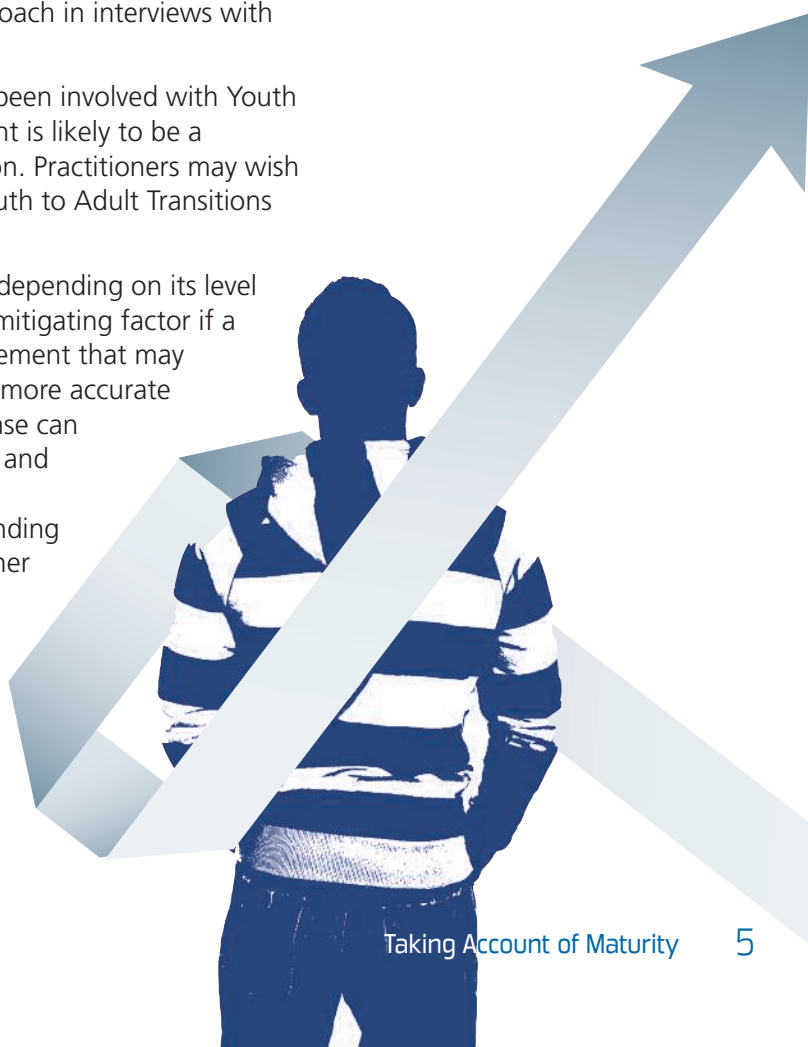
### **Using this Guide to support an OASys assessment**

As OASys is the core assessment process used in both prisons and community, it seemed most helpful to produce guidance that supports more effective use of that tool to make judgments about maturity. Linking the Guide to this specific process does, however, also raise some points for consideration:

- ✓ Sections of the OASys assessment may generate evidence that a young adult lacks maturity particularly in relation to his or her offending behaviour. As part of the professional judgment, the practitioner will need to bring together his/her assessment of the different aspects of the individual’s thinking and offending behaviour (and how these interact with each other) in order to develop a picture of the whole person and the behaviour in context. In general, the assessor is looking for patterns of behaviour and thinking and clusters of indicators which suggest such patterns.
- ✓ OASys is a risk-based assessment tool; this practice guide, however, seeks to stress the importance of not solely seeing 18-24 year olds as problematic, but seeing also their potential for growth and change. The Guide emphasises the importance of using this positive strengths based approach in interviews with young adults and sentence planning.
- ✓ For those offenders who have recently been involved with Youth Offending Services, the Asset assessment is likely to be a significant source of relevant information. Practitioners may wish to look at the Youth Justice Board’s ‘Youth to Adult Transitions Framework’ (YJB, 2012).

Practitioners should be aware that maturity, depending on its level of development, can be regarded as both a mitigating factor if a young adult lacks it, and sometimes as an element that may increase risk. On the whole it is likely that a more accurate understanding of maturity in an individual case can enhance the accuracy of the risk assessment and suggest effective ways of working with that individual to manage their risk. An understanding of maturity is also likely to help the practitioner to adopt methods and approaches which support positive engagement.

