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Delivering the NOMS Offender Management Model

Practitioner views from the Offender
Management Community Cohort Study

**Caroline Turley, Harriet Ludford, Meg Callanan and
Matt Barnard**

National Centre for Social Research

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Disclaimer

The views expressed are those of the authors and are not necessarily shared by the Ministry of Justice (nor do they represent Government policy).

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Policy briefing

This qualitative study was designed to explore the factors affecting the operation and impact of the Offender Management Model (OMM) through 45 in-depth interviews with individuals from offender management teams. The main implications of the research are as follows.

- Staff generally supported the OMM, in particular the concept of continuity of offender management, as well as the review process. They reported delivering the OMM as far as possible in their offices.
- However, staff believed that pressures on the resources required to deliver end-to-end offender management needed to be addressed if the approach was to be fully realised. Interviewees reported that staff sickness, high turnover of Offender Managers¹ and demanding caseloads across the local offices had led to breaks in continuity of relationships with offenders. It was beyond the remit of this study to investigate how widespread these issues were.
- Increased Probation Officer (PO) caseload was also felt to have led to a shift towards shorter supervision sessions as well as an increasing transfer of tasks to Probation Service Officers (PSOs),² including preparation of Fast Delivery Reports (FDRs), supervision of cases managed by POs and, in some offices, management of tier 3 offenders. There was evidence to suggest that PSOs had not always received sufficient training in these areas. If it is necessary for PSOs to perform these tasks, it is crucial they feel equipped to do so and it is therefore recommended that the nature and extent of PSO training is re-examined.³
- In addition, Offender Managers interviewed did not always have sufficient time to discuss offenders' needs with relevant agencies when preparing Pre-Sentence Reports (PSRs), or to investigate the availability of specific interventions. This had sometimes

¹ The person – of whatever grade and from whichever agency – with allocated responsibility for assessing what each offender requires, engaging the offender in planning and co-ordinating delivery, reviewing progress and evaluating outcomes, taking enforcement action and motivating when needed; as far as can be assured, this is the same person throughout any single period of continuous engagement with NOMS.

² The person qualified to level 3 in the current vocational framework: able to assess risk of harm to others and the need for intervention, and to support offenders to change, but unlikely to have sole responsibility for offenders assessed at high risk of causing serious harm.

³ It is important to note that since this fieldwork was conducted a new PSO qualification framework has been introduced.

led to the inclusion of unsuitable requirements on offenders' orders and the case being recalled to court. It would therefore be worth considering whether information on the availability of local interventions could be made more easily accessible, and whether the timeframe for writing PSRs should be revised.

- Action to stabilise the offender, such as tackling serious alcohol misuse, was felt to be very important in the sequencing of order requirements. It was felt that offending behaviour programmes in particular were likely to be ineffective if such issues had not been addressed. This raises a question about sequencing and the level of resource that should be devoted to work aimed at stabilising offenders, given the potential impact on the effectiveness of interventions.
- Positive offender outcomes, perceived to arise from end-to-end offender management, increased the job satisfaction of Offender Managers. However, some also felt they had become a brokering service at the expense of more direct work with offenders. Face-to-face contact with offenders is important to consider in terms of its potential impact on staff retention, particularly in view of the high staff turnover perceived by staff.

Summary

The overarching aim of this study was to explore the factors affecting the operation and impact of the Offender Management Model.

Context

- The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Offender Management Model (OMM) seeks to achieve the overarching aims of crime reduction, public protection, punishment, and offender reform by promoting end-to-end offender management that underpins an offender's journey through the criminal justice system.
- According to the OMM, this approach is best delivered by an offender management team, led by an Offender Manager who works closely with those delivering interventions, Case Administrators⁴ and Offender Supervisors⁵ (in instances where this is taken on by a separate member of the team).

Approach

- A qualitative approach was used to capture the perspectives of Offender Managers, Case Administrators and intervention key workers on the delivery and impact of the OMM. In total, 45 in-depth interviews were conducted across 15 local probation offices in England and Wales.
- The findings in this report give a good sense of the range and diversity of views and experiences among the staff who were interviewed. However, as the findings are derived from qualitative research, the prevalence of particular views and experiences, whether locally or nationally, cannot be estimated.

⁴ The person responsible for ensuring that the sentence is implemented in line with specified timescales, procedures, deadlines and Standards. Will usually be part of the same team as the Offender Manager or Offender Supervisor.

⁵ The person responsible for implementing the Sentence Plan on a day-to-day basis (usually in the prison setting), dealing with the offender face-to-face, enhancing motivation, securing compliance, helping the offender make the links between one intervention and another, and consolidating learning into consistent behaviour in the offender's social environment. Most likely in the community to be the same person as the Offender Manager, but in certain circumstances the roles will be split.

Results

Delivering the Offender Management Model

- The concept of end-to-end offender management was supported by offender management staff and felt to be delivered as far as possible across the local offices. Barriers identified ultimately centred on staffing. It was reported that staff sickness and high staff turnover had led to breaks in the continuity of relationships.
- High caseloads similarly impacted on continuity, particularly at the Pre-Sentence Report (PSR) stage where preparation was allocated on the basis of who had availability to write them, as opposed to who had capacity to manage the offender post-sentence.
- High caseloads were also felt to have led to a shift towards shorter supervision sessions and the transfer of specific tasks to Probation Service Officers (PSOs), including preparation of Fast Delivery Reports (FDRs), supervision of cases managed by Probation Officers (POs) and, in some offices, management of tier 3 offenders.⁶ There was anecdotal evidence to suggest that PSOs had not received sufficient training in these areas, leaving some feeling under-skilled.
- Insufficient time for Offender Managers to discuss offenders' needs with relevant agencies when preparing PSRs, or to investigate the availability of specific interventions, could lead to the inclusion of unsuitable requirements on offenders' orders and the order being revoked and re-sentenced.
- Two overarching objectives guided the sequencing of order requirements: reducing risk of harm, followed by reducing re-offending. Running alongside these was the need to stabilise the offender, for example by tackling serious alcohol misuse. Consideration was also given to the availability of interventions and when they needed to be implemented. Underpinning all these factors was the need to be responsive to the offender's changing needs and risk factors. It was felt that offending behaviour programmes in particular were likely to be ineffective if risk factors such as serious alcohol misuse had not been addressed.

⁶ Tiering aims to focus resources effectively. Tier 3 covers cases with a medium to high risk of harm, where the emphasis is on rehabilitation (NOMS, 2005). More information on tiering is given in Chapter 1 of the main report.

- Implementing the sentence plan required the Offender Manager to access interventions via a brokerage approach. This was seen as a shift away from the approach where the Offender Managers meet offenders' needs themselves through one-to-one supervision.
- Four factors that facilitated successful supervision were identified by offender management staff: trust; supporting and empowering offenders to make steps towards a future without offending; flexibility in terms of the length, frequency and content of supervision; and the offender's willingness to change. Two barriers to effective supervision were also identified: limited resources in terms of time restrictions and a lack of physical space, and the offender's own circumstances.
- A number of factors were identified as key to supporting offenders in complying with and completing their orders. These included a constructive and consistent relationship between offender and Offender Manager, sufficient resource to ensure offender needs were met and a flexible approach that enabled offenders to meet other responsibilities while simultaneously completing their order.

Outcomes of the Offender Management Model

- Staff felt that continuity of offender management had a positive impact on offenders. A key outcome was that offenders came to trust their Offender Manager, through regular and ongoing contact. This in turn was felt to have encouraged offenders to confide in their Offender Manager about their offending behaviour and personal circumstances. Continuity also allowed the Offender Manager to reflect on progress made over time, which potentially could further motivate the offender.
- However, continuity was not always considered desirable. For example, reallocating the offender to a different Offender Manager was felt to be preferable where the offender was dissatisfied with their sentence and held the PSR author responsible. Otherwise it was felt that the offender might be hostile towards the Offender Manager and their relationship not as constructive as it might be.
- Positive offender outcomes, perceived to arise from an end-to-end approach, increased the job satisfaction of some Offender Managers. However, there were also offender managers who felt that they had become a brokering service at the expense of more direct contact with offenders, which was negatively received by some.

Implications

- Probation trusts should examine figures relating to staff sickness, turnover and caseloads across the local offices in order to make a more accurate assessment of resource pressures.
- It is recommended that probation trusts re-examine the nature and extent of PSO training in the light of changing PSO roles and the new Probation Qualifying Framework.
- It would be worth probation trusts considering whether information on the availability of local interventions could be made more easily accessible to Offender Managers. This would assist the effective targeting and tailoring of interventions to offenders' needs, as well as keeping Offender Managers informed about the availability of specific interventions at certain times. Probation trusts should also consider whether the timeframe for writing PSRs should be revised to enable sufficient consideration of the most appropriate interventions to meet offenders' needs.
- Probation trusts should reflect on the level of resource directed at work aimed at stabilising offenders, given the possible impact on their level of engagement with programmes, and therefore the potential effectiveness of interventions.
- It is recommended that probation trusts consider the amount of time staff have for face-to-face contact with offenders, given its potential impact on staff retention.

