

Shifting Journey Cards: Final Report

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SHIFTING JOURNEY CARDS

Final Report



Dr Sarah
Brooks-Wilson



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BIRMINGHAM

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1.1 Introduction

When young people with high or complex needs are required to engage with multiple services in different places, some sort of additional support is often needed.^{i ii iii iv v} Shifting Journey Cards is a new resource that helps understand more about the problems that stop young people travelling to youth justice appointments.^{vi} Journey problems can be hidden (like having no money or lacking confidence) and engaging visual resources can encourage a fuller information exchange to help identify and address such areas. The Youth Justice Board describe effective practice as: ***'practice which produces the intended results'***^{vii} with sector-wide performance focused on reductions in first time entry, reoffending and the use of custody^{viii}. Absence from any appointment is a barrier to these objectives as it stops practitioners understanding and responding appropriately. Discussions about journey making can also provide a useful 'window' to other issues, allowing wellbeing to be supported in different ways.

Shifting Journey Cards were designed by young people, so they fit well with contemporary youth justice. Ways of working with young people are changing, with expectations of compliance giving way to children's rights and voices, and successful examples of participatory policies and practices now in use.^{ix x xi} The Youth Justice Board (YJB) has also adopted Child First principles as a strategic priority, with a focus on co-constructed practice as well as young people's strengths and long term outcomes.^{xii} In a practice context, the shift to locally determined approaches also requires new and flexible tools that can be used in different settings.^{xiii} This report highlights how young people's expert involvement in the creation of flexible communication tools can help uncover hidden problems that improve long term wellbeing in a timely and well-pitched way.

It can be important for young people to be in contact with different services they require including when a community sentence is being served. Service access can be a secondary consideration but appointments are delivered in different ways and some are harder to reach than others.^{xiv} For example, some services provide lifts and financial help and others do not. Some services have fixed times and locations (like education and the police) and others can move to convenient sites (like youth justice appointments in the home). Short, walked journeys can be easily achieved when living close by, but longer journeys can be expensive, risky and time consuming.^{xv} This report and its underpinning research show how creative and innovative communication approaches with young people can help identify places that are harder to reach, and understand what makes things difficult.^{xvi xvii xviii}

This project places young people at the centre, but this should not detract from the significant economic cost of absence - particularly in the context of public service expenditure pressures. Assuming that 2,791 youth justice practitioners^{xix} each earn £35,000 per annum, have one missed appointment per week and are unable to use the missed time, the resulting sector-wide cost would exceed £2.6million per year. This figure is likely to be a significant underestimate as absence-related wage costs do not include rescheduling costs, consumables (like petrol), further court appearances, sentence escalation costs or high (fifty per cent) absence rates for some appointment types^{xx}. Although the primary purpose of this resource is to involve, understand and appropriately treat young people, the broader economic context is impossible to separate, and also crucial to address.

This resource was constructed through three Cheshire-based workshops during the summer of 2018, with young people deciding the format, wording, name and visual design (see Section 2.6 of this report). An initial pilot resource was produced and launched at the Youth Justice Board (YJB) Annual Conference, with 75 packs distributed to around 50 practice settings. Pilot feedback then evidenced resource impact, with practitioners reporting improved journey communication, planning and safety (see Section 4.3 of this report). This report describes why Shifting Journey Cards was developed and how things have progressed. It also provides evidence of the following areas being supported through resource use:

- **Improved timekeeping and attendance**
- **Effective practice resourcing**
- **Increased journey co-planning between practitioners and young people**
- **Better identification and avoidance of personal safety risks**
- **Evidence that strategic end-user involvement can address policy problems**
- **Evidence of visual communication effectiveness when engaging 'hard to reach' young people**

Ultimately, Shifting Journey Cards were created to provide evidence of how 'hard to reach' young people's hidden experiences can be appropriately accessed to help inform more appropriate treatment. This is in line with international and domestic agreements that call for young people's strategic involvement in services that impact them, to improve their long term outcomes.^{xxi xxii}