➤ **In a Com Res and T2A Poll, 69% of the public supported the idea that maturity should be taken into account in the sentencing of young adults. 81% of MPs agreed both groups ranked maturity as a more important factor for consideration than age.**  
(Com Res, Feb 2011)



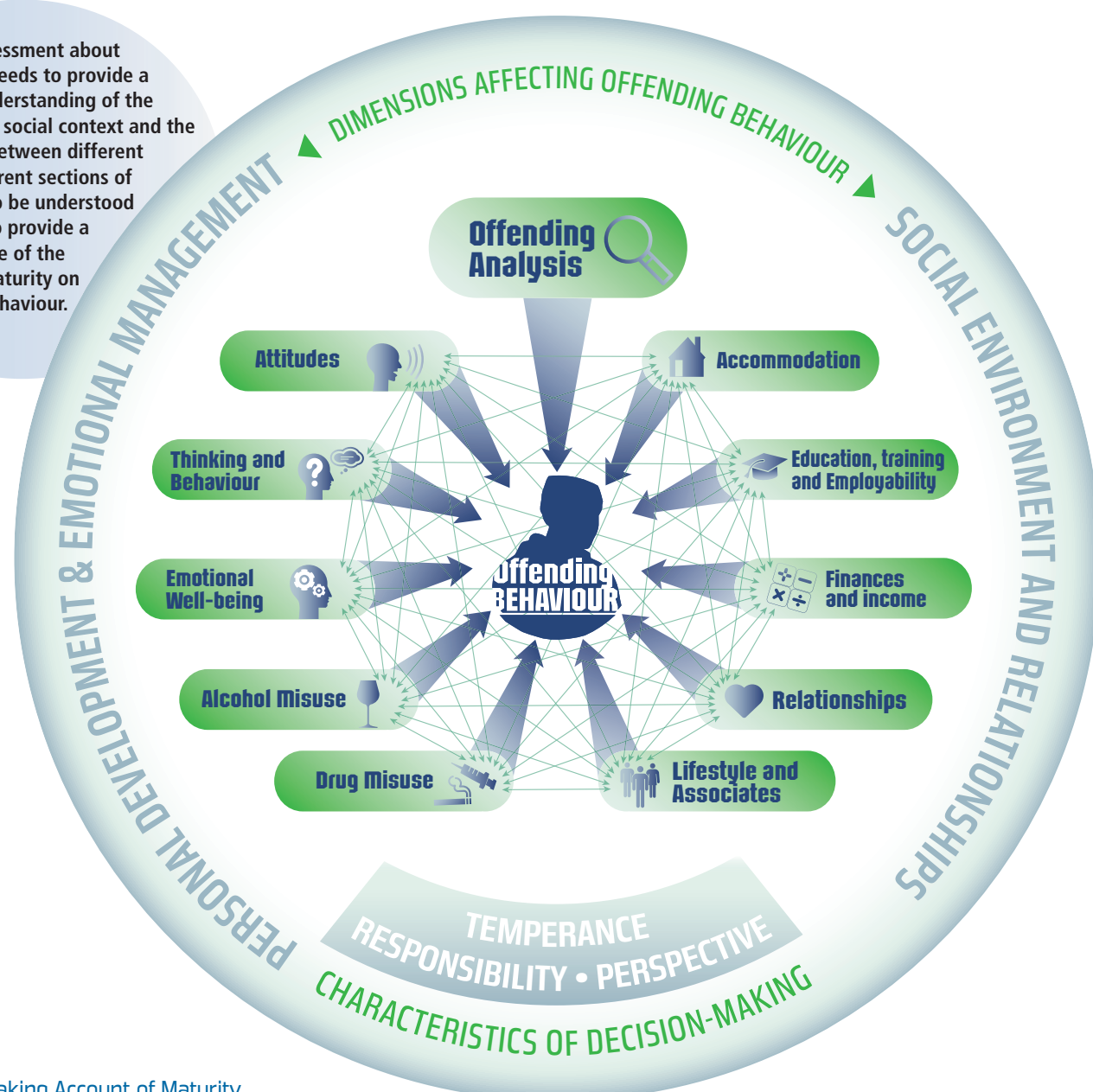
## What key dimensions of maturity in young adults are relevant to offending?

Judgments about levels of maturity will be based upon observations of how far along individuals are on their journeys to adulthood, the affect of influences around them and the choices they make. Such observations should be made in a consistent and systematic way as part of a rigorous assessment process but they are not precise measurements. Instead, informed judgments will be made in the context of what is known about the developmental characteristics of young adults drawn from the fields of neuroscience, psychology and criminology, the types of behaviour that young adults are more inclined to be involved in, and the demands of society through steadily increasing rights, responsibilities and expectations.