1. Context

1.1 Policy background

In 2003, *The Correctional Services Review* (Carter, 2003) set out the need for all elements of the criminal justice system to work more closely together in order to achieve the shared aim of crime reduction. Recommendations were made for reform that would *'break down the silos of prison and probation and ensure a better focus on managing offenders'* (ibid, p. 1). The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Offender Management Model (OMM) was developed largely in response to this (Home Office, 2006) and was based on what the available evidence suggested to be best practice at the time. The OMM sets out to achieve the overarching aims of crime reduction, public protection, punishment, and offender reform by promoting an end-to-end approach to offender management that underpins an offender's journey through the criminal justice system, including periods in custody.

According to the OMM, the end-to-end approach is best delivered by a community-based offender management team, led by an Offender Manager who works closely with those delivering interventions, with those responsible for case administration and with any separate Offender Supervisors. The OMM describes four broad approaches underpinning offender management: punish, help, change and control. These are not mutually exclusive, but are applied in a tiered framework (see Appendix A for a more detailed description of these approaches). The OMM outlines how the relationship between these approaches and the level of risk presented by the offender creates four broad categories of cases:

- Tier 1 cases: **punish** (lowest risk cases);
- Tier 2 cases: **punish** and **help**;
- Tier 3 cases: **punish**, **help** and **change**;
- Tier 4 cases: **punish**, **help**, **change** and **control** (highest risk cases).

In 2004 a Pathfinder project was set up in the north-west of England to explore implementation of the OMM. Research concluded that the OMM was broadly welcomed by staff, particularly the concept of seamless end-to-end offender management. The study also highlighted key challenges that could potentially impact on successful roll-out of the OMM. These included the provision of a shared communication system, sufficient resources to facilitate end-to-end offender management, the timely completion of Offender Assessment System (OASys) assessments,⁷ and sickness and vacancy rates within the probation areas.

⁷ OASys is a standardised process for the assessment of offenders, developed by the National Probation Service and Prison Service.

Sickness and vacancy rates were important challenges as they had the capacity to impact on the continuity of relationships (PA Consultancy Group and MORI, 2005).

Following the Pathfinder, the OMM was rolled out in three phases, with a period of consolidation taking place in 2008–09:

- Phase I (March 2006): offenders on community orders and licences;
- Phase II (November 2006): crossing the custody/community boundary; high/very high risk of harm offenders and Prolific and Priority Offenders (PPOs);
- Phase III (January 2008): offenders serving an indeterminate sentence of imprisonment for public protection (IPP).

It is worth acknowledging that the OMM has not been well received by all and criticisms have been made. For example, Hough (2008) criticises the ‘case-manager/interventions model’ central to the OMM, where it is programmes or interventions that are assumed to make the difference to offender outcomes, while the Offender Manager is more detached and adopts a role of ‘orchestration’. Hough would instead welcome a shift towards the ‘caseworker/craft model’, where the focus is on the craft of working with offenders and the tactics for effecting change, with the Offender Manager central to this process.

1.2 Study aims and objectives

The Offender Management Community Cohort Study (OMCCS) comprises three components: a large-scale longitudinal survey of adult offenders on community orders, collection of administrative data, and a qualitative study. This report presents the findings of the qualitative study only. See Appendix C for further detail about the other components.

The overarching aim of the qualitative study was to explore the factors affecting the operation and impact of the OMM, specifically:

- the processes used to assess offender needs and create sentence plans, with a focus on the factors affecting decisions about the sequencing of interventions;
- the factors affecting the nature and effectiveness of offender supervision;
- the processes used to ensure continuity of offender management and the factors that affect the degree to which these processes are successful; and
- the impacts of the OMM on staff and offenders.

2. Approach

The research was qualitative in design, using 45 face-to-face in-depth interviews. These were chosen as the mode of data collection because the aims of the study required a detailed exploration of the experiences of staff and an analysis of the factors affecting them.

2.1 Selection of the sample

Five probation areas were purposively selected⁸ from the ten involved in the longitudinal survey, to reflect diversity of geographical region and also to incorporate rural and urban areas. In addition, the NOMS probation service area performance ratings⁹ were used to purposively select areas with different levels of performance at the time of sampling. The performance ratings give each probation area a rating of between 1 and 4.¹⁰ Areas were chosen to ensure at least one of each rating.

Within each probation area, three local offices were selected on the basis of caseload, so as to include offices with a high, medium and low caseload relative to that area. Caseload data were supplied by each of the areas involved in the longitudinal survey.

Three members of staff were interviewed at each local office. In order to capture a range of perspectives within the offender management team, the initial aim was to interview the following from each office:

- an Offender Manager, who has overall responsibility for the offender and delivering the sentence's objectives. This could be either a Probation Officer (PO) or a Probation Service Officer (PSO);¹¹
- a Case Administrator, responsible for ensuring that the sentence is implemented in line with specified timescales, procedures and deadlines; and
- an interventions key worker, the bridge between the Offender Manager and the intervention being provided.

However, to ensure that the study captured both the PO and PSO perspective, a higher number of Offender Managers were interviewed than the other two groups. In total, 45

⁸ Sampling in this way involves selection based on dimensions that reflect key differences in the study population that are relevant to the study's objectives.

⁹ Probation quarterly ratings, quarter 2, 2008/09 (MoJ, 2009).

¹⁰ A rating of 1 reflects serious concerns with performance and a rating of 4 reflects exceptional performance.

¹¹ POs are fully qualified to protect the public, manage offenders who pose a high risk of harm to others and influence offenders to change harmful behaviour. PSOs are not trained to manage high risk offenders, but are able to assess the risk of harm to others, the need for intervention and to support offenders to change.

in-depth interviews were conducted with staff from offender management teams.¹²
 The achieved sample interviewed is set out in the table below.

Table 1.1 Achieved sample

Role		Achieved sample
Offender Managers	Probation Officers	11
	Probation Service Officers	7
Key workers ¹³		14
Case Administrators		13
Total		45

2.2 Conduct and analysis of the interviews

The interviews were carried out between November 2009 and May 2010. They were based on a topic guide (see Appendix D) and lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. The qualitative data were analysed using Framework (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) (see Appendix D).

The findings in this report give a good sense of the range and diversity of views and experiences among the offender management staff who were interviewed. As the findings are derived from qualitative research, the prevalence of particular views and experiences, whether locally or nationally, cannot be estimated.

¹² It is worth noting that neither Probation Trust Senior Managers nor Middle Managers were interviewed as it was beyond the remit of this study. It is possible that their perspectives would have differed from the staff interviewed.

¹³ From the following specialisms: Community Payback, substance misuse, employment, training and education (ETE), housing, and accredited offending behaviour programmes.

3. Results

This chapter presents the findings from the qualitative component of the OMCCS, as follows:

- **Section 3.1: The Offender Manager role;**
- **Section 3.2: Delivering the Offender Management Model.** Delivery will be explored according to its core components, known by the acronym ASPIRE (**A**ssess, **S**entence **P**lan, **I**mplement, **R**eview and **E**valuate), under the following headings:
 - Assessment;
 - Sentence planning and implementation;
 - Supervision;
 - Review and evaluation;
- **Section 3.3: Outcomes of the Offender Management Model.**

3.1 The Offender Manager role

A core concept of the OMM is that of ‘one offender: one manager’; a model supported by other research literature on case management (Partridge, 2004).

One offender: one manager

Staff across the local offices described how the ‘one offender: one manager’ approach had been adopted for the majority of their offenders, with low to medium risk cases (tiers 1 and 2) managed by PSOs, and medium to high risk cases (tiers 3 and 4) by POs. There was, however, perceived to be some inconsistency in terms of the management of tier 3 offenders, as in some local offices PSOs were starting to take on this role. Staff perception was that this was being driven by the need to alleviate PO caseloads. This had left some PSOs feeling vulnerable and under-skilled in their role as Offender Manager, as this increase in responsibility had not been matched by any additional training.¹⁴

The concepts of continuity and end-to-end offender management outlined in the OMM were fully supported by offender management staff, and the notion of ‘one offender: one manager’ implemented as far as possible across the local offices. Reported barriers to this approach ultimately centred on staffing. Staff sickness and high levels of staff turnover¹⁵ across the local offices were seen to have led to breaks in continuity of relationships. High caseloads

¹⁴ It should be noted that variation in management of tier 3 offenders is standard practice and expected across probation trusts. This is due to offenders’ risk of harm. For example, a tier 3 offender posing a high risk of serious harm will be managed by a PO; a tier 3 offender with a complex sentence but with a lower risk of serious harm will generally be managed by a PSO.

¹⁵ This was reported to be due to organisational restructuring as well as offender management staff opting to leave their local office.

similarly impacted on continuity, particularly at the Pre-Sentence Report (PSR) stage. Preparation of PSRs was described as being allocated on the basis of who had availability to write them, as opposed to who had capacity to manage the offender post-sentence (see section 3.2).

Co-working

There were instances where offender management and supervision were taken on by separate members of the offender management team; these are referred to as 'co-worked' cases. Staff identified two situations where a case would be co-worked: if the offender had been given an intensive order in the community, or if the offender was in custody.

Management of offenders on intensive orders: Some local offices had seen a shift towards separating the roles of Offender Manager and Offender Supervisor where the offender had been given a complex, intensive order, such as a Drug Rehabilitation Requirement (DRR), or in the case of PPOs. As with PSO management of tier 3 offenders, this approach was felt to be driven by the need to alleviate the unmanageable caseloads held by POs. As such, in co-worked cases the Offender Manager role would be taken on by a PO and the Offender Supervisor role by a PSO.

