

# PETROC

## Youth workers navigating support services

STRAND 6



HM Government

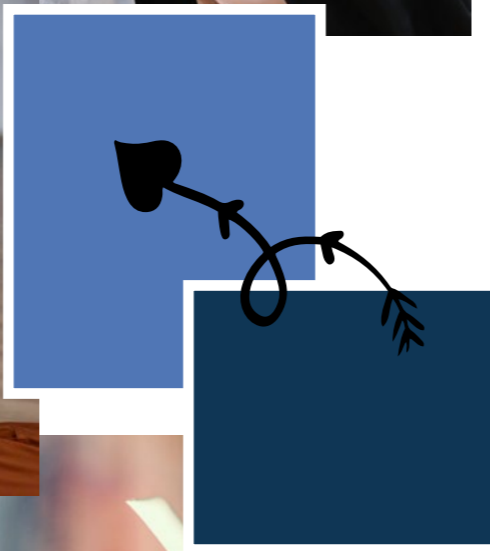


COMMUNITY  
RENEWAL FUND  
**PETROC**



# Contents

Introduction	4
Chapter 1: Referrals and Data Management	5
Paperwork for coordinating service delivery	5
Paperwork for managing expectations	9
Paperwork gathering and formats	9
Examples of Referral Paperwork	10
Referral Process for Individuals with EHCP and navigating SEND teams	15
Chapter 2: Finding support	17
Staff training	17
Areas of demand and access challenges	18
When/Where to Signpost	20
Directories	21
Conclusion	23



# Introduction

The information in this document is a result of four Devon based youth organisations collaboratively exploring challenges around the accessibility of support services for young people with primary consideration for the youth support workers who support young people to navigate these services. Conversations considered the kinds of systems and resources which would help youth workers navigate these support services effectively with the young people they work with. This work represents strand 6 of a wider project called “Innovation for Youth and Community” which is funded by the UK Community Renewal Fund (UKCRF) and Devon County Council is the lead authority.

The organisations involved were Young Devon, Seadream Education CIC, Whiz Kidz UK CIC and Battling On CIC, with conversations and process supported by Devon Communities Together and Petroc. Each partner selected a topic which they felt was a primary challenge regarding young people and/or youth support workers accessing support services and explored these topics through conversations with colleagues, third party organisations (other support organisations or statutory services) and with young people.

The first chapter in this document provides an overview of the common data and approaches necessary for referring young people between services. It also provides example templates for youth support workers and organisations to be able to adapt for their needs.

The second chapter looks at young people’s demand for support services and where these needs can be met by youth support workers and where support services will be needed. It includes discussion on the sorts of training and databases youth workers, as a team, may need.



# Chapter 1: Referrals and Data Management



## Paperwork for coordinating service delivery

As support services, we know that all contact with an individual should be professional yet casual, incorporating empathy and humour to prioritise relationship building and development of trust.

However, paperwork is a necessity both when receiving referrals and when signposting. Young people don’t want to be let down or feel uncared for, be moved from one service to another unnecessarily or made to tell their story repeatedly. Information gathering and where appropriate, the sharing of information, via paperwork, is vital when supporting young people between services (e.g. schools, social services, housing), into employment or other progressive routes. Services need the right information to understand a young person and their journey to be able to work with them effectively, to manage their expectations and to help them make informed choices.

The information type and format necessary will vary between services, and it can feel that large or overwhelming amounts of information is needed (especially for those with learning difficulties and disabilities or other challenges).

This information will normally be necessary for one of the following reasons:

- Legal registration processes such as ID or existing EHCPs.
- Necessary for the service provider to understand circumstances – such as health, educational level, living arrangements and support network, financial status and preferred means of communication.
- Necessary for understanding interests and goals – such as skills audits and personal development plans.

The three figures below show some common considerations around these three areas, with teal boxes being headings, gold boxes indicating legal paperwork, and blue boxes being considerations