Although the focus on maturity and offending behaviour is a relatively new area of study (Prior et al., 2011), there are some identifiable dimensions that are helpful to understanding young adults' offending behaviour:

- How an individual makes decisions. Three key characteristics of decision-making have been identified: **temperance**, which is the ability to evaluate the consequences of different courses of action before making a decision to act in response to the assessment of a situation, to limit impulsivity and control aggressive responses and risk-taking; **responsibility**, the ability to act independently, be self-reliant and have a clear sense of personal identity and **perspective**, the ability to understand and consider the views of others before taking a decision to act and to understand the wider context in which the decision to act is made. Of these it is the element of temperance that is most likely to be underdeveloped in this age group (Prior et al., 2011: 10);
- A person's level of **personal development** in terms of the consistent application of higher order skills of emotional management, planning and control of impulses
- The impact of their **social environment** and **relationships** including family and peer relationships, their experience of education and employment, financial and social resources and the extent to which the person has been able to move towards a stable adult lifestyle; and
- These elements of course interact with each other and shape offending choices, the motives, circumstances, types and patterns of offending.

An assessment about maturity needs to provide a holistic understanding of the individual, their social context and the interaction between different elements. Different sections of OASys will need to be understood interactively to provide a robust picture of the influence of maturity on offending behaviour.










# Part 2

## Taking account of maturity as part of an OASys assessment

By implementing the process of taking account of maturity that follows as part of an OASys assessment, probation practitioners should be able to provide a more informed assessment and proposal for the courts, which may in turn lead to a more effective sentence. Each section of the table below includes suggested questions (in italics) followed by some analytical perspectives to help make sense of the information gathered and ways of exploring issues further. This process will be particularly relevant to OASys assessments of young adults aged 18-24, but may also be relevant to older offenders.

| <b>Relevant OASys section and significant components of maturity that may be identified</b>  | <b>Potential signs of a lack of maturity</b>   | <b>Additional considerations including signs of maturity</b>    |
|---|---|--|
|  <b>1 Offending Information</b><br><b>Social transitions to adulthood</b>                    | <p><i>Has this person experienced significant periods of time in custody or in care?</i></p> <p>If the answer is 'yes', you could explore further to see if those experiences have affected developmental maturity.</p>   | <p><i>This section concerns basic historical and factual information but it can, in a very limited way, provide evidence whether, in a particular case, care or custody is likely to have damaged or delayed maturity.</i></p>   |
|  <b>2 Analysis of offences</b><br><b>Overall psychosocial maturity</b>                       | <p><i>Does this person's offending tend to occur in groups, or in specific situations?</i></p> <p><i>Is the offending influenced by alcohol?</i></p> <p>If the answers tend towards 'yes', you may be seeing signs of poor impulse control and / or immature social networks.</p> | <p><i>Has the individual had opportunities to experience positive transitions?</i></p> <p><i>Are there significant gaps in the offending history?</i></p> <p>In looking at the history of all offending, you may begin to find and be able to explore circumstances when the young adult was able to resist/avoid offending.</p> |



## 2 Analysis of offences Contd.

*In their account of their offence(s) does the individual minimise their involvement, distance themselves from, or seek to avoid taking responsibility?*

If 'yes' to some or all of these questions it may suggest a reluctance to recognise consequences of offending, indicative of a lack of maturity.

*Has the offending behaviour begun to change?  
For example Is there more evidence of the person taking a planned approach?*

*Is the person more likely now to offend alone?*

If the answers here tend towards 'yes' these might be indicators that a lack of maturity, impulsivity and immature networks is less relevant.



## 3 Accommodation

**Social transitions to  
adulthood  
Planning**

*Is this person living independently, or in the family home?*

*Are they living in stable or unstable accommodation?*

*If lacking in independence, or if accommodation is unstable, why is this? Is this due to circumstances outside of their control, or their own behaviour and decision making?*

*What role do they play in their accommodation? Do they pay rent or contribute in other ways?*

Not having independent accommodation could be an indicator of a lack of planning for the future, or avoidance of adult responsibilities. It could allow the individual to remain embedded in immature social networks, or over-reliance on family members, reinforcing a lack of maturity in thinking.