"As a PSO you only hold low and medium risk cases, but you can take an Offender Supervisor role, perhaps for someone who's maybe high risk ... I work with the Prolifics and that's all Offender Manager and Offender Supervisor. But they're just kind of points of advisory contact really, the POs, because they've been here longer than I have and ... they're more aware of perhaps the procedures you need to use." (PSO Offender Manager, probation area E)

In some local offices, the Offender Supervisor would share responsibility for supervision with the Offender Manager if several contact sessions a week were required, such as for a DRR.

As outlined in the OMM, there are risks associated with allocating tasks to different people and ultimately fragmenting end-to-end offender management. However, staff were generally content with co-working and felt that it worked successfully in their offices. Two factors underpinned this success: clarity in relation to roles and responsibilities, and strong communication. Whilst informal communication was welcomed, management systems such as Delius or CRAMS were used to record contact with offenders and were a valued source of information enabling members of the offender management team to keep track of offenders' progress as well as providing transparency about the action taken by different members. Co-location was thought to further facilitate effective communication in co-worked cases.

“When you share a case you have to ... constantly speak to your colleague ... The officers that share the same room, it’s fine because there’s this constant dialogue between both, [but otherwise] ... you have to keep communicating all the time ... otherwise things may get missed.” (PSO Offender Manager, probation area E)

It was acknowledged that co-working could prove problematic where PSOs were used to holding the case themselves rather than being overseen by a PO. Similarly, there was dissatisfaction among some POs who had enjoyed more direct or face-to-face work with offenders and correspondingly did not enjoy adopting what they perceived as a managerial role. This finding is also supported by previous research (Robinson and Burnett, 2007).

Managing offenders in custody: Offender Managers described how engagement with an offender in custody could promote a stronger relationship on release which in turn could enhance compliance. However, as highlighted in the OMM, it is not feasible or cost effective for regular face-to-face supervision to be delivered in custody. In these circumstances, local offices described how the Offender Manager role would be taken on by a PO or PSO in the community,¹⁶ who would be involved in interviewing the offender for Pre-Sentence Reports (PSRs), sentence planning, reviews and parole meetings where applicable. The Offender Supervisor role would be assumed by probation staff working in prison. There was, however, some confusion about this role in relation to low and medium risk offenders. Some POs and PSOs were of the understanding that the role only existed for high risk offenders, which had led to difficulties making contact with low to medium risk offenders in custody.¹⁷

Further barriers to effective management of custody cases included difficulties in communicating with prison-based offender management teams. Communication was better when prisons were nearby and Offender Managers had already built up a relationship with the team there. There was also a perception that workload pressures on both community and prison-based teams meant that communication sometimes broke down. Examples of failures in communication included Offender Managers not being informed of prison transfers or sentence planning meetings that had been scheduled in custody.

In some areas, restrictions were placed on the distance Offender Managers were permitted to travel to visit offenders in custody, and this was felt to have an impact on their ability to

¹⁶ Depending on the risk posed by the offender, as above.

¹⁷ It is important to note that according to the OMM, offender management in prison applies to high and very high risk of serious harm, PPO and IPP offenders. Offender Supervisors usually work with these offenders, but in

engage effectively with the offender. In other areas, priority for face-to-face visits was given to the highest risk cases, with finances and time pressures preventing Offender Managers from visiting lower risk offenders. Visits were also generally limited to one a year. These restrictions had led to alternative methods of communication including meetings conducted by video link (where available) and telephone, and Offender Managers writing letters to offenders and encouraging them to write back. Whilst such methods were felt to be *'better than nothing'*, they were considered less effective than face-to-face meetings; poor quality video links were felt to impact on the ability of the Offender Manager to build a relationship with the offender and to foster a constructive dialogue.

3.2 Delivering the Offender Management Model

This section describes how offender management teams deliver the OMM according to its core components, known by the acronym ASPIRE (**A**ssess, **S**entence **P**lan, **I**mplement, **R**eview and **E**valuate). In exploring implementation of the sentence plan it also examines the role of offender supervision, given that the OMM describes supervision as the process which turns the offender's sentence plan into a reality.

Assessment

Offender Managers noted that the first assessment undertaken by probation staff was the PSR,¹⁸ the purpose of which is to assist the court in determining the most suitable way of dealing with an offender by assessing the nature and seriousness of the offence, as well as risk of harm. PSRs were described as taking three forms: the Standard Delivery Report (SDR), Fast Delivery Report (FDR) and oral reports.¹⁹ SDRs are reserved for more complex cases where there is felt to be a potentially high risk of serious harm, such as cases involving domestic violence or child protection, and are prepared within 15 days. FDRs are written for all other cases, prepared in court on the day of sentencing or within five days.²⁰

Staff described how they had witnessed a shift towards greater use of FDRs, and there was some awareness that a new national target was driving this change.²¹ The increase in use was seen as an effective way of improving efficiency in the probation service (because they

some prisons Offender Supervisors provide a management function for low and medium risk offenders. This is a local decision made by the relevant authorities in each prison.

¹⁸ It should be noted that offenders can be sentenced without a PSR, in which case their first assessment is in custody or within the first five or 15 days of a community order.

¹⁹ Oral reports were not raised in the interviews. They are delivered when sentencing requires minimal information, regardless of the seriousness of the offence.

²⁰ The sentencer will sentence an offender once they feel that they have received adequate background information in order to do so, usually once the PSR has been received.

²¹ The 'target' referred to in the text is a management information measure which is not included in the Probation Trusts Rating System (PTRS). OM40 in the PTRS is a completion by timeliness target and not by type.

are written for low to medium risk cases they require less information and so are quicker to prepare than SDRs). In addition, PSOs were tasked with writing FDRs, which meant that POs were able to spend less time preparing PSRs and could instead focus on managing their caseload. However, despite these perceived benefits, two barriers were identified as impairing the effectiveness of FDRs, as well as PSRs more generally.

Barriers to the effectiveness of PSRs

Training: The training received by PSOs was considered by some to be insufficient in equipping them with the skills needed to write FDRs. Some POs and PSOs felt that the limited training given to PSOs on risk assessment impacted on their ability to decide which of the PSRs was most appropriate. The training received about how to prepare an FDR was also felt to be lacking in detail, particularly in relation to making recommendations to the court. There were instances where this had led to PSOs feeling uncertain about the accuracy of their outputs.

Limited resources: Limited resources were considered a barrier to the effectiveness of PSRs in terms of the time restrictions faced by POs and PSOs and lack of physical space. First, the time allocated to produce PSRs, particularly FDRs,²² was deemed insufficient and unrealistic. Exacerbating this issue was the lack of video-conferencing facilities in some local offices, which meant that a prison visit was necessary in order to interview offenders in custody. Whilst face-to-face interviewing was considered preferable in being able to build a rapport with the offender, the time taken to travel to and from prison was not factored into the time allocated for this task.

Time restrictions were also felt to have a substantial impact on the quality of the PSR and on the appropriateness of the subsequent order. Such restrictions meant that Offender Managers did not always have sufficient time to discuss offenders' needs with relevant key workers or partner agencies when putting together PSRs – an important component of the teamwork approach championed by the OMM. Staff felt that not having time to prepare a PSR and involve other agencies could lead to the inclusion of unsuitable requirements on offenders' orders in some instances. This in turn could mean the order having to be revoked and re-sentenced, creating additional strain on Offender Managers and the court system.

“If you have got a poor report written by ... someone who hasn't had enough time, then it could mean that basically they [the offender] have got the wrong order, something that is not actually going to address their offending. A colleague of mine, she has just received an order where ... this person has been given the

²² Ninety minutes are allocated in total; 45 minutes to interview the offender and another 45 to write the report.

integrated domestic abuse programme. The problem is, he has got learning difficulties, [and] one of the criteria ... is that ... your literacy has to be reasonably good ... She will have to take it back to court.” (PO Offender Manager, probation area B)

Furthermore, there was a growing concern that the pressures on time and resources across the probation service meant that FDRs were being written for offenders whose offence actually warranted a more in-depth assessment. It was felt that ‘cutting corners’ in this way increased the risk of harm and re-offending for these offenders as they might potentially receive a sentence that did not sufficiently address their offending behaviour.

The lack of appropriate space to prepare FDRs in court was also highlighted as a problem in some of the local offices. PSOs mentioned that they were not always able to find vacant rooms in court to interview offenders in, so they either had to share a room with other people or interview offenders in the corridors of the court building. Both scenarios were considered barriers to the preparation of a well-written, accurate FDR and also impacted on the level of confidentiality offered to the offender.

Continuity from assessment to offender management

Staff felt that, in most cases, the management of an offender should be taken on by the author of the PSR; a preference echoed in previous research (Burnett, 1996). Such continuity was felt to facilitate a positive working relationship, as the Offender Manager would already have started establishing some form of rapport with the offender, with the offender having disclosed details about their offence or background more generally. However, whilst this was considered to be in the best interests of the offender, lack of Offender Manager capacity meant that continuity was not always feasible in practice. Preparation of PSRs was generally allocated on the basis of who had availability to write them, as opposed to who had capacity to manage the offender post-sentence. The author of the PSR would therefore not necessarily be able to manage the case and so this would be taken on by an Offender Manager with more capacity.