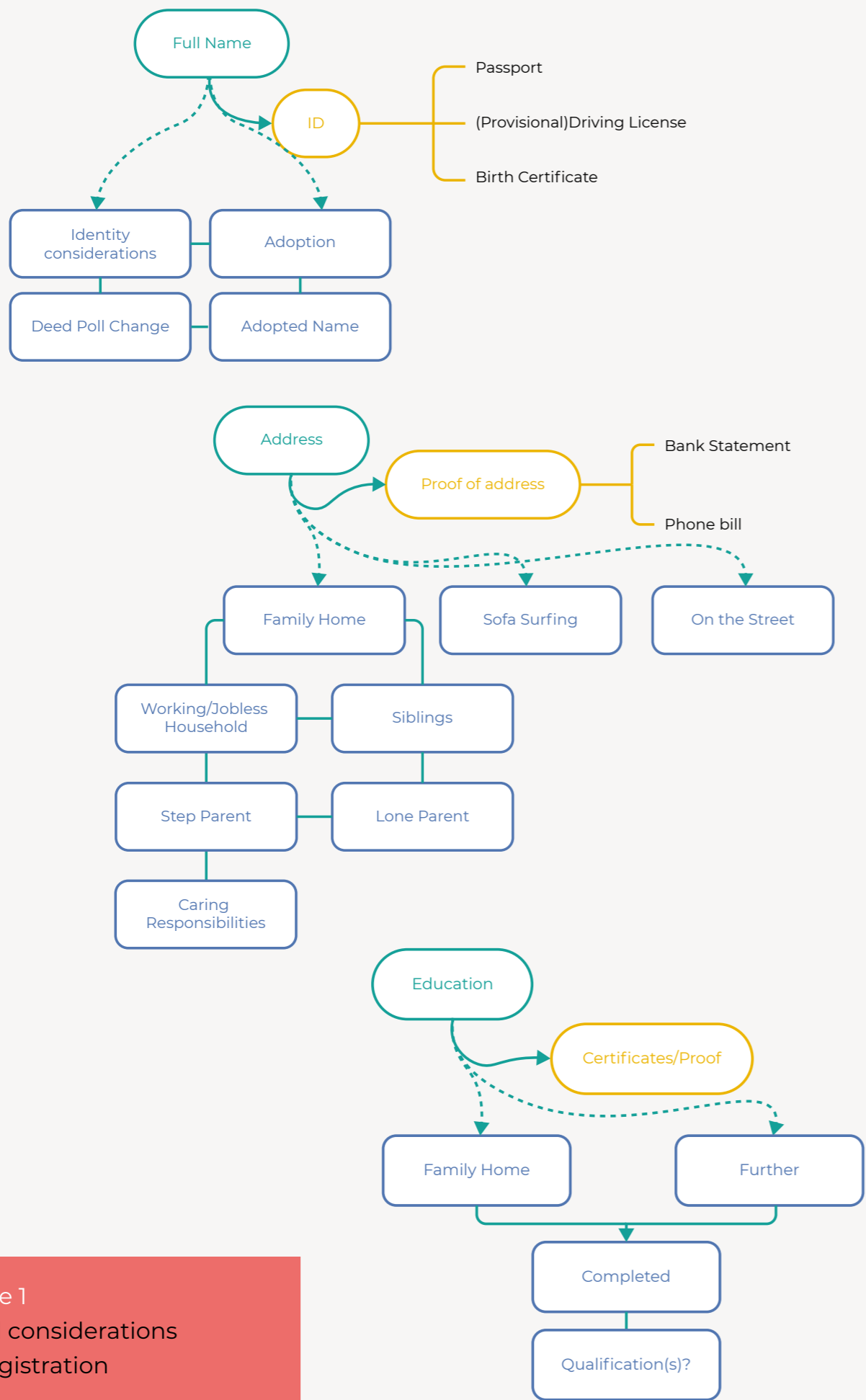


Figure 1  
Initial considerations  
for registration

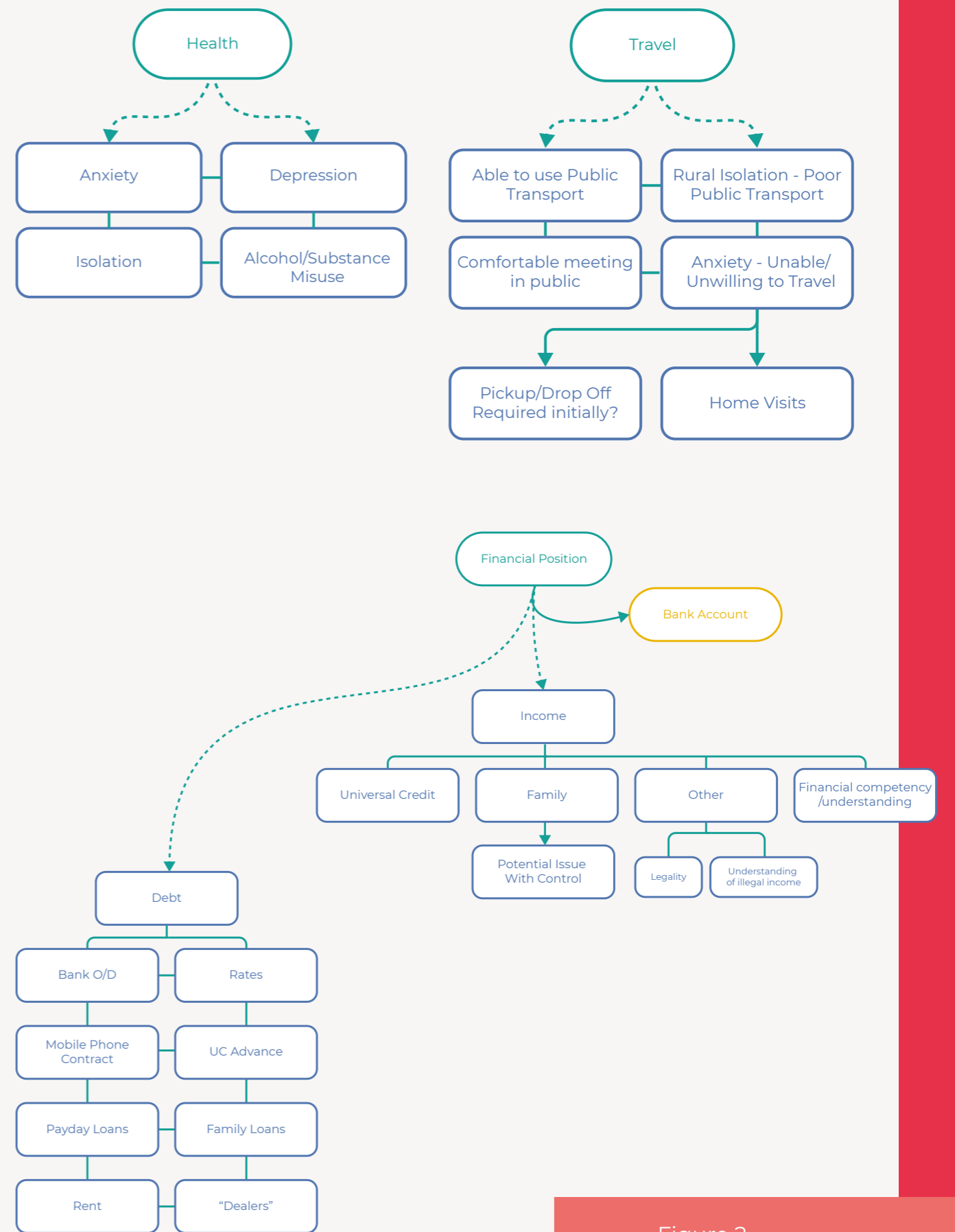


Figure 2  
Wider considerations  
of need

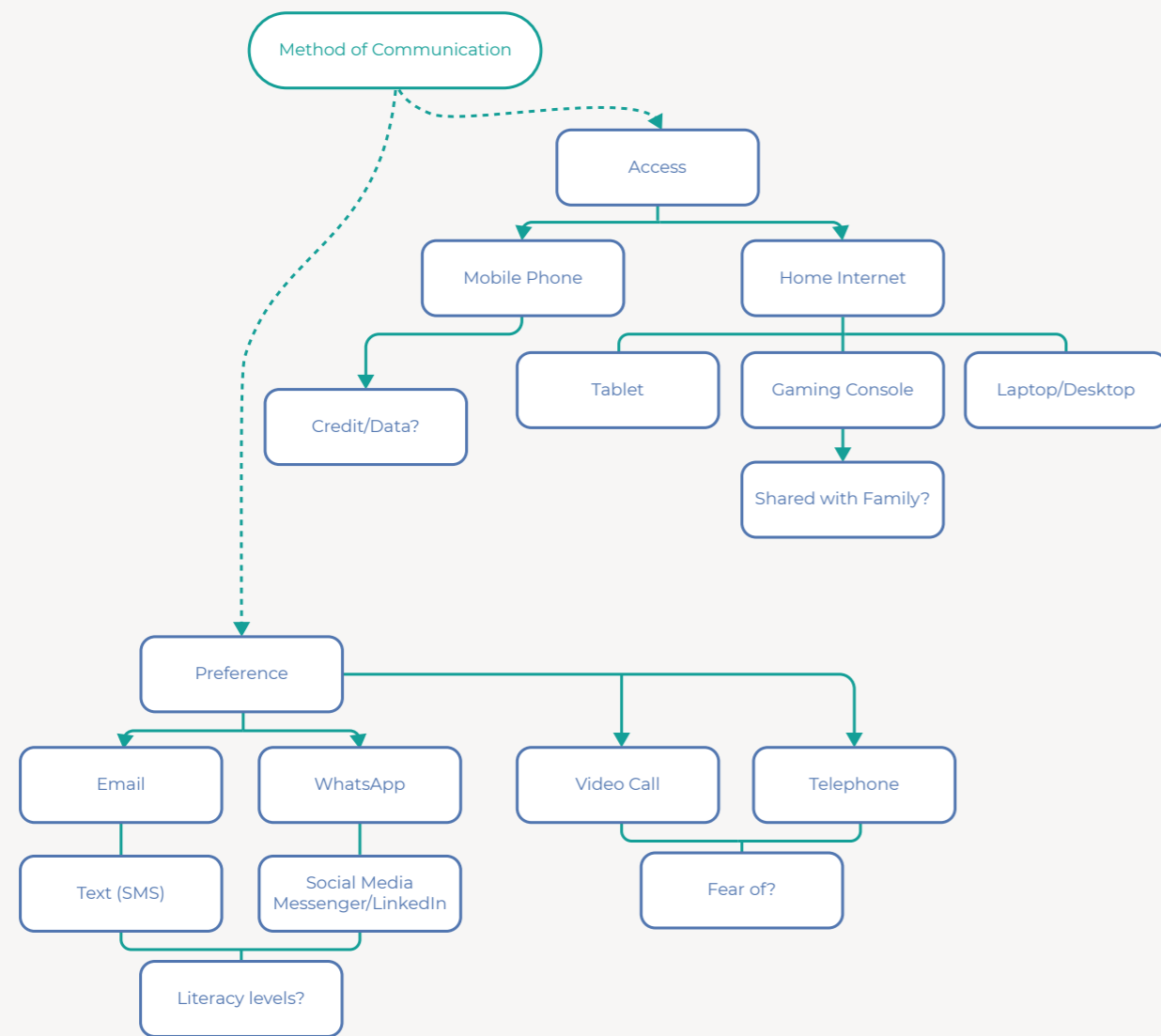


Figure 2  
Wider considerations  
of need

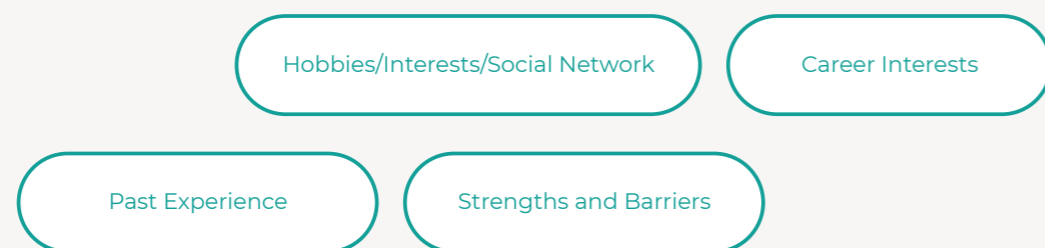


Figure 3  
Considerations for  
goal setting

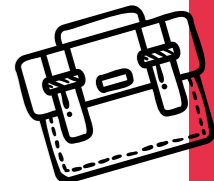
## Paperwork for managing expectations



A starting point for youth support workers when creating a development plan with a young person should be asking them the question: “Have you got any feelings about what you would like to do?”

However, it is also important, early on, to help young people recognise not just their interests but also the skills and requirements needed to achieve their goals or join a placement. A youth support worker must support a young person to recognise any limitations or barriers they have, and how they can overcome their limitations or barriers where possible. The value of induction elements, such as good paperwork, skills audits or goal setting processes, build on this question of interest by finding out where the young person is, rather than where they think they are.

