

**Cheshire
& Greater Manchester**
Community Rehabilitation Company



Taking account of maturity: assessment and good practice

European alternatives to
custody workshop.

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What we will look at

- Introduction to maturity
- What the evidence tell us
- Best practice for staff and managers
- The T2A guide



**Taking Account
of Maturity**

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Introduction to maturity

Changes in Guidelines

- Since 2011, adult sentencing guidelines published by the Sentencing Council for England and Wales have stated that consideration should be given to ‘lack of maturity’ as a potential mitigating factor in sentencing decisions for adults.
- Furthermore, since early 2013, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), in its new Code of Conduct, has for the first time included maturity as a factor for consideration of culpability as part of its public interest test.

What is meant by the concept of Maturity?

- Maturity is a core, developmental concept which addresses the processes through which a young person achieves the status of adulthood.
- These developmental processes include the interactions between physical, intellectual, neurological, emotional and social development.
- Although physical and intellectual development is usually completed during adolescence, for some people emotional and social maturation can continue into the early to mid-twenties.
- Young adults often differ from each other because of their variable maturity and these differences often show themselves in the ways in which individuals manage the multiple transitions which are associated with the journey to adulthood.

The concept of maturity is self evidently not the same as biological age. Blowing out the candles on an 18th birthday cake does not magically transform anyone into a fully functioning and mature adult – even without the life disadvantages many young people in criminal justice have experienced (T2A, 2012:2)



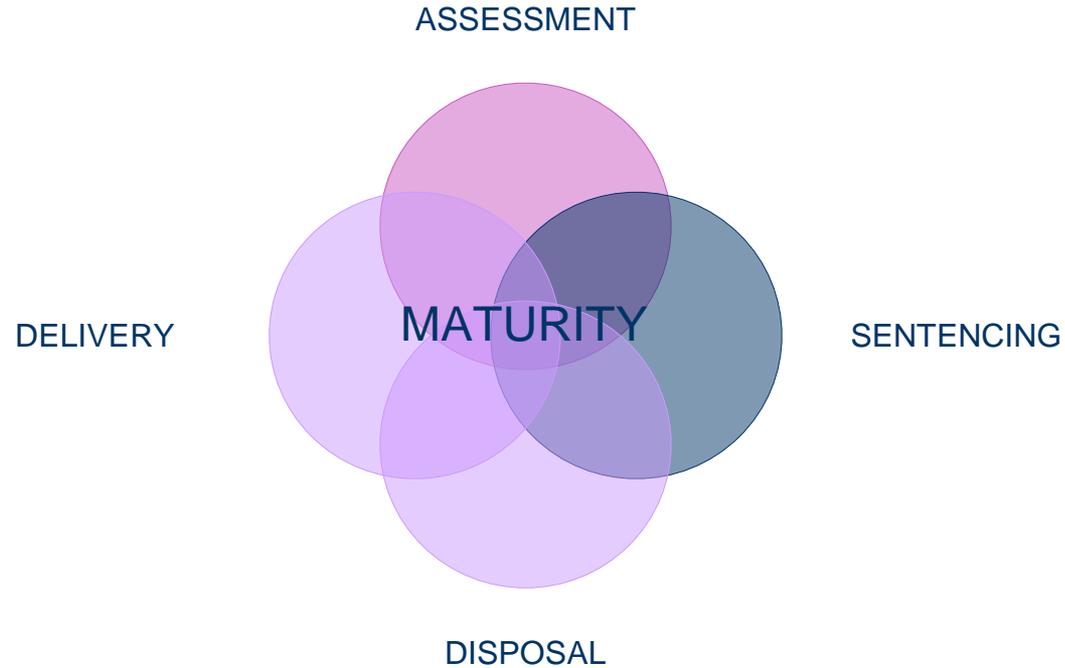
Why is maturity important to CJS staff?