“You would give the order to the person [OM] that had done the [pre-sentence] report to achieve end-to-end offender management ... [But] if ... somebody else had got quite a bit more capacity, it would make sense to then not ... It is a balance between achieving end-to-end offender management and making sure you’ve got the right balance in capacity.” (Case Administrator, probation area D)

The increasing use of FDRs over SDRs was identified as another barrier to retaining the same Offender Manager from assessment through to management. This was because FDRs

were written by PSOs who would not be qualified to manage the offender if the decision was made to re-tier the offender and classify them as medium to high risk during sentencing. In such instances offender management would need to be taken on by a PO. Specialist report-writing teams established in some local offices were an additional barrier to continuity.

It is important to stress that Offender Managers did not always consider it desirable to manage an offender whose PSR they had written. Reallocating the offender was felt to be preferable in instances where the offender was dissatisfied with their sentence and held the PSR author responsible. Otherwise it was felt that the offender might be hostile towards the Offender Manager and the relationship between them not as constructive as it might be.

“There’s a guy that I’m still working with ... I did the PSR on him and I recommended custody because that was the safest option that was there, and the courts agreed ... He probably would have benefited from being reallocated ... [because] any time that I’m challenging him he’s just kicking off.” (PO Offender Manager, probation area D)

Sentence planning and implementation

The OMM states that once an offender has been sentenced, their needs are further assessed via a range of different sources, including the offender themselves and assessments completed by other service providers. However, in practice, staff relied heavily on the PSR, particularly if an SDR had been required, as the report would already include proposals for the sentence plan.

Whilst the OMM stresses the importance of the offender’s engagement and involvement in the assessment and sentence-planning process, other research carried out with offenders on their views of the OMM suggests varying levels of offender engagement and involvement in practice (Chana, 2008).

Offender Managers interviewed for this study reported that in practice they involved offenders in a range of ways and at different stages of the planning process: via self-assessment questionnaires, informal discussion with the offender, or discussion about the plan after it had been composed by the Offender Manager. Offenders were then required to confirm they agreed with the contents of the sentence plan.

Involvement of other members of the offender management team at this stage varied across the local offices. As with PSRs, time restrictions meant that Offender Managers were not always able to discuss offenders’ needs with relevant partner agencies when preparing the sentence plan, despite acknowledging this to be the ideal. Similarly, the time and financial

constraints discussed in section 3.1 meant that Offender Managers could only meet with Offender Supervisors in custody in relation to sentence planning for high risk cases.

Selection and sequencing of interventions

It was considered essential that the interventions selected for an offender's sentence plan were tailored to the type of offence committed. Such interventions are often specified by mandatory sentence requirements and so automatically included on the sentence plan. These would cover interventions such as Community Payback or accredited offending behaviour programmes. For example, if assessment revealed that offending behaviour was linked to alcohol consumption, there might be a sentence requirement for an intervention that addressed alcohol misuse such as the accredited Low Intensity Alcohol Programme (LIAP). Alongside offence-related needs, Offender Managers identified the following factors as influencing the interventions selected for inclusion on the offender's sentence plan.

Offender risk factors: Offender Managers felt that the sentence plan needed to address risk factors such as homelessness, financial instability or serious alcohol or drug misuse. Not addressing these issues could render other interventions ineffective, meaning that careful consideration needs to be given to sequencing of interventions, as discussed below.

Availability of the intervention: Offender Managers suggested that availability had the greatest bearing on the inclusion of accredited offending behaviour programmes on sentence plans.²³ If there was perceived to be minimal need for a specific programme in a local office then it was considered inefficient to train staff to facilitate it, and consequently the programme would not run. If it seemed that an offender would benefit from that programme, a non-accredited alternative would be sought. In instances where the availability of a programme was limited, then high risk cases would be prioritised and the programme would not be included on the sentence plan for lower risk offenders. Of course, specific programmes might have been recommended for the offender at the PSR stage and so could potentially be a mandatory sentence requirement. This highlights the importance of having sufficient time to prepare the PSR and involve other relevant agencies in the process, to avoid the inclusion of unsuitable requirements on offenders' orders, as discussed above.

Targets: Despite a heightened awareness of the targets for intervention referrals, they had little impact on the interventions selected by Offender Managers. At best, they were viewed as a reminder to assess offenders who would potentially benefit from a specific intervention.

²³ However, this is not necessarily a weakness of the OMM per se, but with the resources commissioned in probation areas.

At worst, targets were seen as potentially damaging to the offender, because of the risk that they might drive Offender Managers to recommend interventions that were unsuitable for the offender. One Offender Manager had worked with offenders who had very negative experiences of formal education, and hence was strongly opposed to targets relating to ETE (education, training and employment) referrals.²⁴

It was thought that the sequencing of interventions needed to be fluid and responsive to the offender's changing needs, circumstances and risk factors. Notwithstanding this, two major overall objectives guided Offender Managers' approach to sequencing: first, reducing risk of harm (primarily to others, but also to the offender themselves), followed by reducing re-offending. Running concurrently with these was action to stabilise the offender, thereby tackling barrier factors such as homelessness or serious alcohol or drug misuse.

"It's about what's going to get them most immediately stable ... and whether the risk dictates that that needs to be done right there or then ... A drug and alcohol user that you've got for financial offending, and has ... domestic violence ... and therefore child protection issues. They've not got any contact with a child at the moment [so] you need to do background checks ... but that's as far as it goes actively. Domestic violence issues: he's not currently in a relationship, therefore, those are things that need to be explored, but not necessarily then. If he gets ... a new partner, you bring those [interventions] forward ... Drugs is the thing that's chaotic at the moment, therefore that's linked to a risk of re-offending ... so you'd tackle the drug use [first]." (PO Offender Manager, probation area D)

It was felt that offending behaviour programmes in particular were likely to be ineffective if barrier factors were not addressed prior to referral.

A further consideration in terms of sequencing was the availability of the intervention, specifically offending behaviour programmes. Waiting lists could either benefit or hinder sequencing. First, they could provide the Offender Manager and offender with the opportunity to address possible barrier factors prior to starting the programme. However, if there were no such factors, it was considered crucial to capitalise on the motivation some offenders were perceived to feel at the start of their order. Long waiting lists could quash this enthusiasm, and to combat this some local offices would send offenders to neighbouring offices to undertake the programmes, providing there was availability.

²⁴ It is important to acknowledge that education does not have to be delivered in a formal classroom setting and that other options are available.

The final factor seen to impact on sequencing was how the intervention needed to be implemented. It was felt that some interventions, such as Drug Rehabilitation Requirements and Community Payback, needed to take place shortly after sentencing and so should be prioritised in terms of sequencing. However, it is also important to note that Community Payback is a punishment given on sentence and as such cannot be sequenced in the same way as other interventions.

Implementing the sentence plan

Implementing the sentence plan required access to interventions and resources, increasingly via a brokerage approach. Brokering was felt to be crucial to supervision under the OMM, and this was seen as a shift away from the previous 'assist and befriend' approach whereby the Offender Manager would seek to meet offenders' needs themselves through one-to-one supervision. Offender Managers described how they increasingly perceived their role to be one of overseeing: identifying offenders' needs, securing and deploying the most appropriate interventions to meet those needs and monitoring progress thereon.

"[Supervision] it's kind of like the centre of the spider's web isn't it? Then you've got all the bits on the outside going on ... the accommodation provider, the drugs worker ... they've got their own particular tasks whereas ours is more kind of generic, more an overview." (PO Offender Manager, probation area E)

In order to secure the most appropriate interventions, Offender Managers required a thorough understanding of the in-house provision available, including Community Payback projects and accredited offending behaviour programmes, as well as purchased external provision,²⁵ such as ETE work or accommodation providers. Whilst accessing mainstream service provision was seen as central to the brokerage role, time was considered a barrier to identifying new providers, with restricted internet access in some local offices an additional obstacle. Despite these barriers, there were Offender Managers who would seek out new providers in order to secure interventions that best met the needs of their offenders. Commitment to this task was such that some Offender Managers would research available provision outside work hours.

Supervision

The OMM states that supervision should be delivered via 'a *relationship*' between the Offender Manager and the offender, and specifically highlights the formation and maintenance of a trusting relationship as the bedrock of supervision. This was echoed in the accounts of Offender Managers across the local offices, who described this relationship as

²⁵ Commissioned by the Regional Offender Manager (ROM).

being formed predominantly during one-to-one sessions.²⁶ These sessions focused on offence-related issues, offenders' personal needs and any practical issues that had arisen in the offenders' lives.

Offender Managers reported that offence-related work involved reflecting upon offending history and working on strategies to prevent re-offending, such as thinking skills, problem-solving skills, anger management and conflict resolution. Victim-awareness work was another feature and was often instigated early on in the order to prompt offenders to consider their offence and the impact on the victim, and thus take ownership of their actions. Pre- and post-programme work was viewed as another important aspect of offence-related work, the purpose of which was to facilitate the effectiveness of the programme with which the offender was engaging. Pre-programme work consisted of making offenders aware of what the programme involved and motivating them prior to commencement, whilst post-programme work aimed to consolidate learning.

