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| **1.1** | **Let them participate**  Understanding what’s happening | |
| **Young person:** | |  |
| **Practitioner:** | |  |
| **Date:** | |  |

In general, most young people accept that the justice system should hold them responsible for their actions. However the criminal justice system is highly complex, and doesn’t always appear to them to operate fairly.

If we don’t explain the processes sufficiently, and in a way they can understand, the system will appear illegitimate. **When a system of justice lack legitimacy, the purpose of intervention and punishment is lost.**

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|  | **Have a conversation dedicated to discussing the young person’s interaction with the youth justice system. This should include:**   * **Being clear on why they are there**   Make sure they know what specific thing it is they have done which has resulted in them sitting there with you now, and why the system considers it wrong.   * **What is required of them, and for how long**   Explain what their disposal means, what is required and for how long.   * **What if they don’t do it?**   Explain what might happen if they don’t comply. Offer to help them through it.   * **What will happen afterwards?**   Be clear about any significant consequences of their disposal (i.e. future work prospects) and offer to work with them to get them in the best position possible for when their order finishes.   * **Consider how they can make this a positive experience**   Find at least one positive thing for the young person’s future that you can work on together which can be achieved by the end of the disposal. |

Follow these **do’s and don’ts** for this conversation:

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| **DO’s** | **DON’Ts** |
| **Take the time** to explain what’s happening, simply. | **Use technical language** or criminal justice jargon! |
| **Be realistic** **& compassionate**, the message is probably going to be tough. | **Be tempted to try and coerce them into compliance**, it will be counterproductive. |
| **Correct any misunderstandings**, these can be dangerous! | **Leave them believing rumours** or whispers about what might happen. |
| **Develop a meaningful relationship**, based on trust and reciprocity- so they feel free to ask questions. | **Take an authoritarian approach** to these conversations. That will only alienate the young person. |
| **Address young people’s perceptions of injustice** in the system, so they know you understand. | **Be afraid to say when things aren’t fair**- the system doesn’t always work perfectly! |

**NOTE**: Practitioners should **periodically check that young people understand what’s happening** with their involvement with the justice system, and **revisit this conversation whenever anything changes** in their situation.