1.2 Acknowledgments

I would like to express sincere thanks to the young people in Cheshire who were involved in this project – your interesting and engaging contributions directly fed into the quality of this resource and capacity for it to help other young people. Thank you to Gareth Jones and Kerry Jackson from Cheshire East, Cheshire West, Halton and Warrington Youth Justice Service for being receptive to this project, sharing time, important insights and facilitating young people’s involvement. Thanks also to Mike Botham and Monna Gall from Sandwell YOS for piloting the new resource, and to Nick Jeffries from Coventry and Collette Caldwell from Cheshire for involvement in resource design and subsequent dissemination at the YJB Convention. Huge thanks to Bob Main from Frozen Marrow for ongoing design involvement from planning to project completion. Finally, I am extremely grateful to the youth justice managers, practitioners and young people who generously shared time and ideas in the research that underpins this impact project.

1.3 Funding

This project was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council, grant ES/M500446/1. The underpinning research was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council, grant number ES/IO26770/1.

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2. Resource Background and Development

2.1 Do young people have problems accessing services they need?

This question first became significant when researching school sustainability across a large local authority area in the north of England.^{xxiii} Travel was one of eight key areas with policy mainly focused on public transport, emissions reductions and non-motorised options such as walking buses. A hidden story about high expectations and limited capabilities started to emerge in conversations with young people in a pupil referral unit, with personal and family circumstances (including mental ill health and poverty) making journeys difficult to complete. Although services do not always have the capacity to focus on how people get there, absence makes effective delivery unachievable and in this case, young people's immediate and future wellbeing was impacted through barriers to education.

Research started to reveal how young people with the highest educational needs and greatest risk of exclusion faced the most significant journey barriers. Waking at an hour when most remained asleep, multiple lengthy bus journeys were undertaken to access a part-time alternative curriculum at a site serving the entire local authority area. Alternative educational provision is vital for young people struggling to engage with mainstream settings and new, longer and more complex journeys should not present a barrier to education. In this research, journey problems were feeding a stark injustice as young people were not being provided with what they needed to actively participate in education, impeding long term wellbeing. This research raised new questions about whether access barriers might be a problem for other young people, and what the impact might be.

Youth justice research revealed journeys to be a serious, hidden problem, resulting in unmet needs and severe punishment which can damage for reintegration and constructive societal engagement (see Section 2.2 for more details)^{xxvii}. Extensive social disadvantage makes smooth passage through the youth justice system difficult to achieve^{xxix xxx xxxi} as it is hard to understand, remember and prioritise punctual appointment attendance in the context of neglect, abuse, trauma, exploitation, discrimination, victimisation, social deprivation, physical and mental health difficulties, unmet educational needs and housing precarity.^{xxxii} The youth justice sector now prioritises minimal system contact,^{xxxiii} yet absence is still punished without full information on young people's journey problems,^{xxxiv} resulting in sentence escalation and extended system contact, suggesting a policy development opportunity still remains.

Young people have diverse youth justice journey experiences and understanding these differences is important. Underpinning evidence shows how some young people experience racist abuse when accessing youth justice, which increases the risk of breach if an altercation ensues. The impact of such hostile and demeaning treatment can also make it difficult to positively engage with appointments shortly afterwards^{xxxv}. Looked after young people can have higher levels of local navigational knowledge as a consequence of frequent placement moves, contrasting with young people who do not attend school or venture far from home, and have a limited 'home range'^{xxxvi}. Other evidence suggests journey risks can be gendered, with risks associated with violent assault and groups of men for male travellers, contrasting with female travellers where isolated transport stops, travelling at night, lone males and sexual assault are considered to be a greater risk^{xxxvii}.

