



Ministry
of Justice

Offender Management Community Cohort Study (OMCCS) Baseline Technical Report

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

The Offender Management Community Cohort Study (OMCCS) was a longitudinal study that brought together a wide range of data to describe the cohort of offenders aged 18 and over who started Community Orders between October 2009 and December 2010. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) commissioned NatCen Social Research and Get the Data (GtD) to carry out the OMCCS. The broad aims of the study were:

- to assess the effectiveness of interventions in reducing offending behaviour; and
- to evaluate aspects of offender management.

In its initial conception, the OMCCS comprised three main stages:

- Baseline (Wave 1) – which would describe the commencement of Community Orders and offenders' position at an early stage in their sentence;
- Mid-order (Wave 2) – which would describe the implementation of Community Orders, including what was delivered and to whom, and;
- End of Order (Wave 3) – a final stage that would explore the outcomes for the cohort, particularly in relation to breach of the Community Orders and reoffending.

Although there were changes to the design as the study progressed, this remained the basic approach. This is the first of three technical reports on the OMCCS and it focuses on the baseline stage.

1.2 Research design

The OMCCS used a dataset based on three data sources:

- A longitudinal survey of a representative sample of 2,919 offenders, drawn from ten Probation Areas. This provides information on their perceptions and experiences of Community Orders, their backgrounds, attitudes and needs, and how these change over time. The first survey (the baseline survey) was carried out around three months after the start of the offender's Community Order, with subsequent surveys carried out seven months, on average, into the sentence and following its expected end point.
- Central administrative records for all those offenders starting a Community Order during the period (144,407 offenders) describing the sentence received, offences and the risks and needs of offenders as assessed by practitioners. This includes:

FORM 20 data detailing Community Order commencements and terminations; Offender Assessment System (OASys) data, containing details of the needs and risks that offenders present with; and Interim Accredited Programmes System (IAPS) data on offenders' attendance on accredited programmes.

- Local administrative records from the same ten Probation Areas selected for the survey (covering 48,943 offenders), which describe how offender management operates and how offenders complete or breach their sentences.

The survey and administrative data sources were combined to form a 'Universal Dataset'.

1.3 Structure of the report

This technical report covers the baseline data collection, comprising the first survey interview and the initial round of data collection from the central and local administrative data sources. Many of the same processes were followed for the subsequent stages of the study, and further details about these later stages will be included in future technical reports on the OMCCS.

Following this introductory chapter, the structure of this report is as follows:

- chapter 2 discusses the sample design and selection for the survey, and the coverage of the administrative data collection;
- chapter 3 describes the fieldwork for the face-to-face survey of offenders;
- chapter 4 sets out the response to the survey and the challenges faced;
- chapter 5 details the administrative data collection;
- chapter 6 deals with the weights that were developed for the survey to deal with differences in selection probabilities and to correct for non-response bias;
- chapter 7 describes the approach to a 'Universal Dataset' that brought the different data sources together for the cohort.

The report does not contain results from the study; the Assessment and Sentence Planning report, which describes the characteristics of the whole cohort of offenders on Community Orders, their sentences, assessments of their needs and their sentence plans, is available on the MoJ website.¹

¹ Cattell, J., Mackie, A., Prestage, Y. and Wood, M. (2013) *Results from the Offender Management Community Cohort Study (OMCCS): Assessment and sentence planning*. London: Ministry of Justice.

2. Sample design and selection

This chapter sets out the aims for the sampling for the longitudinal survey and details the approach taken. The key requirements were that the study:

- was to follow a cohort of offenders from as close to commencement of their orders as possible;
- should be carried out face to face;
- should strike a balance between the accuracy of estimates obtained from the survey and costs of running the survey;
- was to be restricted to adult offenders in Tiers 2 to 4.²

The chapter also describes the approach to the administrative data collection, which complemented that of the survey to provide a comprehensive view of the cohort.