Making steps towards stable living arrangements, independent of family of origin, could be a sign of developing maturity, particularly if those steps are planned. The reverse could of course be true for some young adults who want to leave home to live independently, but haven't really thought this through.

Even if this person is living at home they may be playing a mature role within the family by, for example, supporting the family's finances. They may be planning for a move from home that they currently can't afford.



#### 4 Education, training and Employability

*Social transitions to  
adulthood*

*Planning*

*Emotional Regulation  
and impulse control*

*How is a lack of engagement  
with education, or the adult  
world of work, affecting this  
person?*

*What kind of decisions is this  
individual making about  
education and training?*

*Has this person been  
disengaged from education  
/training/employment for a  
significant period of time?*

Answers to these questions  
might provide evidence of a lack  
of planning and emotional  
/impulsive decision-making  
about training and employment.

*Does this person have a  
significant learning difficulty?  
Is this person engaging in  
planned approaches to access  
training or employment?*

By the age of 18 most  
people's cognitive /  
intellectual abilities are  
fully developed. Learning  
difficulties are very significant  
for assessment, and should  
be separate from a  
consideration of maturity in  
decision making.

As with other sections,  
engaging in planned  
approaches to finding and  
maintaining employment  
could indicate developing  
maturity of judgment



#### 5 Financial Management and Income

*Impulse control*

*How is this person managing  
their finances?*

Large debts or impulsivity in  
money management e.g.  
spending all their income as  
soon as it is obtained might be  
indicative of a lack of maturity.

Good money management  
may indicate developing  
maturity.



#### 6 Relationships

*Emotional regulation*

*Impulse control*

*Does this individual have  
damaging or poor relationships?*

*Do they change intimate  
relationships regularly?*

*Are they dealing with any  
additional difficulties?*

Poor emotional regulation and  
impulse control may harm  
relationships and can be  
indicative of a lack of maturity  
and its influence on behaviour  
in relationships. Difficulties in  
relationships for other reasons  
may also impact on the young  
adult's opportunities for  
developing maturity.

*Has this person successfully  
established a stable adult  
relationship?*

*Have they experienced  
difficulties in their  
relationships that they have  
successfully dealt with?*

If answers tend towards  
'yes' in either case this may  
indicate increased maturity,  
although the nature of  
these relationships would  
need to be understood in  
more depth.

## Relevant OASys Section



## Potential signs of a lack of maturity



## Additional Considerations



### 7 Lifestyle and Associates

#### Social context

#### Impulse control

*Is there evidence of impulsivity in their response to the influence of criminal associates?*

*Is there evidence of impulsivity through engagement in risk taking activities?*

*Do they spend significant time with pro-criminal social groupings?*

If the answers tend to be 'yes' this may indicate a lack of maturity.

Maturity of judgment may also be affected by the social context influenced by who the person spends time with.

*Does this person play a leading role in a group?*

*Is there evidence of planned and purposeful offending?*

Answers that tend towards 'yes' may suggest mature, if anti-social, functioning, even if they are operating in an immature social context.



### 8 Drug Misuse

#### Impulse control

#### Planning

#### Motivation

*Is there a history of significant cannabis misuse and is this continuing?*

*Is their misuse of any drugs linked to pro-criminal social groupings?*

*What is their motivation to change drug-misusing behaviour?*

There is some evidence that cannabis use may delay maturity. Involvement with drug misusing groups may make the individual more prone to risk taking. Impulsive thinking and difficulties in planning as in thinking and behaviour may also reduce motivation to address substance misuse issues.

*Has this person decreased their use any illegal drug significantly?*

This may be an indicator of maturity developing and changes in this behaviour of itself can be a support to the development of increased maturity.



### 9 Alcohol Misuse

#### Impulse control

#### Planning

#### Motivation

*Is their alcohol misuse linked to pro-criminal social groupings?*

If the answers tend to be 'yes' this may be an indicator of immaturity and propensity for risk taking, as in **Lifestyle and Associates** and **Drug Misuse** above.

*Has this person changed their pattern of alcohol consumption, showing signs of more responsible use?*

There may be links here to the development of more stable personal relationships and perhaps less reliance upon more casual groupings.





## 9 Alcohol Misuse Contd.

*Impulse control*

*Planning*

*Motivation*

*Do they tend to binge drink?*

If the answers tend to be 'yes' this may be an indicator of immaturity and propensity for risk taking, as in Lifestyle and Associates and drug misuse above.