2.2 Underpinning research evidence

This resource is underpinned by a research project that looked at community sentence journey requirements, causes of absence and practice responses.^{xxxviii xxxvix} One pilot study and two main case studies were conducted with 32 youth justice practitioners and 28 young people at youth offending teams in Yorkshire and the North West of England. Youth justice data does not provide detail on absence-related community sentence breakdown (or 'breach'), but policy and inspection data suggests absence is a common cause, making breach rates the nearest available proxy measure. Research took place at two case study settings with the highest community sentence breach rates in England and Wales (at over 15 per cent of all community sentences, with a national average of just over 6 per cent) and practitioners confirmed youth justice attendance to be an ongoing problem. Importantly, these locations also contained some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country for health, education, employment and income - making connections between young people's journey problems and deprivation. Figure 1 describes some of the key points that this research established.

Figure 1.
Key points from the underpinning research.

- Some youth justice appointments have absence rates as high as fifty per cent
- Absence and lateness results in ineffective service delivery, long term unmet needs and harsh punishment - including custody
- When convicted young people have high or complex needs, different local services respond holistically
- Holistic treatment is geographically dispersed and this creates a high journey making burden
- Complex needs also heighten service access problems. For example, poverty can limit access to public transport; mental ill health can make it hard to independently access unfamiliar places; limited literacy can make it hard to understand bus timetables.
- Children and young people have highly varied experiences accessing youth justice, with personal, family and local circumstances all significant in different ways for different young people.
- Journey making is almost entirely absent from youth justice policy and practice guidance.
- Absence and lateness can be punished (including through imprisonment) as young people remain responsible for being present and punctual
- Practitioners can struggle to find activities for young people on high compulsory contact levels (25 hours per week).
- Practitioners identified visual, interactive journey discussion tools as presenting a new opportunity for well-pitched, meaningful and inclusive practice

2.3 The need for inclusive, visual communication

Youth justice journey problems can be hard to identify and difficult to talk about, making it important to use methods that help improve the flow of communication. Sometimes young people can be reluctant to communicate with unfamiliar adults, and relentless everyday difficulties can seem normal to those experiencing them. Visual research methods are extensively used in research with children and young people, and are proven to be effective. They are age appropriate compared with other approaches (such as written methods),^{xi} and improve memory recall while encouraging research engagement as materials are held and moved around. They also detract from adult/child power differences,^{xii} while being broadly inclusive for those with limited literacy, a limited ability to concentrate or English as a second language.

Visual communication tools can provoke different types of knowledge and engagement, making careful selection important.^{xiii} In the underpinning research, a pilot visual methods focus group took place with young people experiencing complex needs including limited literacy, mental ill health, educational disengagement and poverty. Using the topic of 'a recent journey into town', experiences were recounted using four visual approaches. Icons and photographs showed journey modes (like buses, cars and walking) and common destination types (like shops, medical sites and the police station). An Ordnance Survey map provided opportunities to explore the route, and participants were also given drawing materials to construct their own visual communication tools.

Each method was carefully evaluated for engagement levels and nature of information generated, with maps and icons most effective for this research. Maps made it possible to explore different points in the journey, and icons generated focused discussions on travel modes and destinations. Energetic engagement resulted from the use of icons, with visual prompts clearly understood and experiences freely recounted. The Ordnance Survey map produced a detailed narrative of journey features and locations of personal significance (such as liking a bridge, identifying a sweet shop, indicating where the journey was boring/exciting and noting the point of arrival in town). Although self-generated maps can elevate young people's voices, drawing was unpopular as young people were distracted by the quality of their own drawing skills. Photographs were also less effective as it was hard to exclude irrelevant visual content, making communication less focused.

2.4 Aims, objectives and beneficiaries of the new resource

At the start of this project the name, format, content and design of the resource had yet to be decided with young people. Despite this, project objectives were clear, with an overarching goal of supporting effective practice and positive outcomes by:

- **Encouraging conversations about journey making**
- **Overcoming literacy problems through the use of visual communication**
- **Drawing out everyday problems that are hard to identify**
- **Better meeting young people's needs**
- **Improving timekeeping and attendance capabilities**
- **Limiting service disengagement, service withdrawal or punishment as a consequence of journey problems and incapacities**
- **Supporting effective practice through improved cost and time resourcing**

When community sentences require young people with high and complex needs to engage with multiple services, it should be assumed that some sort of additional support will be needed to meet attendance expectations.^{xliii xliiv xlv xlvi xlvii} As such, Shifting Journey Cards needed to help identify and respond to journey problems, while releasing pressure from families and communities who are often required to help, but can be poorly placed to do so.