- In England and Wales, the age of 18 has been the point for determining whether criminal justice agencies respond with either juvenile or adult law.
- The T2A Alliance and others have argued that this sudden switch between youth and adult justice does not recognise variability of maturity.
- Young people in the transition to adulthood require specific, tailored support through this process of change.
- Maturity can be influenced by life experiences and also individual characteristics.
- In terms of offending, not only does this age-group experience high levels of recidivism but it is also one when many individuals naturally stop offending (Prior et al.,2011).
- The late teenage years are the peak age for offending, but also the time when a young adult is most likely to desist from crime.

Why is the transition phase critical?

- Crucial opportunity to get our response right
- Getting our perspective right
- Understanding how maturity has effected offending

When And How Is Maturity Relevant?



What the evidence tells us?

- Focus groups with young people have highlighted consistent themes.
- Staff need to have an open mind and be more resilient, with an understanding that young people are more likely to 'kick off' and react quicker.
- Using a 'Temperature check' approach is good practice for averting escalations of anger and encouraging deescalation.
- Common sense practices work, eg 'don't stop me walking out if I am angry, I will calm down and come back'.
- Some clients preferred female staff though male role models were important. All staff needed to have trust and boundaries and listening skills.

What the evidence tells us?

- Sense of humour was rated as very important.
- Young people felt that the relationship needed to work both ways, 'know my name, smile, give a damn'.
- Young people valued being given chance to explain even if they were wrong.
- Non judgemental approaches were critical.
- Second chances were welcomed. Though this didn't mean them 'getting away with it' and should come with structure.

What the evidence tells us?

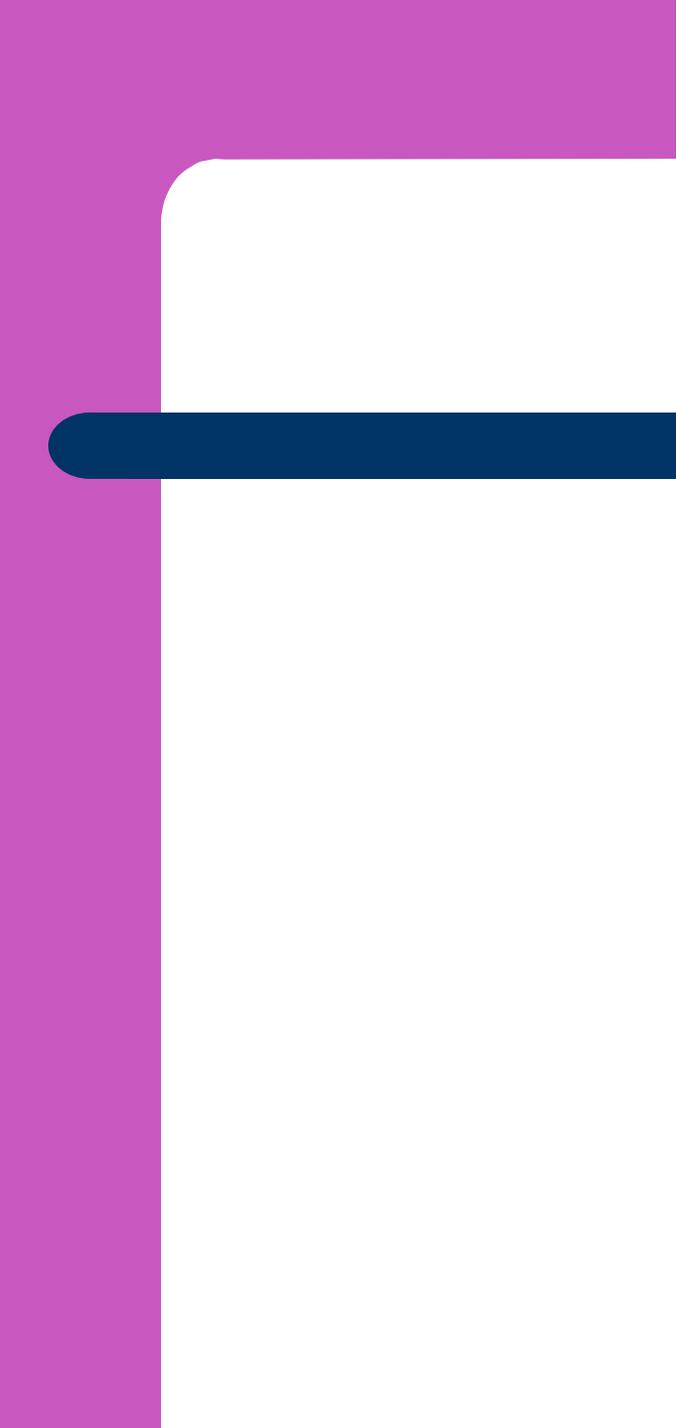
- Young people liked: Not being rushed, being given time to think. Being given a chance to prove themselves, being listened to, a client lounge area where they were trusted to make own cup of tea. Ownership of the space.
- Young people disliked: Travel, volumes of apps, condescending staff.

