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| **4.1** | **Try to avoid threats and sanctions**  Making interventions effective | |
| **Young person:** | |  |
| **Practitioner:** | |  |
| **Date:** | |  |

The principle purpose of the youth justice system is to **prevent offending by children and young people**.

While sanctions, restrictions and mandatory activities are all necessary parts of the youth justice system, when **over-used or applied inappropriately they can be counter-productive.**

At a time in their life when they are seeking increased independence and autonomy, lot of **young people resent rules, restrictions, threats or sanctions**- and when this happens **the effectiveness of our interventions suffers.**

Although young people might comply, **many** **just do so for quiet life**. And **those that don’t stick to the rules can get pulled deeper into the system as a result.**

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|  | **Ask yourself: if we only get young people to ‘comply’ (i.e. turn up), then how meaningful will the work we do with them really be?**  **Meaningful interventions can be only be delivered via meaningful engagement, and for this reason the use of threats, sanctions and restrictions should be limited** |

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**Of course this will always be a balancing act….**

As youth justice practitioners you have a **duty to manage risk** and **ensure young people comply with their orders**, but if wherever possible if you use your professional discretion prioritise positive engagement over forced compliance, **you can expect better results from your interventions.**

Here is some **general guidance** for how to approach dealing with these decisions:

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| **DO’s** | **DON’Ts** |
| **Encourage engagement through flexibility and collaboration**- working with young people not on them**.** | **Use threats and sanctions to achieve compliance;** it doesn’t work long term and can be counterproductive. |
| **Develop a meaningful relationship**, you’ll be much more likely to reach young people this way. | **Take an authoritarian approach** to these conversations. That will only alienate the young person. |
| **Discuss sanctions/restrictions with young people** and try to work out a compromise everyone can live with | **Take decisions alone** if young people are part of the process whatever you decide is more likely to be effective. |
| **Know what the rules are:** there are certain standards that you must follow. | **Forget to listen to your instincts:** the rules are important, but so is your expertise & experience. |
| **Be flexible:** use all flexibility afforded to you to give the young person the scope to make mistakes. | **Forget to let the young person know that you believe in them,** they need this encouragement! |
| **Address young people’s perceptions of injustice** in the system. | **Be afraid to say when things aren’t fair**- the system doesn’t always work perfectly! |