2.1 Population for the study

The overall principle of the sample design for the study as a whole was that it should represent the national caseload of offenders starting Community Orders in England and Wales during a specified period (October 2009 to December 2010). The study focused on Community Orders only; all offence types and all sentence lengths from one to 36 months were included. The OMCCS excluded those starting Suspended Sentence Orders, those out on licence from prison, or any other non-custodial sentences that are not Community Orders (unless they also started Community Order).

Survey population

The aim for the survey was that it should concentrate on offenders who had been subject to more than the minimum level of ‘treatment’, to enable a robust assessment of the effectiveness of the Offender Management Model. Tier 1 cases were excluded as they have the lightest contact with National Offender Management Service (NOMS);³ this group accounted for 39% of the total cohort.

There were other exclusions from the survey (see Table 4.1 for details of the size of these groups):

² Offenders are assigned to one of four ‘tiers’ during their management by the National Offender Management Service, based on a number of factors including their risk of reoffending, with the aim of directing appropriate resource towards them. Tier 1 is the lowest level, where the aim is largely punishment, whilst substantial management is required of Tier 4 offenders with the aim of controlling risk. Tier 1 offenders – those with the lightest contact with National Offender Management Service – were excluded from the survey.

³ ‘Current’ tier within the first month was used as being more reliable in selection than the commencement tier.

- offenders who had already ended their community order by the first interview due to entering prison;
- offenders who were deemed too risky to interview even within the probation office;
- offenders who had moved to a new Probation Area before the baseline interview; and
- offenders who were deemed unable to participate for health reasons.

However, these groups are included in the administrative data collected for the Universal Dataset (see chapter 7 for further details).

2.2 Survey sampling approach

Conducting a survey of a cohort of offenders requires an approach that will provide a sample of sufficient quality to be able to generalise to the national population with some confidence at an acceptable cost (which inevitably requires the selection of Probation Areas and offices in which to work). The overall approach to sampling for the OMCCS was to carry out selections at three levels:

- First, a set of ten Probation Areas was selected at random.⁴
- An efficient number of local offices (eight or nine) were selected within selected Probation Areas (in smaller Probation Areas, all offices were included).
- Individual offenders starting on Community Orders were selected over a specified period.
- Female offenders and those from an ethnic minority background were oversampled to provide a sufficient base for analysis.

Selection of Probation Areas

Ten Probation Areas, of the 42 Probation Areas in existence at the time of the OMCCS fieldwork, were selected to take part in the survey. This was considered an adequate number to represent the diversity across Probation Areas, while striking a balance between achieving a sample of sufficient quality, minimising the burden on NOMS and managing the costs of the survey.

⁴ There are 42 Probation Areas in England and Wales (covering the police force areas), which are served by 35 Probation Trusts. The Trusts were set up following the Offender Management Act 2007, when some of the Probation Areas joined to form Trusts. The process of forming Trusts was still underway at the time of the OMCCS fieldwork, therefore the sample was drawn from the 42 Probation Areas. Nine of the ten sampled areas went on to become Probation Trusts, while North Wales is part of the Wales Probation Trust.

A selection of offices across all 42 Areas would have produced a more statistically efficient sample. However, the resulting dispersion of offices would have made the fieldwork operation considerably more expensive, given the considerable effort required to gain agreement to participation and to develop acceptable procedures for the study, including meetings with senior staff in each Area and workshops with lead contacts and data experts. In addition, this would have required data on flows of Community Order commencements at all local offices in the 42 Areas, and this information was not held centrally.

Probation Areas for the OMCCS were selected at random using Probability Proportionate to Size (PPS); i.e. the larger the caseload of the Probation Area, the more likely it was to be selected. It was important to represent Wales in the study, and for this reason the weights for Areas in Wales were increased (by 10%) to ensure that the PPS procedure would include at least one Welsh Area in the final sample. Recent annual Community Order commencement statistics were used for selecting the ten Areas.