## Paperwork gathering and formats



Depending on the service (support service or placement), and the young person’s access to registration paperwork (such as birth certificates, ID, etc.), an induction and the gathering of necessary information, or parts of it, may take many months. It is important to have processes which allow for standardisation, while also having the flexibility to raise, or not raise, the topics a young person is comfortable with.

Each organisation must be clear on which paperwork or information is expected from different stakeholders. They must also decide the level of detail expected to be completed independently by the young person, and the areas which they will support with registration paperwork.

It is advised that youth support workers discuss the organisation the young person is being referred to (including placements) and supporting paperwork as part of a narrative and explain why they are needed, to eventually secure a paid work or help achieve other goals. For example, ‘A’ (volunteering, which needs a DBS check) leads to ‘B’ (skills development as described in the Personal Development Plan) which leads to ‘C’ (fulfilling a job or other identified targets). This helps manage young people’s expectations and helps them understand the value of paperwork to access a support service. Check ins, supported by paperwork, help

young people to look back and see how far they have come, as well as keep paperwork up-to-date.

The way these conversations are held, key messages are logged, information collected and referred back to, is likely to be individual to each organisation. Again, it must be remembered that empathy and relationship building will aid the referral process and encourage disclosure as well as facilitate future support.

The format, use of imagery, accessibility of language, time allowed, and setting used must always be considered, especially if the young person has additional needs or finds paperwork challenging. There are some benefits to printed paperwork, in that it is more portable and some young people like to see it being filled out. However, the length of time needed to input this information into a digital system must be considered.

## Examples of Referral Paperwork

Below are some templates and processes to enhance your service delivery. These templates are examples only. Some are more detailed than others and several have areas of overlap. Paperwork can be done in detail, slimmed down or combined to gather information necessary for one of the three reasons stated above and shown in figures 1, 2 and 3.