2.5 Resource co-production context

This project was a collaboration between the University of Birmingham and Cheshire East, Cheshire West, Halton and Warrington Youth Justice Service (Cheshire YJS from this point forward), based in the North West of England. Cheshire YJS spans four local authority areas and 990 square miles, containing polarised deprivation levels in urban and rural settings. The large catchment area makes journeys difficult for many young people, with YOT practitioners providing lifts to resolve barriers associated with distance, cost and transport availability. Young people are not expected to travel to neighbouring local authority areas if services are available in their home area, but this was not always the case, and some journeys were extensive. As such, the completion of community sentences and diversionary interventions in this large catchment area also relied on home appointments and the provision of lifts.

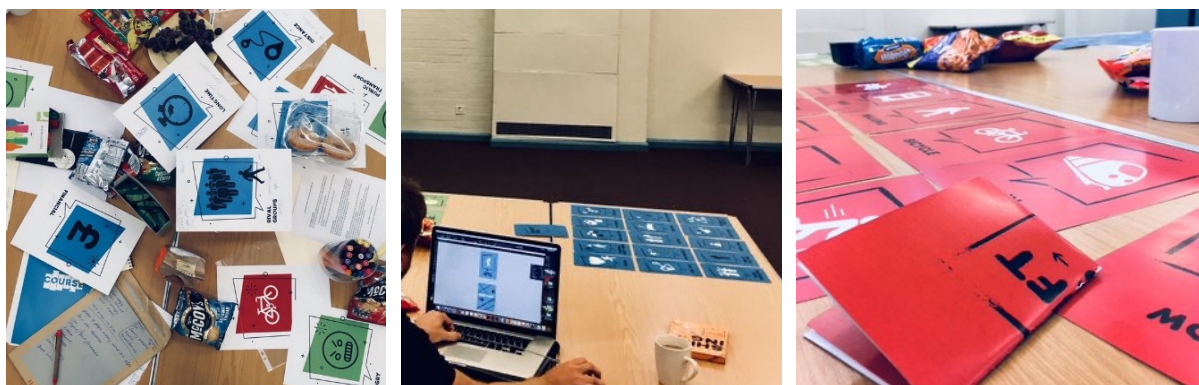
After establishing a project relationship between the University of Birmingham and Cheshire YJS, site visits were made and a project plan was developed. Initially, four practitioners were interviewed to understand accessibility practices and the local context. Then, in the summer of 2018, three workshops were held in a neutral community building within the Cheshire catchment area. The first and third session involved groups of seven and six boys respectively, with the middle workshop held as part of a larger girls group session, involving around fifteen young people. Some workshop participants were then interviewed, allowing views and experiences to be discussed in greater depth.

2.6 Co-designing the cards

At the first workshop, young people were provided with snacks, pens, paper, and basic ideas on the project, with open questions used to encourage discussions. Young people developed ideas about the resource format, name, initial design and wording, which was then refined in the remaining two sessions. When conducting resource design workshops with young people, three areas seemed important to understand in order to support safe and achievable journey planning:

- **Mode of travel**
- **Specific barriers**
- **Feelings about the journey**

The three workshops proved to be highly valuable, with young people developing content beyond conventional policy ideas to make the resource more youth-centred. For example, transport policy commonly refers to public (bus and train), private (car) and active (walking and cycling) travel modes, and young people in this project described their use of other modes including scooters and skateboards (see Table 1). Similarly, a wider variety of journey barriers was identified during the co-construction of this resource (see Table 2), with young people openly discussing the impact of everyday life, and how different things (such as bullying, religious holidays and menstruation) impacted youth justice attendance. For the 'feelings about the journey' cards, young people were very enthusiastic about the use of emojis to express different emotions, and some new content was introduced in connection with different feelings that were not expressed in the initial research project (see Table 3). Different resource name ideas were also discussed, with Shifting Journey Cards eventually chosen. The group decided that this title related to movement while using clear uncomplicated language. The resource format was extensively discussed with a rotating cardboard wheel almost chosen. However, a deck of cards was considered to be versatile and non-stigmatising, as it would appear like a game was being played during YOT meetings in public settings, such as cafes.