Best practice for managers

- Managers need to be really aware of the importance in the sequencing of the order, taking account of the Learning disabilities or difficulties. Break orders down into manageable bite sized chunks eg 'I will do, you will do, we will achieve'.
- Capitalise on the diversity of your team. Positive male role models are Important. Good gender and experience balance needed in a team. Recruit people with lived experience where possible.
- Co-participation and co-production are vital. Include feedback from clients and focus groups into any model.
- Managers need to be hands on but also able to deliver.
- Small things make a big impact. Say hello and use the name of new inductions. Young people will usually complain more frequently but informally.
- The group bring different issues. LISTEN. If they are turning up then they want to engage. Custody is often not considered that much of a deterrent by this cohort.
- Flexibility is vital, however beware staff Misinterpreting this for 'doing nothing' or letting compliance slip. This about learning style and approach eg appointment length.

Best practice for staff

- Understand this cohort have different needs.
- Assess using a relevant guide eg T2a.
- Have the right attitude.
- Be flexible and responsive.
- Be innovative.
- A multi agency approach with wrap around services and strong exit pathways works best.

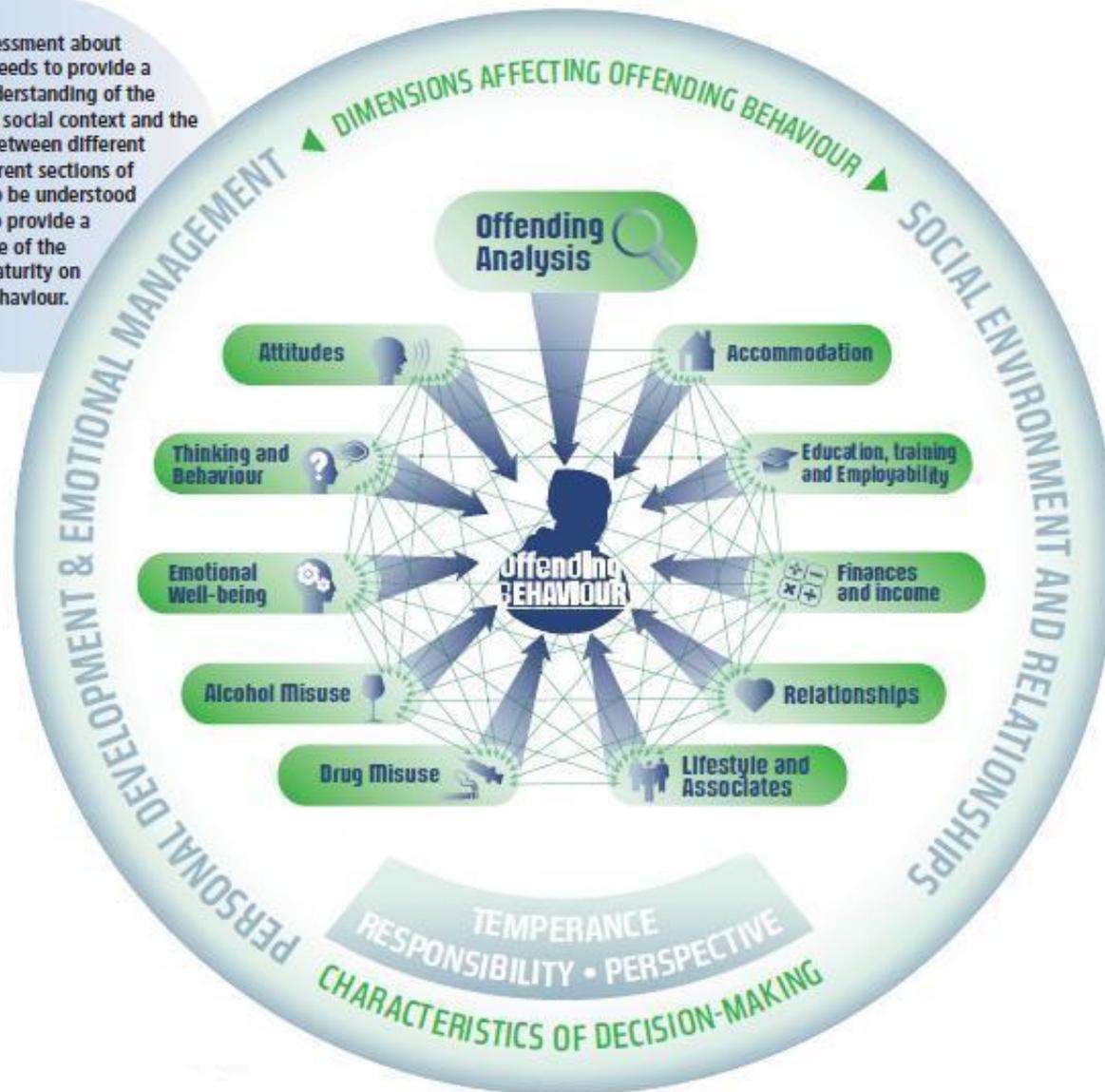
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The T2A guide

How can the guide help?