Providing support to offenders in crisis was considered a vital part of supervision. However, Offender Managers were mindful of when the support required was outside their remit and professional counselling was required, and made referrals to appropriate external agencies when necessary. The approach of Offender Managers in these situations echoes psychotherapy and counselling literature which describes how practitioners must convey empathy, respect, warmth and '*therapeutic genuineness*' (McNeill *et al.*, 2005).

One-to-one sessions also provided an opportunity to address more practical issues that had arisen, such as financial difficulties and problems related to accommodation. As discussed, such factors had the potential to destabilise an offender and so it was important to address them. Offender Managers would provide immediate support in supervision by giving advice and assistance in relation to finances and housing problems. Additionally, they would broker support on the offender's behalf where appropriate; for example with housing providers and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Facilitators to effective supervision

Staff identified four facilitators to successful supervision. The first of these, **trust**, was considered the foundation to a successful relationship between the offender and Offender Manager. Offender Managers would adopt various strategies in order to gain offenders' trust, including a befriending approach and occasional leniency where considered appropriate.

²⁶ Burnett (1996) described one-to-one work as being at the core of supervision programmes across probation areas involved in the research.

One example given was allowing a missed appointment early on in an order, when the offender reported having lost their bus pass. Obtaining the offender's trust was key, as it was thought that this in turn would encourage the offender to make honest disclosures about their offending behaviour and personal circumstances.

Supporting offenders in **envisaging a future** without offending and then empowering them to take steps towards this was also considered an important aspect of supervision and one that underpinned the maintenance of a positive working relationship. This approach supports research which identifies the acquisition of a '*sense of agency*' (the ability to make choices and govern one's own life) as the key difference between persistent offenders and '*desisters*' (McNeill, 2009).

Offender Managers also felt that **flexibility** in terms of the length, frequency and content of supervision was crucial, as supervision had to be responsive to offenders' needs. Delivering longer supervision sessions or more frequent supervision than was prescribed by their risk tier or stage in the order was essential when offenders had serious problems or were particularly chaotic; turning offenders away when they needed help could be highly detrimental to their progress. Similarly, responsiveness in relation to the content of supervision could also facilitate success, by adapting supervision content to suit the needs of and progress made by the individual.

Finally, an offender's **willingness to change** was highlighted as essential to successful supervision. Willingness to change tended to be linked to external factors including age, stage in offending career and the role of significant others. This echoes the process of desistance outlined in offender supervision literature, described as relating to age and maturity, social ties or bonds, and changing personal identities (McNeill, 2009). Once an objective change has occurred in an offender's life, it is the role of the Offender Manager to harness that, help offenders to realise the value of that change and then work towards desistance.

"The young man that is sort of 18, 19 and he's been involved in a couple of offences and at the time he thought it was fun but he's now come to a period in his life where he's trying to get on ... they're the ones that you get the ... best success from." (PSO Offender Manager, probation area E)

Barriers to effective supervision

Two predominant barriers to effective supervision were identified by Offender Managers: limited resources and the offender's own circumstances. **Limited resources** were considered a barrier in terms of both the time restrictions faced by Offender Managers and

lack of physical space. The time restrictions faced were felt to be due to a shift towards shorter supervision sessions in recent years; sessions that would have typically lasted up to an hour now last between 15 and 30 minutes, with Offender Managers only able to justify spending an hour with an offender if they are particularly high risk.²⁷ This shift was attributed to two factors – first, the move towards a more managerial role of the Offender Manager. Offender Managers felt this left them with little time to do offence-related work with offenders as they had to focus their supervision time on basic risk management and making referrals, echoing observations of the more ‘detached’ role Offender Managers adopt under the OMM (Hough, 2008). This led to resentment among some Offender Managers who had joined the probation service in order to work directly with offenders and address their offending behaviour.

“You are not there to work with an offender. You are merely there to assess their needs and then buy them [interventions] in. Whereas I think most OMs feel that their role is to address offending behaviour and to complete offence-focused work.” (PO Offender Manager, probation area A)

The second reason for the shift was that caseloads were felt to have increased, particularly for PSOs. One reason suggested for this was the number of instances where offenders’ risk categorisations were lowered to tier 1 or 2, allowing PSOs to hold these cases and thereby reducing pressure on PO resource. The added pressure on their workload led to reduced time spent on supervision, sometimes leaving them with time only to provide a ‘meet and greet’ service.

“[An offender] might be actually in weekly ... but that means they’re coming in for about five minutes a week, because a PSO might have a huge caseload of about 100 cases, so all they can do is tick boxes, ... see people and then send them away again. They’re not actually doing anything with regards to ... changing behaviour ... There’s basically no time to do these things.” (PO Offender Manager, probation area B)

The lack of appropriate office space to conduct supervision was also highlighted as a problem in some of the local offices, to the extent that sometimes one-to-one sessions had to be delayed because there was nowhere suitable to conduct them. While offenders would report to their Offender Manager in the corridor in some offices, Offender Managers were aware that they could not conduct offence-focused work there as this would compromise the

²⁷ The National Standards 2007 outlines the amount of contact offenders should have with their Offender Manager, on the basis of the level of risk they pose.

content of the session as well as the quality of work conducted, as in order to maintain confidentiality there were limits as to what could be discussed.

Factors relating to the offender were identified as potential barriers to successful supervision. These included substance misuse problems, a lack of financial stability and generally chaotic lifestyles, all of which could potentially be addressed through appropriate interventions. However, as already discussed, of more importance was the offender's willingness to change. Offender Managers described how a large proportion of offenders deny that their offending is problematic and/or are satisfied with their current situation. In these instances, regardless of their approach or content of supervision, it was extremely difficult for Offender Managers to achieve positive outcomes. Whilst Offender Managers described how they would try to motivate offenders to change, for example through encouragement, referring to appropriate services and interventions, and challenging certain behaviours, ultimately it was felt imperative that the offender wanted to change.

Review and evaluation

Reviewing offender progress

Formal reviews: To comply with National Standards, formal reviews were conducted with offenders in the community every 16 weeks. Their purpose was to monitor progress, assess change in level of risk, review the sentence plan and revise or set new objectives if necessary. If significant events had occurred within the 16-week period a review would be carried out earlier; including completion of a programme, breach, or a significant life event that the Offender Manager felt may impact on the level of risk posed by the offender. Exceptions to this scheduled review process were tier 1 offenders who were considered low risk and did not have a supervision element to their order.

For custody cases, formal reviews took place annually. Offender Managers felt these were important and that engagement with an offender in custody could promote a stronger relationship on release, which in turn could enhance compliance in the community. However, some barriers to effective management of custody cases were raised, as discussed in section 3.1, including difficulties in communicating with prison-based offender management teams and restrictions on the distance Offender Managers were permitted to travel for visits.

Overall, the perception of Offender Managers was that the review process was extremely beneficial, despite the resources involved. It is worth noting that Case Administrators were described as taking on the majority of the administration related to the review process and this might have impacted on Offender Managers' views. The review process was felt to be crucial in keeping the sentence plan on track and keeping the Offender Manager and the

offender focused on the next steps. The process was also felt to have a positive effect on the motivation of the offender, particularly in providing an opportunity to feed back positive messages on progress and to reassess the sentence plan in the light of changing needs.

Informal monitoring: In addition to formal reviews, informal monitoring took the form of regular email and phone contact with agencies working with the offender. This information would feed in to supervision sessions and would be drawn on at 16-week reviews. A range of management systems were utilised by offices to record contact with offenders. These were a valued source of shared information that enabled members of the offender management team to keep track of attendance and progress on programmes and with other elements of the sentence plan. Facilitators to maintaining effective communication included co-location of staff and regular staff meetings. Offender management teams also valued three-way meetings on completion of accredited programmes as a way of monitoring progress and identifying next steps. These involved the programme tutor, the Offender Manager and the offender.

Risks to successful monitoring of offender progress included ineffective communication. There was a concern in some areas that different members of the offender management team did not always communicate effectively and that a lack of understanding of each other's roles exacerbated this issue, particularly in relation to Community Payback and Offender Managers. Recommendations were made for greater use of all-staff meetings, joint training sessions and shadowing of each others' roles to promote improved communication, which in turn would improve monitoring and review.

Compliance, breach and enforcement

Staff reported on how enforcement procedures were enacted if an offender failed to comply with the requirements of their sentence.²⁸ Failure to comply included not attending supervision, a programme or unpaid work session without providing an acceptable explanation in advance. After the first missed appointment, a warning letter was sent out giving the offender five days in which to provide an acceptable explanation for their absence. If evidence was provided, the warning letter would be withdrawn. If no evidence was provided, and they failed to attend a second appointment, breach proceedings would be enacted and the case would be referred to court.

Once notification of failure to attend an appointment had been given, responsibility for commencing breach proceedings lay with the Offender Manager responsible for the offender.

²⁸ Enforcement procedures are outlined in full in the National Standards 2007 (Ministry of Justice, 2007).

Responsibility for completing the paperwork and preparing the case for court tended to lie with the Case Administrator although this varied, with some offices having a dedicated Enforcement Team or Officer who dealt with enforcement procedures.

Staff identified a range of factors that were felt to impact on the implementation and effectiveness of enforcement action. These are discussed below.