	Research Findings	New evidence from Cheshire project
Mode	Car, train, bus, bike, walk, hitch hike, get a lift, taxi (emerged from research)	Motorbike, drive, moped, hoverboard, scooter, skateboard

Table 1. Youth justice commuting modes identified in the underpinning research and this project ^{xlvii xlix}

	Research Findings	New evidence from Cheshire project
Children	Mental ill health, limited literacy, timekeeping skills, understanding the consequences of a lift after a missed appointment, perceived appointment risks, transport related offence, no money, can't read	Poorly, sleeping, confused (about what is needed), menstruation, young carer, why am I here? (doesn't know why with the YOT/offence denial), didn't get reminder, religious holiday
Family circumstances	No family car, no money for transport, limited parental carer support due to skills/resourcing/complex needs	Conflict, bullying, sleeping, religious holiday, young carer, no reminder
Transport	Limited transport coverage, transport unpredictability (late bus/train), unable to secure concessionary fares, complex journeys, off peak travel availability, banned from places I need to access transport	Traffic accident, heavy traffic
Locality settings/ public space	Living far away from services, takes ages, 'bad' weather, personal safety risk, conflict, significant journey duration, racist abuse, not safe	Bullying, not getting on with the police, subject of hate crime (gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and belief), gangs
Practice delivery	Weekend appointments, remote locations, appointment inflexibility in time and space, inability to communicate travel problems due to own resourcing or no provision of practice contact details, long distance	

Table 2. Youth justice commuting impediments identified in the underpinning research and this project ^l

	New evidence from Cheshire project
Feelings	Happy, unhappy, worried, terrified, angry, stressed, anxious, feeling down, excited, bored, upset, tired, hungry, confused

Table 3. Feelings during the youth justice commute, identified in this project

3. How to Use the Cards

Shifting Journey Cards are flexible and can be used for different journey making contexts and problems. Cards can be considered together or separately and are organised into the following themes:

Journey mode

Red



Journey barriers

Orange



Feelings about the journey

Green



Cards shows a simple icon relating to one of the above areas with a written title underneath and on the reverse. This makes it possible to engage with young people who are visually orientated, have limited literacy or English as a second language, with the text-only side useful for those who prefer written communication. Resource design and piloting suggests the following approach works well when trying to explore and understand journeys:

Before the activity

1. Lay out one of the three card themes (journey mode/barriers/feelings) so the icons are mostly visible (the cards should be easy to search through at this point)
2. Encourage the young person to look through the cards and before the activity:
 - a. Explain that young people made these cards to help understand journey problems and plan support
 - b. Clearly identify the purpose of this activity: Are you doing this exercise to understand any problems, help plan ahead or identify areas you can provide support? For example: Is the young person is at the start of a new order? Have they been late? Are they about to start making more independent journeys? Are they about to visit a new site?

During the activity

3. Encourage the young person to select cards that relate to their youth justice journey experiences. Ask open questions like 'which of these have you used to travel?', 'which ones describe your YOT journey?' or 'have you ever experienced any of these?'
4. If the young person is reluctant to engage, try one of the following:
 - a. Starting with less personal cards ('Red - journey mode', rather than 'Green - feelings about the journey'). If appropriate, then move onto barriers before discussing feelings.
 - b. Demonstrate card selection using your own experiences
 - c. Ask general questions about service access to start the conversation (for example 'how do young people usually get to the YOT?')
 - d. Offer suggestions using local knowledge or practice experience (for example 'what's the bus station like?' or 'the police station is far out - how do you get there?')
5. When some cards have been selected, discard the ones that haven't been used
6. Either repeat the process for other two traffic light themes or stop here if it is most useful to focus on this one area

