**A thematic review of the work of youth offending services during the pandemic**

**Management Boards are recommended to:**

* Identify the backlog of cases being processed through courts, and ensure that there is sufficient workforce capacity to deal with increased caseloads.
* *Bolton YOT Response - All YOTs across GM raised the issue of the Court backlog following the closure of Courts, the backlog has been dealt with and cases are being dealt with timely currently. There was an initial increase in caseload however this seems to have stabilised.*
* Review the locally agreed definition of vulnerable children, to make sure that all relevant children who are known to the YOT are included for access to education and services.
* *Bolton YOT Response - Laptops have been provided to the YOT to support with one-to-one tuition, all young people know to YOT of school age can be supported through the access to education service, any issues are dealt with via our ETE officer.*
* Consider how young people are to be reintroduced to school, education and employment and how any attainment gap is to be addressed.
* *Bolton YOT Response - The Board is notified of any Children and Young people who are not in education training or employment through the data presented at each YOT management board. The ETE officer will devise a plan to reintegrate young people back into ETE, the overview of this plan is presented to the board.*
* Address any inequalities in ‘digital divide’.
* *Bolton YOT Response - Any inequalities will be raised through the ETE officer and addressed, the Board is informed of any issues and will offer support or challenge in order to resolve.*

**YOT Managers are recommended:**

* That as part of assessments, young person’s access to IT and communication methods are routinely assessed.
* *Bolton YOT Response - The YOT have on occasion provided a basic level mobile phone for young people who do not have access to one to enable sessions to be delivered by phone. Sessions have taken place using telephone, Whatsapp and socially distanced face to face work either outside the home or in the YOT office.*
* To give careful consideration to whether case responsibility should remain with the ‘home’ YOT after an out of area placement, if that can be undertaken remotely and is in the best interests of the child.
* *Bolton YOT position – Decisions around whether the home YOT continue to deliver the interventions if a young person is living in a placement out of area are taken based on individual need. Where the young person would benefit from face to face contact and the distance is too great for Bolton to deliver, a request would be made for caretaking arrangements with host YOT. Bolton YOT  would always retain case responsibility for LAC but may request caretaking by a host YOT with regular liaison. Where young people are placed more locally, for example within Greater Manchester, decisions will be made based on the interests of the young person which may mean that Bolton YOT continue to deliver the interventions and manage the case on a day to day basis. During Covid restrictions and where remote working is more prevalent it may be in the interests of the child for that to remain with Bolton YOT. Bolton YOT have also continued to manage some young people during Covid restrictions where the host YOT is not delivering a face to face service but Bolton YOT are.*
* Ensure effective communication with the custodial estate, so that children are best prepared for being released into COVID related restrictions that will vary.
* *Bolton YOT Response - The ability to increase face to face support for young people in custody as part of the Resettlement Strategy has been severely restricted due to Covid. The YOT have utilised resources such as the Email a Prisoner Scheme and ensure we are put onto young people’s PIN so that they can call their worker from their cells. There are issues with access to young people at certain points, for example, when they enter custody as they are required to self-isolate and this restricts our access to them even further. There are issues with the Email a Prisoner Scheme in that whilst the YOT can email in the YP is not able to reply but it does allow us to keep some contact. The telephone contact using their PIN is also dependent on them ringing us as we are not able to ring them.  The YOT continue to attend meetings with the YP and secure establishment virtually and also include the SE in our Multi-agency risk management meetings where possible to ensure that lines of communication are open. The YOT have been able to access a minibus to collect YP from custody as we are not able to transport them in our cars due to Covid restrictions. Iss has remained operational during the whole pandemic and there has been no reduction in the offer for YP being released on licence. We are using GPS tracking as a licence requirement for a YP who offends prolifically but regularly cited Covid symptoms as a reason for not keeping his appointments. GPS monitoring will enable us to monitor his whereabouts during Covid if he continues to use this as a reason for non-attendance. If he is supposed to be self-isolating but is not at home he will be breached. The YOT continue to liaise with parents in order to prepare them for release. Greater Manchester YOTs continue to have support from the GM Social Worker at Wetherby YOI who can support with any safeguarding issues for GM YP.*

**Key Issue highlighted:**

* Concern raised about the experience of parents who were victims of violence by their child. This is an area that needs a sharper focus and more detailed planning for the protection of parental victims.
* *Bolton YOT Response - Remedi carry out the victim work this has much improved, Remedi gave a presentation to the board*