Flexibility and discretion: The extent to which offender management teams felt they had discretion and flexibility in how they enforced breach procedures varied across the Offender Managers interviewed. Some staff felt that it was important to use their judgement when deciding whether to pursue an enforcement action. For example, an Offender Manager working with offenders on DRRs reflected that the overall goal of public protection and offender rehabilitation could, in some cases, be better served through leniency in enforcement proceedings, as applying such discretion could have a positive motivational effect on the offender.

“I will only breach somebody [as a] very last resort. If I can get them to comply or if I can say ‘look, I should have really breached you, but I am going to give you a chance here’, nine times out of ten they take it and it improves the relationship ... I probably shouldn’t use the amount of discretion that I do, but I just think I have got more chance of getting results with somebody.” (PO Offender Manager, probation area B)

Similarly, it was felt that strict adherence to the enforcement procedure would not be in the public’s best interest as additional requirements on orders for offenders with chaotic lifestyles were only setting them up to fail. There was a perception amongst Offender Managers that their knowledge of the offender enabled them to identify genuine cases where an exception should be made and they felt it was important that they had the flexibility to do this. How far staff felt they had this discretion varied, with some exercising a degree of discretion and others voicing frustration that they felt they had to start enforcement procedures when they did not feel it was in the best interests of the offender concerned.

Flexibility and discretion were felt to work less well in offices where offenders with unpaid work requirements were managed by Offender Managers outside the Community Payback team. In these circumstances, responsibility for enforcement action lay with Offender Managers who may have minimal contact with the offender concerned and this inevitably limited their ability to judge whether enforcement action was warranted. There was a perception that Offender Managers were inconsistent in their enforcement procedures in

these situations. Such inconsistency was felt to cause resentment among offenders in unpaid work groups, have a de-motivating impact and make the group more difficult to supervise.

“It’s caused a few problems recently because there isn’t that consistency across the board ... Some, if they miss for a second time it’s going to be breach..., sometimes it’s a compliance review and the breach never happens, but of course all the offenders ... talk to each other ... [and] it’s sending the wrong message ... It’s a little bit difficult for the supervisor then to manage because you’ve got ... people on a group that aren’t too happy.” (Case Administrator, probation area A)

This issue was further exacerbated by poor communication between some Offender Managers and Community Payback teams, where some Community Payback staff felt they were not always kept informed about decisions on enforcement action. In areas where responsibility for enforcement was held within the Community Payback team, these issues were less of a concern; staff felt better able to judge each case, a more consistent approach was adopted and there were fewer opportunities for communication to break down.

Targets: There was concern that targets set for enforcement action conflicted with targets set for order completions and that achieving one target went against achieving the other. Process targets for the completion of enforcement action were also described, including the need to spend administrative time preparing documentation for enforcement action which would later be withdrawn because the offender subsequently provided acceptable evidence for their absence. Targets for fast turnaround enforcement action meant staff felt unable to wait for evidence of this kind before proceeding, resulting in administrative time being wasted if evidence was later provided.

Breach court sentencing: Court sentencing was felt to impact on the effectiveness of enforcement action. Staff felt that courts were not always consistent with breach sentencing and this lost the probation service credibility with offenders; for example, offenders on Suspended Sentence Orders who should have been sentenced to custody if in breach of their order did not always receive custodial sentences. Whilst the sentencing framework set out in the Criminal Justice Act (2003) states that an order must be made more onerous when resentencing, Offender Managers questioned the usefulness of repeatedly adding additional requirements for offenders in breach of their orders, when they were already struggling to comply with their original one.

Factors facilitating compliance: A number of factors were identified as key to supporting offenders in complying with and completing their orders. These included appropriate sentencing, a constructive and consistent relationship with their Offender Manager, sufficient

time and resource to ensure offender needs were met, appropriate sequencing of order requirements to ensure that offenders were not 'set up to fail' and a flexible approach that enabled offenders to meet other responsibilities, including childcare and employment, while simultaneously completing their order.

3.3 Outcomes of the Offender Management Model

Sections 3.1 and 3.2 above explored delivery of the OMM; this section examines the perceived impacts of the OMM as identified by offender management staff. It begins by describing the impacts on staff before discussing the perceived impacts on offenders.

Impact on offender management teams

Implementation of the OMM impacted on continuity of offender management as well as specific roles and responsibilities within offender management teams. This in turn impacted on job satisfaction.

End-to-end offender management

A core element of the OMM is continuity for the offender. This approach was welcomed by Offender Managers as it enabled them to gain a greater awareness and understanding of individual offenders' needs, which in turn facilitated feelings of ownership of the case. In contrast, they felt they had had a more superficial responsibility when they only held cases for a specific part of the offender management process. Ultimately, maintaining continuity and leading an offender successfully through their order had a positive impact on Offender Managers and their feelings of fulfilment.

"There is little greater satisfaction in this job than seeing somebody successfully through end-to-end and shaking hands with them at the end and saying, 'if you do have a problem ... I'll be here' ... it can make a heck of a difference to how you drive home that night." (PO Offender Manager, probation area D)

As discussed in section 3.2, it is worth noting that continuity was not always desirable and in certain situations could have a negative impact on the Offender Manager.

Offender Management staff were keen to stress that there were insufficient resources in place to support an end-to-end approach. High and sometimes unmanageable caseloads were reported to reduce the amount of time Offender Managers were able to spend with offenders, and increases in the number of targets that needed to be met added to the pressure they felt. High caseloads were also associated with staff working long hours without compensation, and this in turn was perceived to contribute to high levels of staff sickness.

This further exacerbated pressures on workload, with Offender Managers having to take responsibility for absent colleagues' caseloads.

Roles and responsibilities

The implementation of the OMM across probation areas led to changes in the roles and responsibilities of offender management staff. The OMM highlights the role of the Offender Manager to be one of assessing offenders' needs, creating sentence plans and engaging offenders in the appropriate interventions to meet their needs. As discussed, this shift was negatively received by some.

“The Offender Management Model by all accounts is to be a broker of other agencies to get them to do the work. It’s not something I actually joined [the probation service] to do, if I’m totally honest. I wanted as a Probation Officer to have more hands-on work with clients to try and make a change.” (PO Offender Manager, probation area A)

As discussed in section 3.1, some offices co-worked cases for specific offender groups, whereby POs assumed the role of Offender Manager and had overall responsibility for offenders, while PSOs conducted the day-to-day work with offenders as the Offender Supervisor. This division in labour was felt by some to further distance POs from their work with offenders, thus exacerbating resentment about this shift in role.

The OMM was also seen to have instigated a move away from specialisms with different offender groups towards generic Offender Management Units (OMUs) in some local offices. This was felt to have distilled specialist knowledge and led to Offender Managers becoming a 'jack of all trades'; echoing findings from research carried out in a specific probation area (Chana, 2008).

“The downside to the way that we work now is that you can’t really get very expert in anything ... you might have one type of case, [but] you might not have another for a long time, [so] you’ve forgotten what you’re supposed to do.” (PO Offender Manager, probation area D)

However, there was acknowledgement that working in generic OMUs facilitated the development of a wider knowledge base which was useful in that it was transferable to different offender groups. This mirrored findings from other research conducted with Offender Managers (Clarke, 2009).

The concept of teamwork is central to the OMM, with all members of the offender management team working collaboratively for the benefit of the offender. This notion was felt

to have had a particular impact on the role of Case Administrators, who rather than making up a pool of case administration resource, were now assigned to a specific OMU and worked only with POs and PSOs assigned to that unit. With the new structure also came responsibility for a wider range of tasks, which was welcomed. Case Administrators described how this shift had a positive impact on their professional development, while acknowledging that the increase in volume and breadth of work, as well as the associated increase in responsibility, could be overwhelming at times.

Perceived impact on offenders

Before exploring the perceived impact of the OMM on offenders, it is important to stress that these perceptions stem from offender management teams rather than offenders themselves.

Offender Manager/offender relationship

The working relationship developed through the 'one offender: one manager' concept was felt to have had a positive impact on offenders in a number of ways. A key outcome was that offenders developed a trust their Offender Manager through regular and ongoing contact. This in turn meant that offenders would feel more comfortable sharing information relating to their offending behaviour and personal circumstances. It also allowed the Offender Manager to reflect on progress made over time, which could serve to further motivate and encourage the offender.

"You can go back and you say 'remember this? Remember when that happened? We never thought you were going to manage this ...' and you can use that as a tool ... to get someone to reflect on the progress of their supervision and how well they've done over a period of time ... It really helps." (PO Offender Manager, probation area B)

As discussed previously, various factors underpinned breaks in continuity of relationship, such as staff sickness and perceptions of high staff turnover. High caseloads similarly impacted on continuity, particularly at the PSR stage. A break in continuity could potentially have a serious impact on the offender, especially if they had established a positive relationship with their Offender Manager. Staff described how offenders might stop making disclosures about their offending behaviour or lives more generally, make complaints about their new Offender Manager, behave aggressively during supervision, or disengage entirely.

"If they've built a good relationship with their officer [they] will talk freely ... If they meet someone else, then that process has to start again before they feel they can come in and say, 'I had ten cans of beer on Saturday ... and spat at a policeman' or something ... They might just come in and say, 'oh, nothing has

happened' ... at its very worst ... they'd just stop coming in." (Key worker, probation area A)

However, continuity could impact negatively on the offender if a more contentious relationship developed. This might occur if an offender felt their Offender Manager had done wrong by them, by taking enforcement action or recommending a custodial sentence at the PSR stage, for example. In such instances it was felt that a 'fresh start' with an alternative Offender Manager might be in the best interests of both the offender and Offender Manager.