### Basic Referral Forms

This basic form from an organisation referring a young person to join a placement or volunteering opportunity captures necessary basic information, but also gathers information essential for safeguarding principles. This is especially relevant for a placement provider expecting to work with more challenging or vulnerable individuals, and can be adapted accordingly, or used in conjunction with a risk assessment form.

The equal opportunities form allows for standardised tracking of participant demographics.



Basic Referral Forms



EQUAL OPPS FORM

### Risk assessment

This risk assessment form can be either completed with a learner or separately. It builds on referral paperwork and history with existing services to highlight evidence or history related to:

- Risks to Others;
- Risks to Property;
- Risk of Self-Harm;
- Mental Health and Substance Issues;
- Self-Neglect and Vulnerability;
- Special Educational Needs;
- Special Dietary Needs.



Learner RISK ASSESSMENT



### Independent Living/Support Needs Assessment

This form focuses on skills necessary for daily life, rather than employability, and may be most suitable for wrap around support provision. The form has originally been used with those with additional needs and includes questions which may be seen as 'too basic', but the categories are good conversation prompts and it can be adapted as needed.

It asks questions related to:

- Financial Management;
- Food Management, Nutrition and Health;
- Personal Hygiene;
- Home Maintenance;
- Personal Safety; Community Access;
- Transportation and Online Safety.



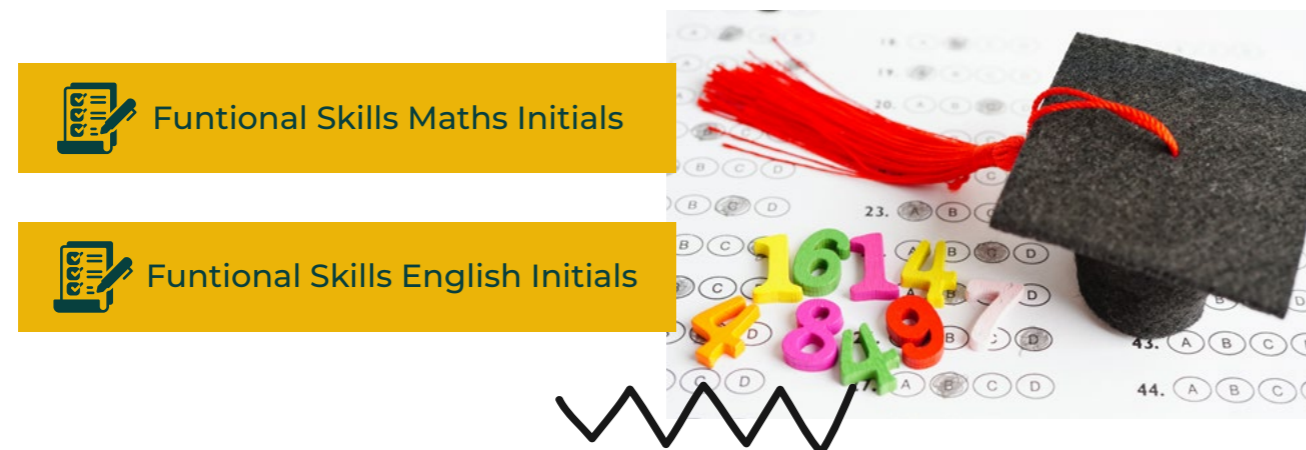
Independent Living Skills Questionnaire



## Functional Skills Assessments – Maths and English

Please note that learners when disclosing their Maths and English level may state they are 'Level 1 or Level 2'. However, they may not be clear on the different levels, and in fact be at 'Entry Level 1 or Entry Level 2'. These assessments help support workers to understand their learners' level.

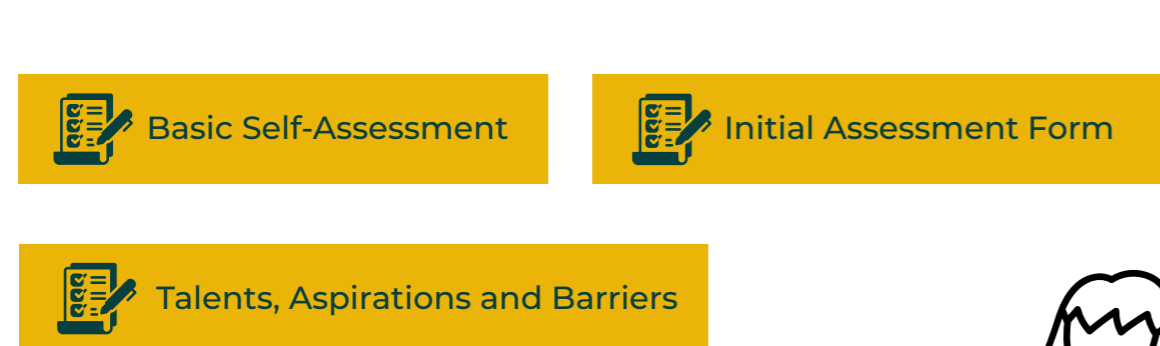
Further resources can be found for free at: <https://www.tes.com/teaching-resources/shop/EnglishandMathsSolutions>



## Self-Assessment

The forms below may duplicate some information provided by the referral service, but they are intended to be completed with a young person upon them joining your service. The basic form is asking about support needs, qualifications, confidence and motivations. More detailed forms contain a mixture of questions exploring both the issues which have brought the person to the service, but also their positive interests.