*Do they, for example, make judgements about when and how often to drink alcohol or balance the cost with other commitments they might have?*

*Is there evidence of the individual become less dependent upon alcohol in their social relationships?*

There may be links here to the development of more stable personal relationships and perhaps less reliance upon more casual groupings.



## 10 Emotional Well-being

*Emotional regulation*

*Impulse control*

*Transitions*

*Does this individual display poor emotional self-management?*

*Are their feelings and thinking in conflict?*

*How do they describe themselves (positively or negatively)?*

Poor emotional management and a failure to successfully integrate emotional and cognitive functioning may be indicative of a lack of maturity. If the person has yet to achieve a successful transition to adulthood this may impact on their attitude to themselves.

*In responding to challenging situations in their life has the young adult shown that they can recognise, stop and think about and then manage difficult feelings? Do they have coping strategies to fall back on in difficult emotional situations?*

There may be circumstances in which the individual has been able to demonstrate a capacity to resist the impulse to react negatively or where they have controlled themselves. For some this may be an indication of developing maturity that can be developed further in supervision.



## 11 Thinking and Behaviour

*Impulse control*

*Planning*

*Emotional regulation*

*This section of OASys is very important. It has the greatest range of questions related to the concept of temperance with links to impulsivity and thinking through consequences.*

*The questions in this part of the OASys tool, about impulsivity, temper control, problem solving skills and consequences, are all of direct relevance to evidencing a lack of maturity.*

Demonstrating an understanding of other people's points of view and concrete thinking will be less relevant to a judgement of maturity, perhaps apart from the very youngest in this age group, as they are likely to be developed by around the age of 18.

*Are their patterns of thinking and behaviour inconsistent, with some evidence of them being able to think less impulsively on occasions?*

It is worth considering, particularly for individuals at the higher end of the age range, to what extent the patterns of thinking and behaviour are evidence of a lack of maturity and to what extent they are habits that have become embedded. In other words has the young adult become used to behaving in particular ways, even though maturity has developed.



## 12 Attitudes

*Social context*

*Impulse control*

*Does this person have pro-criminal and negative attitudes towards their community?*

*Do they have a history of poor compliance with court orders and statutory services?*

These may be evidence of a lack of maturity, particularly if rooted in an immature and pro-criminal social context.

Poor compliance may be evidence of impulsivity.

*Are there examples of times when this person has complied and/or responded positively to services provided? Do they express positive attitudes to any specific people or agencies?*

These may suggest developing maturity.

# Part 3

## Implementing the assessment

### Improving PSRs and recommendations to sentencers

Developing an understanding of maturity by using the process in Part 2 can enhance the quality and helpfulness of the PSR. This section describes how that can have a positive impact on assessments, proposals and sentence-planning, which can result in a better-informed decision-making process and a more effective sentence.



#### **Assessment**

Understanding maturity can...

- ☒ Inform the offence analysis, suggesting how psychological immaturity interacts with social contexts to make offending more likely.
- ☒ Inform risk assessment and defensible decision making, by improving the analysis of the evidence base for judgements being made.
- ☒ Help to identify specific evidence which supports, or rejects, a finding that a lack of maturity is likely to be relevant to this person's offending.
- ☒ Inform a discussion, probably in the Offender Assessment of the PSR, about specific aspects of maturity relevant to the individual rather than labelling the person as immature. Help highlight the specific needs of individuals who have not yet developed full maturity and support a realistic approach to issues of compliance and the kinds of order that could help the individual participate successfully in the supervision process.
- ☒ Encourage a positive approach to those aspects of 'youthfulness' which could otherwise be framed as potential risk factors and obstacles to compliance.



## Proposals

Taking account of maturity in proposals to the court can...

- ☒ Inform your argument for specific interventions that support developing maturity
- ☒ Highlight the interactive nature of psychosocial maturity and produce proposals that support the development of successful transitions and the development of positive personal and social resources
- ☒ Argue for specific referral to appropriate services
- ☒ Explain explicitly the logic underlying the proposed intervention(s).



## Making the Pre-Sentence Report more effective

Communicating an assessment which recognises the significance of maturity and encourages sentencers to take this into account in a way which is both constructive as well as realistic. To ensure this happens, the PSR-writer should...