In a discussion, after the activity

7. Ask the young person what they can tell you more about their choices. If needed, ask why and how this has an impact on getting to appointments safely
8. Relate the findings back to the purpose of your discussion (see Point 2b).
9. If appropriate, discuss different options that support safe journey completion
10. Involve anyone else needed to support safe journey completion (for example, if the young person is travelling to reparation independently for the first time after this activity, is it possible to let the reparation providers know that they are taking on a new responsibility and might be late, and not to enact breach).
11. Follow up any other actions that ensure identified journey problems are addressed
12. Agree a time and date to review things - the next appointment would be a good place as this may be when the young person either has either:
 - a. Managed to overcome journey barriers and can feed back on how things went and whether this activity was useful
 - b. Experienced the journey problems again and needs to explore other solutions

4. Resource Refinement

4.1 Feedback from the general public

After the Cheshire workshops had taken place, a draft resource was made for piloting purposes. Before producing the pilot resource, members of the general public were consulted at Birmingham New Street Train Station, during a University of Birmingham public engagement event. People were asked to express their views on the new resource and youth accessibility support more broadly, which helped to make visual communication clearer (for example, an earlier version of the cards had some additional design elements that were non-essential, and were subsequently removed). After explaining the research, members of the public were asked to vote 'for' or 'against' increased service accessibility support for young people in the youth justice service, with 70 out of 71 members of the general public in favour.

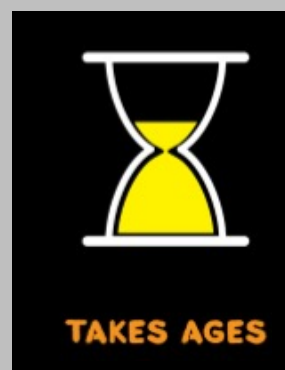
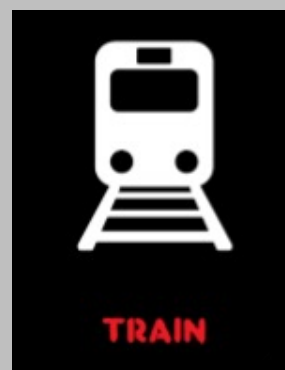
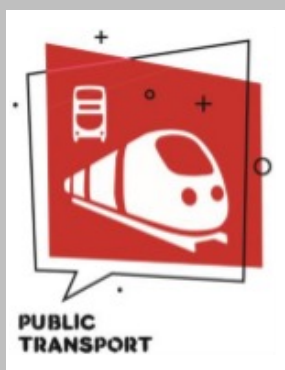
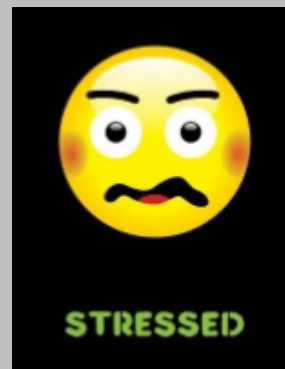
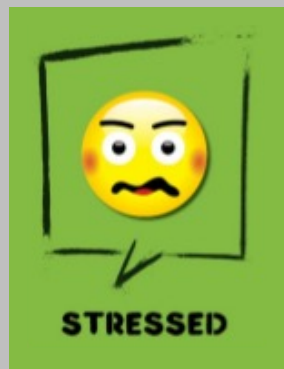
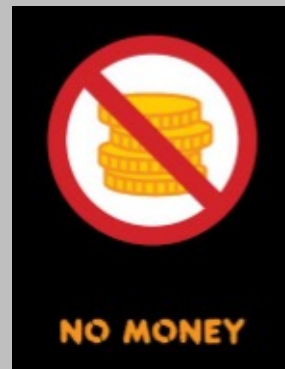
4.2 Pilot resource launch at the YJB Convention