To provide a more 'light-touch' introduction to a person's character and aid with conversation and relationship building, organisation can consider using an interactive interests or character quiz such as <https://www.viacharacter.org/> or <https://icould.com/buzz-quiz/>.



## Distance Travelled Questionnaire

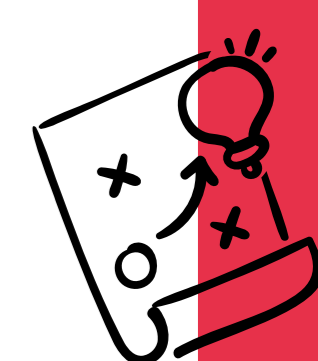
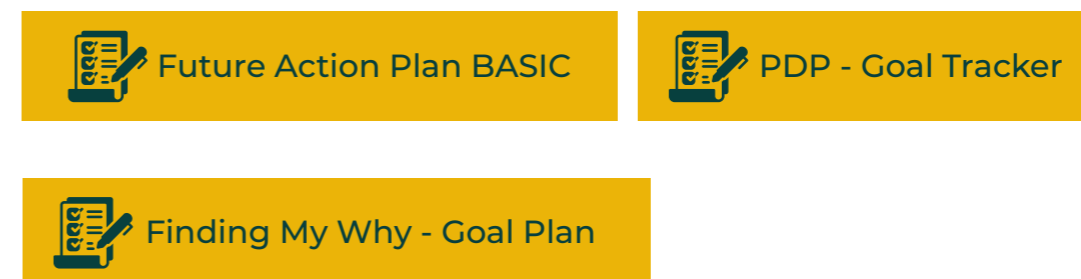
A Distance Travelled Questionnaire (DTQ) is similar to a self-assessment in that it contains prompts on an individual's abilities and interests. But rather than asking for descriptive answers, it asks for a numerical rating. It can likely be completed alongside the detailed conversations arising from the initial assessment, but can then be returned to during, or at the end of, a support service. The below example is quite in-depth, but as this can be seen on the 'Basic Self-Assessment' form above, the rating categories can be very simple (e.g. 'Confidence'; 'Team Work').



## Future Action Plan/Personal Development Plan

Future Action Plans or Personal Development Plans enable the setting of goals at the start of a young person's involvement with a support service, naming or describing what they hope to work towards and get from their involvement. It is important to use these as markers and return back to them to reflect, measure progress and adjust when needed.

Goal setting will build on the conversations emerging from initial assessments. Organisations can choose to incorporate goal setting into the above assessments, or record them separately. Goal setting must be managed with realistic expectations and a youth support worker can use sources such as UCAS (<https://www.ucas.com/explore/career-list>) or local knowledge of education provider entry requirements to inform the goal setting.





## Individual Learning Plan – Monitoring Placement Value

The main purpose of this form is to log goals and monitor how participation in a course or a placement is helping a young person move towards those goals via regular check-ins across their time on different learning units or activities with the provider. Feedback in this form is captured with a 😞 - to - 😊 scale, but numbers can also be used.

Prior to the monitoring section, the beginning of the form includes sections which relate to skills assessment processes, such as learning styles, functional skills assessments and qualification achievements. These could be completed as part of this form or prior to it with separate paperwork such as those listed above.



Individual learning Plan - Course Feedback



## Referral Process for Individuals with EHCP and navigating SEND teams

Young people with SEND between the ages of 4 to 25 years have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which is a legal document that outlines the level of support they need whilst within education and their transition into employment. This document is only live whilst a young person is within an educational setting. If a young person leaves their education for whatever reason after the age of 18, the EHCP ceases as does the support. An EHCP can be re-instated, but it is a long process and essentially needs to be started from scratch.

If a young person has an EHCP, it is vital that the referral process is controlled and that all the relevant statutory and non-statutory bodies are informed. Typically, the below process is followed when referring a young person with an EHCP into a new support provider or into a work placement.