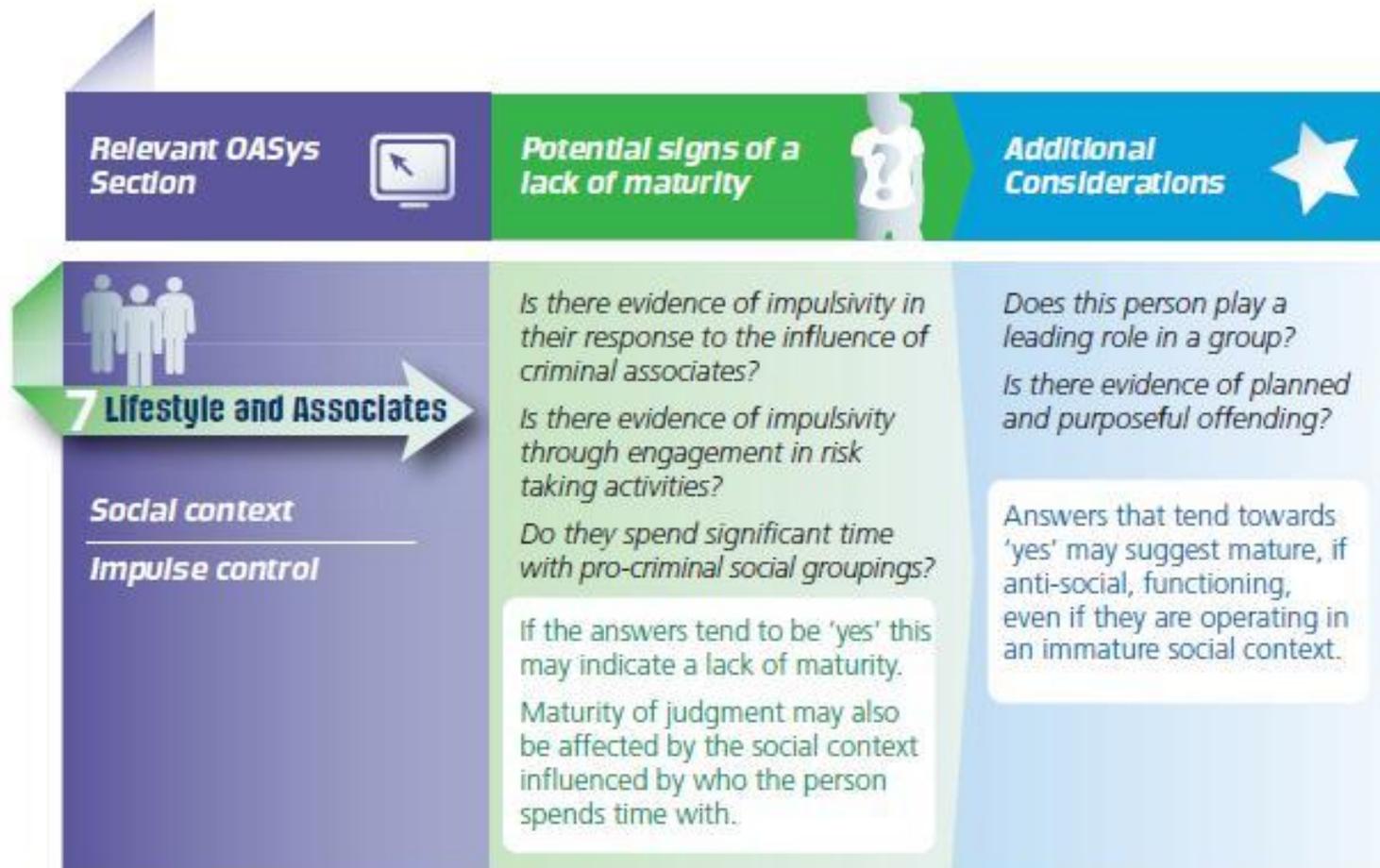
- Enable practitioners to recognise and obtain evidence of an individual's level of maturity
- To help practitioners form judgements on how this might inform analysis
- To inform proposals and sentence planning
- To inform and guide OASys assessment

An assessment about maturity needs to provide a holistic understanding of the individual, their social context and the interaction between different elements. Different sections of OASys will need to be understood interactively to provide a robust picture of the influence of maturity on offending behaviour.



It's about needing to have a holistic understanding

Example OASys section



Assessment

- Inform offence analysis
- Inform risk assessment
- Identify evidence which supports or rejects finding a lack of maturity
- **Looks at specific aspects of maturation as opposed to labelling young adults as simply immature**

Proposal

- Inform arguments for specific interventions
- Argue for specific resources
- Explain explicitly the underlying logic of proposals

Pre-Sentence report

- Consider the language used e.g. avoid jargon so young adult understands
- Highlight potential impact of custody to Court
- Think about sequencing and balancing the proposal

Looking ahead to Sentence Planning

- Build on the young adults' strengths by harnessing their energy and potential enthusiasm
- Encourage compliance by providing clear and simple instructions
- Develop conditions to support desistence by working with other agencies and making appropriate links
- Maximise the Practitioners influence by collaborating with young adult and demonstrating commitment

Other things to consider

- Is there evidence of a learning disability or difficulty?
- If they are female consider impact of abuse and trauma.
- If they are BAME consider issues of identity and culture.
- Ex-veteran? Vulnerable?

Any Questions ?

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