Access to interventions

The OMM was perceived to have increased offender access to services both in custody and in the community. Offender Managers felt that being able to take a more active role in sentence planning allowed them to drive the plan forward in custody and ensure offenders had access to the necessary offending behaviour programmes and other support. However, the extent to which this outcome could be achieved was limited by the availability of interventions in custody and the level of co-operation among prison staff. Offender Managers and key workers also felt that there were a greater range of services available to offenders in the community, with the brokering role of the Offender Manager felt to have improved links with local services. However, there was a view that increased access to and take-up of local services came at the expense of effective supervision due to less frequent attendance. It was also felt to limit opportunities for Offender Managers themselves to do meaningful work with offenders.

"We have got more options to refer them to [now]. But ... I don't feel they feel they're getting a service from probation, [so] what is the point of me being here?"
(PO Offender Manager, probation area A)

Despite a general perception that there was increased access to services, some Offender Managers described barriers to access for women offenders. Limited demand for some services meant there were insufficient numbers to warrant women-only provision. This was considered important for some offenders, such as female perpetrators of domestic violence. As a result, instances had arisen where women had to travel long distances in order to access the service elsewhere, or had not been referred to the service at all.

Offending behaviour

Positive outcomes in terms of offenders' reintegration and offending behaviour were generally thought to be underpinned by interventions received. Specifically, staff highlighted reduction in substance misuse, development of basic skills, increased structure in an offender's day-to-day life and finding both voluntary and paid employment as positive outcomes of interventions. For example, where Community Payback was considered to have an impact beyond that of punishment, it was felt to have helped some offenders gain work-related skills, develop empathy, desire alternatives to their offending behaviour and, in some cases, find paid employment.

Offender Managers and key workers also felt that offenders gained from attending some of the accredited offending behaviour programmes as well as some non-accredited ones. Whilst some Offender Managers and key workers questioned the extent to which programmes could be said to have reduced re-offending, it was felt that offenders generally did learn something from them.

"At the start of programmes offenders will moan about going on them and not want to go on them, but by the end of it they always say, 'well actually, I did learn something in there', and that's all we can hope for really ... even if they've taken one thing from the programme, that's one thing more than they perhaps had before they went on it." (PSO Offender Manager, probation area E)

Extent of impact of the OMM

External factors such as lack of housing, financial instability or serious alcohol or drug misuse were identified as limiting the extent to which the OMM could impact on offenders. Without resolving these underlying issues and stabilising an offender, Offender Managers felt that positive outcomes were unlikely.

"If their problems haven't been dealt with, there is no point. If you have got somebody that is stoned, they are not going to sit for two and a half hours doing group exercises. If you have got somebody that hasn't got anywhere to live, they couldn't care less." (PO Offender Manager, probation area B)

As discussed in section 3.2, Offender Managers described how a large proportion of offenders were in denial about their offending and/or were satisfied with their current situation. Such reluctance to change limited the extent to which Offender Managers were able to achieve positive outcomes, regardless of their approach or the content of supervision. Offender Managers described how they would try to motivate offenders to change, through referrals to appropriate interventions and challenging certain behaviours for example, but that ultimately delivery of the OMM could not impact on outcomes until the offender was willing to change.

The offender's age and previous criminal behaviour were also thought to influence outcomes. Some offender management staff suggested that young people were the most challenging to work with and that success tended to come from those who had started offending later in life. The number and type of previous offences also had an impact. For example, one Offender Manager described how the offending behaviour of those convicted of fraud or drink driving was not considered to be entrenched and it was therefore easier to stop these offenders re-offending.

4. Implications

This qualitative study was designed to explore the factors affecting the operation and impact of the OMM through in-depth interviews with individuals from offender management teams, and will be of interest to policy-makers and offender management practitioners. The main implications of the research are as follows.

4.1 Delivery of the Offender Management Model

- The findings indicate that the concept of end-to-end offender management outlined in the OMM was fully supported by offender management staff, and the notion of 'one offender: one manager' implemented as far as possible. However, staff suggested that there were pressures on the resources needed to deliver this. Staff sickness and a high turnover of Offender Managers across the local offices had reportedly led to breaks in continuity of relationships, as had demanding caseloads. Given the negative impacts such breaks in continuity might have on offenders it would be worth NOMS exploring the extent to which this is an issue, and if so, how its impact can be mitigated.
- Resource issues were felt to have resulted from unmanageable caseloads. There was a perception that this had led to shorter supervision sessions (attributed also to the brokerage role Offender Managers had assumed) as well as a transfer of tasks to PSOs. These included preparation of FDRs, supervision of cases managed by POs and, in some offices, management of tier 3 offenders. There was evidence to suggest that PSOs had not received sufficient training in these areas, leaving some feeling vulnerable and under-skilled. If it is necessary for PSOs to perform these roles from a resource perspective, it is crucial that they feel equipped to do so. It is therefore recommended that Trusts review the role of the PSO and whether current training provision is appropriate.²⁹
- Insufficient time to discuss offenders' needs with relevant agencies when preparing PSRs, or to investigate the availability of specific interventions, was reported to have led to the inclusion of unsuitable requirements on offenders' orders. This could result in cases ultimately being revoked and re-sentenced. In view of the additional work this could entail for Offender Managers and the court system (as well as offenders), probation trusts should consider whether information on the availability of local

²⁹ For reference, since this fieldwork was conducted a new qualification framework has been introduced for PSOs. In September 2010 a specific qualification at VQ Level 3 was made available to all new entrants and some existing PSOs.

interventions could be made more easily accessible to Offender Managers and, in addition, whether the timeframe for writing PSRs should be revised.

- This study provides evidence about decision-making in relation to the sequencing of order requirements. Two overall objectives guided this: reducing risk of harm, followed by reducing re-offending. Running alongside these was the need to stabilise the offender, for example by tackling serious alcohol misuse. It was felt that offending behaviour programmes in particular were likely to be less effective if such issues were not addressed prior to referral. This raises a question about the level of priority that should be accorded to work aimed at stabilising the offender, given the potential impact on the effectiveness of interventions.

4.2 Impact of the Offender Management Model

- Offender management staff felt that continuity had a positive impact on offenders. A key outcome was offenders developing trust in Offender Manager, due to regular and ongoing contact. This made it more likely that offenders would confide in their Offender Manager about their offending behaviour and other personal circumstances. In addition, continuity allowed the Offender Manager to reflect on progress made over time which could serve to further motivate and encourage the offender.
- Whilst high caseloads undoubtedly had a negative impact on staff, the potential for positive offender outcomes, perceived to arise from end-to-end offender management, increased the job satisfaction of some Offender Managers. However, they also felt they had become a brokering service at the expense of direct contact with offenders; a shift that was negatively received by some. Both factors are important to consider in terms of the potential impact on staff retention, particularly in view of the high staff turnover reported by the offender management teams included in this research.

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Appendix A: Offender management approaches

The OMM identifies four broad modes of case management applicable for work with offenders. These are outlined below (reproduced from the OMM).

Offender management approaches

Mode label	Description of mode	Offender management approach
Punish	Arrangements made for the implementation of the sentence requirements, with due regard for decency, health and safety and the preservation of citizenship; monitor risk factors; 'signpost' to help resources	Hands off; administrative, organising, monitoring, signposting to resources
Help	Motivation; referral to resources providing practical help addressing circumstances or situation – typically employment, accommodation, basic and life skills; support and encouragement of participation	Hands on; motivating, encouraging, referring, supporting, problem solving
Change	Implementation of carefully planned programme designed to achieve personal change, typically including offending behaviour programmes, drug and alcohol treatment, some social skills	Hands on; treatment (usually) to complement or as part of specialist treatment programme; co-ordination of all inputs to complement one another. Sometimes referred to as 'therapeutic'
Control	Intensive, inter-agency, multi-faceted programme to control and monitor behaviour, including surveillance and intelligence work. Typically, Prolific Offender Schemes and dangerous offender MAPPA 'packages'	Hands on; risk management, inter-agency co-ordination, high level of teamwork

Appendix B: Tiering framework

Detailed descriptions of the profile of offenders suited to each risk tier (reproduced from the OMM).

Tiering framework

Tier	Offender profile	NB. offender descriptions are for illustrative purposes. The complexity of factors and variables means that the definitions at the margins between levels are a matter for professional and local judgement
1	<p>Medium or low risk harm cases</p> <p>Low likelihood of re-offending</p> <p>Low intervention cases requiring monitoring of risk factors only</p> <p>Compliant offenders who are well motivated to complete the sentence</p> <p>Offenders who present no manageability problems</p> <p>Cases in which punishment is or has become the main objective</p>	
2	<p>Rehabilitation cases in which the focus of the work is on the offender's situation</p> <p>Rehabilitation cases with less complex intervention plans</p> <p>Reasonably motivated, reasonably compliant offenders</p> <p>Medium or low risk of harm</p> <p>Resettlement/reintegration cases where practical help is the intervention approach</p>	
3	<p>Medium/high likelihood of re-offending cases with multi-factor intervention plans</p> <p>Medium risk of harm cases</p> <p>Cases with personal change as the primary objective</p> <p>Cases requiring high levels of integrative work</p> <p>Cases in which mishandling would have significant organisational consequences</p> <p>Vulnerable offenders</p>	
4	<p>High and very high risk of serious harm – public protection priorities</p> <p>Cases requiring the highest level of skill, qualification and organisational authority</p> <p>Cases requiring unusual or exceptional resource allocation</p> <p>Cases requiring very high levels of inter-agency work</p> <p>High local and national priority cases (prolific and/or persistent offenders)</p>	

Appendix C: Offender Management Community Cohort Study aims and objectives

This appendix gives further information about the aims and objectives of the study.