1. The young person works with not-for-profit organisation Careers South West (CSW) in conjunction with a school, college, or youth support worker to explore options for their next step
2. Once the options have been established with CSW, they make contact with parents or carers and with the future support service and organise interviews or tasters to take place
3. Once a destination is selected, CSW inform the Local Authority (in Devon this is either Devon County Council, Torbay Council or Plymouth City Council) of the service provider selected and works with the Authority to secure the necessary support to make the transition successful
4. The old service provider updates the EHCP and submits this update to the Local Authority
5. The Local Authority updates the EHCP centrally and contacts the new provider for costing with a plan of activities the young person will be engaging with. Once the new provider has presented this, the plan and costings go to a panel to be agreed. The panel is made up of representatives of the council's SEND team, usually made up of SEND case workers, procurement, head of SEND, SENDAISS\* and parents. However, parents cannot attend the review panel of their own child



6. If a young person is transitioning out of education, then the provider or youth support worker, needs to work with CSW, and Adult Social Services to find an appropriate support service (or a placement)
7. Funding to support the placement can be accessed through the Access to Work Scheme, Support Internships and/or Adult Social Services
8. Where the young person has complex needs, other professional bodies might be needed such as Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists, Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Multi-Agency Referral Units, Early Intervention Team, Youth Offender Teams etc.

When working with young people with SEND, it is vital that the process is slow, explained throughout and always reassuring. In many cases, multiple meetings, calls, and consultations are needed to get a right service provider for the young person.

It is important to note that EHCPs can often be several months (or more) out of date, especially when relating to young people whose placements, education or support cross Local Authority boundaries and paperwork procedures. This can lead to delays and challenges matching individuals with services, and subsequently leading to frustration and distorted expectations. It can even represent a safety risk to support workers if they are not aware of historical events or any triggering or sensitive topics, therefore altering their ability to build a relationship with the young person.



## Chapter 2: Finding support

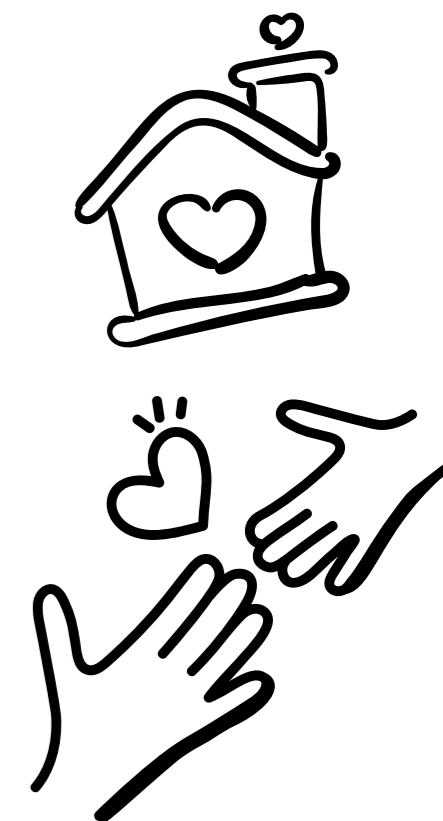
### Staff training

When hiring a qualified youth support worker, it is presumed that they have had adequate training and know the common pathways to access support services, such as universal credit, without any additional support. It is expected they will only be seeking advice on signposting routes and external support for specialist issues or localised contacts.

The organisations we spoke with, said that their youth support workers are not given much training or induction on specialist or localised support services and signposting options because of the amount of information available, the number of existing services and the fact that it changes too quickly. They instead rely upon advice from knowledgeable colleagues and accessing internal databases as needed (see below for more information).

For semi-qualified youth support workers or volunteers who run youth groups, basic training in certain areas should allow for signposting only when specialist support is needed. Training in the following areas is advised:

- Mental Health First Aid
- Housing and Homelessness
- The Benefits System
- Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD)
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Safer Recruitment in Education
- Working with volunteers
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Prevent
- Level 2 Safeguarding
- British Values
- Citizenship
- Sexual Health
- Diversity, Equal Opportunities and LGBTQIA+
- Domestic Abuse Awareness
- Digital Skills



## Areas of demand and access challenges

The youth organisations we spoke with report that the single largest area of demand shown by young people for formal support services is for mental health services. This is supported by evidence taken from two youth mentoring projects currently operating in Devon, Experience Works, part-funded by the European Social Fund, and Empowering Enterprise, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and the European Social Fund. The support areas signposted to by mentors in these projects are shown below (figure 4).

As can be seen, of the 735 incidences of signposting in these projects between April 2017 and June 2022, 16.6% were for mental health services, with 9.8% being for physical health and wellbeing. The other areas most signposted to were volunteering opportunities (11.4%), employment opportunities (15.4%) and education and training (18.6%). It should also be noted that housing services accounted for 7.3% of signposting.

The four partners spoken with on strand 6 of this UKCRF project emphasised the need for housing services and said that they consider housing services to be the second largest area of need for the young people they work with.

