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| **3.1** | **Acknowledge limited life chances**  Identifying disadvantage | |
| **Young person:** | |  |
| **Practitioner:** | |  |
| **Date:** | |  |

**It is easy to underestimate the importance of social inequalities in narrowing young people’s options**, making offending seem a more attractive (or sometimes the only) option.

Often young people who offend have been **denied the protections of childhood**, and are now **being excluded from the opportunities afforded to others in adolescence**.

Disadvantaged or marginalised young people are often excluded from mainstream society, yet **they are surrounded by others who seem able to access its benefits.**

**We shouldn’t underestimate the frustration and resentment this causes, and the impact this has on their likelihood to offend.**

Disadvantage in any of the areas identified in the matrix below are known to be important in offending behaviour.

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|  | **Use the matrix to record any concerns you have about the issues or barriers in this young person’s life that might have impacted their behaviour.**  **By identifying these areas of disadvantage, we can better understand the motivations for offending and begin working to address them.**  **Be sure to expressly acknowledge any disproportionate structural difficulties and injustice young people face, it is important that they know you understand the difficulties they face.** |

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|  | **Can you identify disadvantage?** | |
|  | yes? | COMMENTS |
| **Consider the young person’s current living arrangements…**is the arrangement unstable, temporary or over-crowded? are they living with known offenders? are they absconding/staying away? is the accommodation unhealthy or unsafe? |  |  |
| **Consider the young person’s financial circumstances…**do they lack a regular income from employment, benefits or support from parents, do they have debt problems or suffer from financial deprivation? does their income lack legitimacy? |  |  |
| **Consider the community or neighbourhood in which the young person resides…** is the young person isolated there? do they lack amenities, live in poverty or deprivation or suffer from local tensions, pressures or issues? |  |  |
| **Consider the young person’s parenting, care and/or supervision…**does the young person have adequate primary care and supervision? are their basic care needs being met? is there any violence, abuse or neglect within the family? if they have any involvement with the care system are the provisions adequate and appropriate? |  |  |
| **Consider the young person’s relationships…**are there any issues with the young person’s relationships with their family member’s? are you concerned about the influence of their peers? do they have a support network? |  |  |
| **Consider the young person’s social skills…**do they demonstrate difficulties with non-verbal communications such as eye-contact, body language or facial expressions? do they have difficulties expressing emotions? do they struggle maintaining friendships or with social awkwardness? do they appear anxious or frustrated, or struggle to comprehend the thoughts/feelings of others? have they been diagnosed with any social communication difficulties or has anyone raised any concerns? |  |  |
| **Consider the young person’s speech and language abilities…**  do they have difficulty thinking what they want to say? do they speak using only very simple vocabulary or have difficulty explaining things? is their speech difficult to understand? do they have difficulties remembering or following instructions, or struggle understanding the meaning of words? have they been diagnosed with any speech and difficulties or has anyone raised any concerns? |  |  |
| **Consider their learning abilities or education needs…**do they have problems reading or writing? do they have trouble understanding time and date, or with other daily life skills? have they been diagnosed with any special educational needs or has anyone raised any concerns? |  |  |
| **Consider the young person’s education, training or employment status…** have they been attending school/college? are they currently NEET? do they have suitable prospects for employment or training? |  |  |
| **Consider the young person’s emotional development and mental health…**have they had contact with mental health services? do they have any prescribed medication for mental health problems, are they sad, anxious or irritable? are they low in mood? do they feel hopeless or have flashbacks to traumatic events? do they experience unusual thoughts or see/ hear things that others can’t? do they suffer from over-activity, inattention or impulsivity? do they have a history of self-harm or suicidal thoughts/attempts or appear depressed? do they have any formal diagnosis, or has anyone expressed concerns? |  |  |
| **Consider the young person’s health…**have they been diagnosed with a physical health condition? are they experiencing any physical health symptoms? are they taking any medication or is their health being put at risk somehow? |  |  |
| **Consider the possibility of traumatic brain injury…**has the young person suffered a head injury that left them knocked out, dazed or confused? |  |  |
| **Consider if the young person might be misusing substances…** is there excessive or inappropriate use of alcohol or tobacco? Inappropriate or excessive use of legal drugs? use of illegal drugs? |  |  |

**NOTE**: After completing this you should complete exercise 5.1 to develop an action plan to address these areas of disadvantage.