The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) and Matrix Knowledge Group were commissioned by the MoJ to carry out the Offender Management Community Cohort Study (OMCCS). The overarching aims of the OMCCS were to assess the effectiveness of interventions in reducing offending behaviour for adult offenders on community orders and to evaluate the effectiveness of offender management. In order to meet these aims, the OMCCS comprises the following three components:

- a large-scale longitudinal survey of adult offenders on community orders;
- collection of administrative data³⁰ on individual offenders to complement the survey data;
- a qualitative study exploring offender management staff experiences of delivering the OMM, to complement and contextualise the survey and administrative data.

The overarching aim of the qualitative study was to explore the factors affecting the operation and impact of the OMM, specifically:

- the processes used to assess offender needs and create sentence plans, with a focus on the factors affecting decisions about the sequencing of interventions;
- the factors affecting the nature and effectiveness of offender supervision;
- the processes used to ensure continuity of offender management and the factors that affect the degree to which these processes are successful; and
- the impacts of the OMM on staff and offenders.

³⁰ This will be derived from case management systems such as CRAMS, Delius and ICMS as well as central data sources; accredited programmes software (IAPS), caseload monitoring tools (Forms 20 & 30) and the probation service's common assessment tool, OASys.

Appendix D: Qualitative methodology

This appendix gives further information about the qualitative methodology.

Topic guides

Tailored topic guides were used in all interviews to help ensure a consistent approach across interviews and between interviewers. However, the guides were used flexibly to allow interviewers to respond to the nature and content of the discussion, so the topics covered and the order in which they were discussed varied between interviews. Interviewers used open, non-leading questions and answers were fully probed. The main headings of the topic guide used for the interviews with Offender Managers are provided below. Slightly different versions of this guide were used for interviews with the Case Administrators and key workers.

1. **Introduction**

- Introduce self and NatCen
- Reiterate study aims
- Explain confidentiality and anonymity
- Interview practicalities
- Questions

2. **Background and context**

- Current job role
- Current caseload
- Aim of role
- Introduction to OM model

3. **The Offender Management process: Assess – Sentence Plan – Implement – Review – Evaluate (ASPIRE)**

Assess

- Tools (SARA, OASys)
- Sources
- How assessment is carried out
- Who involved in assessment
- Extent to which court acts on assessment

Sentence Plan (Creating)

- Role of assessment in creating sentence plan
- Influence of offender needs, requirements of sentence, available resources
- Interventions
- Sequencing
- Decision-making process
- Responsibility for producing/completing sentence plan
- Responsibility for distributing sentence plan

Sentence Plan (Implementing)

- How interventions are brokered
- How interventions are delivered
- Supporting offender needs in implementing sentence plan
- How sentence plan is implemented whilst offender is in custody

Review and evaluate

- Monitoring compliance with sentence plan
- Scheduled reviews
- Ongoing reviewing
- Impact of reviews on offender management

4. Offender Supervision

- Nature of offender supervision in local area
- Who responsible for offender supervision
- Factors affecting nature of supervision
- Most important aspects in offender supervision
- How fulfil the roles of supervision
- Examples of where supervision has worked well and less well
- Differences between supervision in community and custody
- Factors affecting effectiveness of supervision

5. Continuity of Offender Management

- Definition of continuity
- Local approach (one offender: one manager)
- Other processes to ensure continuity
- Factors influencing how successful continuity approach is
- Process for maintaining continuity if offender spends period in custody
- Impact of continuity/lack of continuity on offender management/offenders

6. Impact of the Offender Management Model

- Effectiveness of OM system on offender outcomes
- Examples of positive and negative outcomes arising from the OM Model
- Factors influencing effectiveness
- Impacts of the OM model on staff

7. Reflections and suggestions for improvements

- Overall view of OM model
- Suggestions for improvements
- Any other areas of importance to cover
- Reassure confidentiality
- Thank them for their time and tell them they are welcome to contact members of the research team at any time if they have any queries

Qualitative analysis

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interview data were managed and analysed using the Framework approach developed by NatCen (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Key topics which emerged from the interviews were identified through familiarisation with the transcripts. An analytical framework was then drawn up and a series of charts or matrices were set up, each relating to a different thematic issue. The columns in each matrix represented the key sub-themes or topics and the rows represented individual participants from the offender management teams. The sub-themes or topics were as follows:

Role and Background:

- Role
- Caseload
- Wider team structure

Assessment and Sentencing:

- Setting up a case
- Standard Delivery Reports (SDRs)/Fast Delivery Reports (FDRs)
- Court sentencing
- Sentence planning
- Targets

Interventions:

- Role in relation to interventions
- Brokering interventions
- Targets
- Interventions available
- Content of interventions
- Views on quality/appropriateness
- Sequencing
- Impacts of interventions

Offender Supervision:

- Role of supervision
- Content of supervision
- Nature and effectiveness of supervision

Review and Evaluation:

Scheduled reviews

Monitoring compliance and breach

Targets

Continuity:

Approach to continuity

Factors impacting on continuity

Continuity between custody and community

Communication across OMM

Views on importance of continuity

Impacts of continuity on offender outcomes

Impacts and Reflections:

Offender outcomes

Key factors influencing offender outcomes

Staff impacts

Overall view of OMM

Suggestions for improvements

Data from each transcript were then summarised into the appropriate cells. Bespoke Framework software, also developed by NatCen, enabled the summarised data to be hyperlinked to the verbatim transcript text. This approach meant that each part of every transcript that was relevant to a particular theme was noted, ordered and accessible. The final analytic stage involved working through the charted data, drawing out the range of experiences and views, identifying similarities and differences and interrogating the data to seek to explain emergent patterns and findings. Verbatim interview quotations are provided in this report to highlight themes and findings where appropriate.

Appendix E: Glossary

Glossary

Brokerage	The process of securing and deploying suitable interventions for offenders, undertaken by Offender Managers
Case Administrator	The person responsible for ensuring that the sentence is implemented in line with specified timescales, procedures, deadlines and Standards. Will usually be part of the same team as the Offender Manager or Offender Supervisor.
DRR	Drug Rehabilitation Requirement
ETE	Education, Training and Employment
FDR	Fast Delivery Report
In-depth interview	The collection of data based on personal, spoken accounts on a specific topic. Questions are responsive and used flexibly to enable the participant to explore the topic from their own perspective. The interviewer makes use of open questions which invite participants to provide detailed answers.
IPP	Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection
LIAP	Low Intensity Alcohol Programme (accredited offending behaviour programme)
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
OASys	Offender Assessment System
Offending behaviour programme	Rehabilitation programmes designed to identify the reasons behind offending behaviour and reduce and monitor these factors, accredited by the Correctional Services Accreditation Panel.
Offender Supervisor	The person responsible for implementing the Sentence Plan on a day-to-day basis (usually in the prison setting), dealing with the offender face-to-face, enhancing motivation, securing compliance, helping the offender make the links between one intervention and another, and consolidating learning into consistent behaviour in the offender's social environment. Most likely in the community to be the same person as the Offender Manager, but in certain circumstances the roles will be split.
Offender Manager (OM)	The person – of whatever grade and from whichever agency – with allocated responsibility for assessing what each offender requires, engaging the offender in planning and co-ordinating delivery, reviewing progress and evaluating outcomes, taking enforcement action and motivating when needed. As far as can be assured, this is the same person throughout any single period of continuous engagement with NOMS.
OMCCS	Offender Management Community Cohort Study

OMFQ	Offender Management Feedback Questionnaire
OMM	Offender Management Model
OMAS	Offender Management Analytical Services
OMU	Offender Management Unit
PO	Probation Officer: fully qualified officer whose role is to manage offenders who pose a high risk of harm to others, influence offenders to change harmful behaviour, and protect the public.
PPO	Prolific and Priority Offender
Probation Service Officer (PSO)	The person qualified to level 3 in the current vocational framework: able to assess risk of harm to others and the need for intervention, and to support offenders to change, but unlikely to have sole responsibility for offenders assessed at high risk of causing serious harm.
PSR	Pre-Sentence Report
SDR	Standard Delivery Report

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Delivering the NOMS Offender Management Model

This qualitative study explores factors affecting the implementation of the NOMS Offender Management Model. The Offender Management staff interviewed generally supported the model, and report successful delivery as far as possible. Positive offender outcomes, arising from end-to-end management were reported to have increased job satisfaction. However perceived resources pressures of staff-sickness, high staff turnover and demanding caseloads had lead to some breaks in the continuity of relationships. Increased Probation Officer caseloads were felt to have led to shorter supervision sessions and an increased transfer of certain tasks to Probation Service Officers. Action to stabilise an offender, such as tackling serious alcohol misuse, was felt to be vitally important in the sequencing of order requirements.

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