Despite Cheshire Youth Justice Service offering a valuable resource development opportunity, the substantial service catchment area and widespread provision of lifts made it difficult to access independent young journey makers. Subsequently, a pilot edition of Shifting Journey Cards was distributed to policymakers and practitioners at the Youth Justice Board Annual Convention in November 2018. During the Convention, a workshop of 34 practitioners from the youth justice sector and beyond agreed to use the tool and provide feedback. In total, 75 sets of Shifting Journey Cards were distributed to 50 youth offending teams, with pilot findings evidencing resource value and informing the final design.

Shifting Journey Cards were also presented and distributed at Youth Justice in the Midlands – an event at the University of Birmingham in January 2019 involving local and national representatives from academia, policy and practice. The resource was also presented at the Social Policy Association Annual Conference at the University of Durham, and the British Sociological Association Annual Conference at the University of Glasgow. These sessions helped to further refine the cards (for example, avoiding colours used by rival groups of young people) while providing further reflections on the tool and its purpose.



Co-producing the card design to promote clear communication





Gauging public opinion on journey support for young people at Birmingham New Street



Using feedback to inform the design before and after the pilot



4.3 Did visual communication help understand service access barriers?

Piloting was important to ensure resource design and purpose were working as intended, with evidence suggesting new opportunities to avoid journey problem had been created. In one example it was described how:

'The young person was able to reflect on his journey planning to his appointments as this was something that was impacting his order. The young person commented on the cards and said that the rival gangs card was his favourite as the characters on it had hats on that young people do actually wear' (Practitioner Feedback 1, Sandwell)

This feedback highlights the value of visual communication which also opened up discussions to: 'encourage engagement with a young person who is a non-attender of his YOT order'. (Practitioner Feedback 1, Blackburn). In some cases these conversations made it possible to avoid repeated absence and associated problems, with higher levels of engagement and improved practice effectiveness resulting, as: 'the young person arrived on time for his next appointment' (Practitioner Feedback 1, Sandwell).

In another case, cards were used with young people who were 'consistently late' (Practitioner Feedback 1, Hull), with the resource described as a: 'good tool to expand on conversation to identify barriers and problems to engagement. The young people it was used with appeared to like the simplicity of the cards' (Practitioner Feedback 1, Hull). This suggests the visual resource improved effective communication on journey problems, and that co-production had been useful for pitching the resource well. Another practitioner described how the cards appealed to different learning and communication styles, especially young people who like to be actively and physically involved in the learning process:

'The cards worked extremely well in this case. The young person is a kinaesthetic learner, so likes to use his hands. The young person can also be quite shy during interview, however in this case with him using the cards I feel that he expressed himself more than he usually would' (Practitioner Feedback 3, Sandwell)

As well as benefitting different communication approaches, Shifting Journey Cards were suggested as valuable for overcoming language barriers, with the simple icon-based design providing new communication opportunities:

'I spoke to another young person in reception. English was his second language and whilst he speaks English well now, he said these would have been useful for him when younger, struggling with money and had limited English speaking capabilities'. (Practitioner Feedback 4, Sandwell)

Young people's problems and feelings can fluctuate, with another young person

Young people's problems and feelings can fluctuate, with another young person suggesting that if they were having a difficult day, Shifting Journey Cards would help communication: 'He thought the reasons were fairly comprehensive and that he might be tempted to point to a card if he had had a bad day and [wasn't finding it as easy to] explain' (Practitioner Feedback 5, Sandwell). When communicating with children and young people, age-appropriate pitching can be a challenge based on the wide range of abilities and visual preferences. Initial feedback from a 17-year-old young person suggested that Shifting Journey Cards were appropriately designed:

'He liked the cards and thought the idea was useful. I asked him whether he thought the design was good, which he said it was, and that he didn't think they were too young for him, which is something I thought he might say' (Practitioner Feedback 6, Sandwell)