### Support Service Demand Areas (Experience Works and Empowering Enterprise Projects)



Figure 4  
Support service areas signposted to by the Empowering Enterprise and Experience Works projects

Unfortunately, most support services, especially mental health services, have long waiting lists of several months or more. However, even looking beyond the length of waiting lists, it is not a straightforward path for young people seeking support.

Partners of this project reported that many young people say they are happy and comfortable in their situation and know where to get support if they need it, but this should not be taken for granted. They may only realise they need support as they get older or the reality of their situation kicks in. And if/when they do seek support, it usually equates to them talking with their family, with peers or with their GP.

To widen awareness of support available, it should not be assumed that promoted support services online will be accessible by those in need of it. The youth services we spoke to indicated services should be wary of an excess of digital contact, as we should not assume everyone has access to technology, or phone data. To complement online presence, word of mouth reputation is key for promoting wider awareness and trust in support services, or use of drop in 'tourist information style' help centres which also support further signposting.

Even when access to technology is possible, this demands a level of literacy, communication skills and confidence to be able to engage effectively. For example, knowing how to complete a structured search online, being able to read into the most appropriate service and understand the different thresholds and requirements for entry.

Beyond finding the right service, confidence and mental health challenges equally play an important role in whether young people are able to approach a service. For example, even when an individual has reached the top of a waiting list, the expectation of communicating via a phone conversation can be difficult for some and may dissuade them from engaging further with the service. A further example is that an individual may use drugs to 'combat their mental health issues', but then get turned away from services that would help their mental health due to the drug use – this rejection can compound the dependence on the drugs.

Experiences of being previously turned away from a service or having felt bounced from one service to another, repeatedly telling their story, can be very distressing. In situations like these, an individual's trust in services will fade and confidence to approach them in the future lost.





## When/Where to Signpost

As youth support workers are often knowledgeable about so many topics and are a 'friendly face' in regular contact with a young person, they build trust in a way that other services don't. This can cause over-dependency. Youth support workers can often end up managing day-to-day tasks on behalf of the young person, such as doctor appointments.

Youth support workers have a strong desire to support those they work with, and it can be second nature to advocate on their behalf. Where this advocacy is often necessary, organisations and individual youth support workers must decide the level of detailed involvement that they expect to input and that is expected of them. Compared to what is accessed independently by the young person.

For example, do youth support workers book the appointments? Do they complete some or all of the paperwork? Do they join as a trusted ally on appointments? These roles will depend on the organisation and their approach.

To minimise the risk of over-dependency, youth support workers must have external services identified, know when to use them, and manage the expectations of both the young person and the service via accurate paperwork.

When signposting out, it is an important responsibility to ensure those signposted to are qualified to handle the issues young people have. Youth support workers should consider the qualifications and competencies of those they are signposting to, especially as signposting to a social prescriber and community interventions become more common.

However, where these 'lighter touch' check-ins or community interventions may not be suitable to meet complex needs, they have been found to help young people on long waiting lists for medical or professional support. For example, getting out into nature, making sure the individual feels listened to, and ensuring they trust someone is working on an outcome for them. These types of social interventions can be especially helpful to enhance young people's self-confidence.

## Directories

When talking to youth organisations in Devon about their signposting approach, it was clear that there is a desire for a comprehensive database where youth support workers can find out key organisations and contact details for the different complex needs of those they support. However, they acknowledge that this is near impossible, especially without dedicated resources, as organisations and key contacts within them are in constant flux.

Instead, organisations often rely upon their 'tried and tested' relationships and the existing knowledge within the team. As such, the knowledge of suitable routes is an especially important and dedicated role for a team's manager or coordinator who will be able to support and guide their colleagues. It is also advised that internal communication and meetings are facilitated to allow for knowledge sharing and troubleshooting within teams.

The knowledge shared within teams will be richer than a database of contact information, and might cover information such as waiting times or admittance thresholds.

Organisations will often use this knowledge to build their own databases which meet their needs.

Suggested headings used for categorising signposting organisations are shown below. Ideally, these can also be filtered by district or area:





# Conclusion

The support services system includes large, medium and small organisations, some of which are operated as statutory services. All services operate within legislative frameworks but have their own processes to ensure they are registering individuals accurately and tracking their needs and development. Navigating this landscape of support can feel overwhelming for both the young person accessing the services and for the support workers there to help them. This document has pulled together a databank of templates that detail the common areas of information which are needed by support services. Becoming familiar with these data areas can help youth support workers create and maintain their own systems, whilst still prioritising the trust and relationship building aspects essential to their work.

This document also introduces the most common support needs of young people, notably mental health support, and discusses the broad knowledge base youth support workers need to fulfil their role. The document finally looks at the support services youth workers need to work with and how this knowledge is organised and distributed amongst teams..



Figure 5  
A screen shot of the Young Devon team's support directory, created on Padlet.com







# PETROC