- ☒ Consider the language being used. It may be better to avoid unhelpful use of jargon like 'temperance' so that both the court and the young adult can understand the report.
- ☒ Be clear if there is the rationale for proposing supervision (sometimes as an alternative to a short custodial sentence) by pointing out that the supervisory relationship can potentially offer a role model/attachment figure.
- ☒ Think about how many hours (eg of Unpaid Work) in a community sentence might be appropriate for individual young adults, the type of activity required and how requirements are explained.
- ☒ Highlight the potential impact of custody with reference to the specific social context faced by the young adult. Research suggests that a custodial sentence can delay or damage the developmental process and embed immature patterns of behaviour. In custody, opportunities to develop capacities to exercise control, solve problems and to make independent choices and decisions can be more limited than in the community.
- ☒ Avoid proposals that have too many requirements and make sure the right balance is proposed. Although the court will want to ensure that the sentence is sufficiently demanding, they will be assisted by a professional assessment which explains how the individual's level of maturity affects their ability to comply and benefit from the requirements that may be considered. It is important to address the elements that actually fit with your assessment of their behaviour in context. In some cases, for example, arguments could be made for cognitive-behavioural programmes which can address aspects of planning and impulse control.



## Looking ahead to sentence planning

Young adults are more likely than other age groups to breach community sentences. Below are some steps you can take, during sentence-planning and in the very early stages of supervision, to engage the individual and encourage constructive compliance.

Sentence plans for young adults should build on the strengths of this age group, pay attention to encouraging compliance, take account of and be relevant to the social context and recognise the significance of worker influence to effective outcomes. The aim should be to support the maturation process and development of a pro-social identity, paying particular attention to addressing psycho-social maturity. Such considerations are appropriate whether practitioners are supervising young adults in the community or working with them in custody.



### ***Build on young adults' strengths by...***

- ☒ Harnessing the energy and potential enthusiasm among this age group;
- ☒ Designing interventions that pay as much attention the individual's wider real life experiences as to their presenting problems;
- ☒ Making the most of the greater potential for change amongst those whose thinking and lifestyle is less embedded;
- ☒ Working with individuals to set relevant achievable goals which provide opportunities for praise, developing and sustaining optimism; and
- ☒ Recognising that developing brains are moulded by experience and helping this age group access and make the most of pro-social contexts.



### ***Encourage compliance by...***

- ☒ Setting clear but realistic boundaries and more support to help individuals work within them, recognising that those individuals at the younger end of this age group may have less capacity for planning and their lifestyles are more likely to be 'chaotic';
- ☒ Making sentences modular, with short-term intermediate outcomes and milestones that are more quickly reached by young adults, which may suit some who show short-term thinking;
- ☒ Providing clear and simple instructions and not overloading with too much detail and too many instructions at one time;
- ☒ Being aware of the young adult's specific needs or learning styles that may hinder their response to generic, adult, individual or group interventions; and
- ☒ Being flexible and creative in one-to-one sessions with individuals, adjusting the approach and materials to keep an individual actively engaged in the process.



### ***Develop conditions to support desistance by...***



Employing multi-disciplinary approaches, being specific about what appropriate services are available, taking account of ease of access and relevance to this age group. It is important to recognise the specific needs of young adults in terms of establishing stability in their accommodation, employment and family relationships;



Making links with local colleges and finding out about local employment opportunities to inform realistic discussions with young adults that explore their aspirations and begin to help them make decisions about their future;



Developing the individual's skills and confidence to make use of local services and resources; and



Incorporating a family dimension, recognising that this age group may have a different relationship with their family of origin than older offenders who have formed their own family groups, many of whom may be parents themselves.



### ***Maximise the practitioner's influence by...***



Demonstrating professional and personal commitment to the individual;



Being alert to positive behaviour and change which are opportunities to reinforce their developing pro-social identity;



Collaborating with them when establishing clear boundaries and to identify mutual expectations;



Being forward-looking in the design and delivery of interventions;



Being patient and willing to adopt a range of methods to actively engage the individual. Such methods could include existing programmes and services but only if they are likely to support the development of relevant aspects of maturity; and



Developing the consistent application of skills associated within increasing maturity, including emotional management, planning and control of impulses, and helping to ensure that immature patterns of behaviour do not become embedded.



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## Contact details:

This guide is available on the T2A website [www.t2a.org.uk](http://www.t2a.org.uk) and is free to download and print. For more information about the guide, please contact Max Rutherford, Criminal Justice Programme Manager at the Barrow Cadbury Trust, at [m.rutherford@barrowcadbury.org.uk](mailto:m.rutherford@barrowcadbury.org.uk)

To find out more about maturity in a criminal justice context, read the literature review by University of Birmingham, available to download at [www.t2a.org.uk/publications](http://www.t2a.org.uk/publications)



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