Importantly, evidence also suggests how icon-based communication remains appealing to those on the cusp of adulthood, with simple detail supporting focused discussions. In terms of refining the design of the first pack, one young person provided feedback on the range of emojis available, suggesting an additional, laughing expression. Usefully, the practitioner described how Shifting Journey Cards had opened up communication and helped identify additional welfare needs:

'He thought the emojis covered the range of feelings people might have, but wondered why there wasn't one that was laughing. For him, he chose tired and hungry as the two cards that represented his journey, which prompted some discussion we might not otherwise have had' (Practitioner Feedback 7, Sandwell)

This pilot activity provided evidence of how well pitched, visual communication can identify hidden aspects of journey making that present significant personal safety risks. Such information is valuable as youth justice engagement should improve (rather than worsen) young people's circumstances and outcomes. YJB strategic objectives express the desire to support 'children to become the best version of themselves' and this resource provides an opportunity to plan around risks and limit harm during youth justice journeys:

'The young person informed me that he had gotten to the arts centre by car, his mother had given him a lift. I asked him if this was the usual method of transport to which he informed me that he would get a lift whenever he could. He stated that it was 'risky' for him to use public transport due to the [names group of young people]. I then selected the 'rival gangs' card and suggested that this would be the card that best describes his reasoning for his method of transport. He agreed. He then expressed that he was worried that the gang carry knives and that he was therefore at risk of being stabbed when using public transport' (Practitioner Feedback 8, Sandwell)

The feedback above provides evidence of how Shifting Journey Cards can unearth hidden journey problems, help plan attendance and reduce personal safety risks. When young people are struggling to communicate verbally (for example, when English is a second language or after having a difficult day) visual communication tools can help. Such methods are also valuable with kinaesthetic learners who tend to prefer participatory, practical and problem-solving communication styles. Subsequently, it can be suggested that this project has achieved the following outcomes:

- **Improved timekeeping and attendance**
- **Effective practice resourcing and outcomes**
- **Increased journey co-planning between practitioners and young people**
- **Better identification and avoidance of personal safety risks**
- **Evidence that strategic end-user involvement in policy-relevant practice tools is valuable**
- **Evidence that visual communication is effective when engaging ‘hard to reach’ young people**

This pilot provides evidence that when young people help with appropriate communication pitching, it can uncover hidden barriers to long-term wellbeing, providing new opportunities to refine services accessed by young people.

5. Next steps

Localised youth justice delivery is necessary due to highly varied geographical contexts, service delivery approaches and population profiles – something that is reflected in National Standards, which have increasingly adopted a ‘light touch’. This suggests overarching accessibility policies and blanket guidance are not necessarily well placed to resolve journey problems in different settings such as a small towns, large cities and large rural areas. As a result, the policy gap on youth justice commuting impacts effective practice and young people’s outcomes in different ways, and visual communication tools can provide a practical and non-stigmatising solution when integrated into practice meetings. Many youth justice appointments depend on significant journey commitments being undertaken by young people with high and complex needs. This makes it important to understand more about what works well and where the tensions lie, with a wealth of new and existing evidence suggesting inclusive and visually engaging tools are more likely to result in a meaningful information exchange. This initial piece of work included a short-term assessment of whether well pitched visual communication tools on youth justice journey problems are beneficial, with further research now needing to understand any impact in the following areas:

- **Improved community sentence completion**
- **Reduced service disengagement**
- **Reduced long term unmet needs**
- **Reduced the use of formal breach proceedings.**

A key outcome of this project is that simple, flexible and engaging co-designed communication** can help young people thrive rather than merely survive. This project places young people at the centre, but this should not detract from the significant economic cost to large scheduling gaps, particularly in the context of public service expenditure pressures. Assuming 2,791 full and part-time youth justice practitioners^{iv} have a pro rata annual salary of £35,000, the cost of one missed appointment per practitioner per week exceeds £2.6 million. Although the primary purpose of this resource is to involve, understand and appropriately treat young people, economic costs cannot be disentangled and are also vital to address.

6. References

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