The sample was stratified by country and region to ensure that at least one of the selected Probation Areas was in Wales. The Probation Areas (and regions) included in the study were:

- Derbyshire (East Midlands)
- Hertfordshire (Eastern)
- London
- Teesside (North East)
- Lancashire (North West)
- Kent (South East)
- Wiltshire (South West)
- North Wales (Wales)
- West Midlands (West Midlands)
- South Yorkshire (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Selection of local offices

A limit of sampling a maximum of eight offices within each Probation Area was set. Six Areas had eight or fewer offices (the smallest Areas had four offices), so in these cases all of the offices were selected for the survey. In Kent, all nine offices were included, as cutting out a single office may have introduced fieldwork inefficiencies and including all nine improved statistical efficiency.

Offices were randomly selected in larger Areas with a greater numbers of offices. This was because, in line with the PPS approach, each Probation Area sampled needed the same number of interviews to be carried out overall. Covering all offices in these larger Areas would have resulted in a very small number of interviews in each office each month; this would have made fieldwork inefficient for interviewers and the task of accessing all of the offices and developing procedures in each one would have been substantial.

In three of the larger Probation Areas some sub-sampling of local offices was therefore required. These Areas were London, West Midlands and Lancashire. The selection of offices in the three larger Areas was based on commencements during the preceding 12 months using FORM20 data detailing Community Order commencements and terminations provided by each Area. The local offices were selected at random using PPS. London was stratified to allow for an equal proportion of offices in each geographical area within the Probation Area (North, South, East and West).

Selection of offenders

With local offices selected, the final stage of sampling was to select individual offenders. The aim for the OMCCS was to survey offenders at the start of their sentence. To achieve this, a prospective approach to forming a cohort was required (i.e. the cohort needed to be built up over time as offenders were sentenced and their cases taken up in the selected probation offices). The eventual size and composition of the population that would commence in the period of interest was not known, but historical data were available that allowed an assessment to be made of the likely numbers, given recent trends. Commencement data from the previous year were used to develop sampling fractions that, when applied to the flow of offenders through the selected Probation Areas, should provide a sample of the desired size and composition. In line with the PPS design, each Probation Area had the same target number of cases.

Offenders were selected at random by NatCen each month based on monthly flows of FORM20 commencement data from MoJ. The raw FORM20 data supplied by Areas to MoJ included a 'team code' for the team managing the offender's case; these teams were coterminous with offices, so selections of offenders by office could be made. There were some problems with the team codes in London where there was uncertainty about which codes related to each selected office, with the result that a handful of cases selected were actually managed by offices that had not been selected for the survey. This was discovered during fieldwork, and in these cases, interviews were carried out where possible (the weighting approach was able to deal with these cases – see chapter 6).

The sampling period for 13- to 36-month sentences was commencements between October 2009 and September 2010. For one- to 12-month sentences, the period was January to December 2010. These two sampling periods, each lasting 12 months, facilitated a gradual start to fieldwork. The 12-month periods served two purposes: eliminating any seasonal variations and providing sufficient cases to achieve the size of sample required.

The level of ineligible and opt-out cases was higher than anticipated; the sampling fractions were therefore adjusted during the course of fieldwork to increase the flow of sample cases to field interviewers.

BME and female offender oversampling

The study aimed to achieve large enough numbers of female and ethnic minority offenders in the final survey sample for analysis. Data from earlier cohorts in the administrative data suggested that these groups both represented about 15% of the caseload at any one time, and it was decided that a small amount of oversampling of these groups was needed to be confident of achieving enough interviews at the third interview stage.

To achieve this, a means of increasing the likelihood of selection of BME and female offenders was built into the selection process at the Probation Area level and at the offender level; BME and female cases were weighted up in the caseload before random selections of Areas and offenders were made. These oversampled groups were weighted back to actual levels in analysis.

2.3 Sampling for the administrative data

The sampling for the administrative data mirrored that for the survey to ensure that cases could be matched between them; the same cohort of commencements was followed using the same FORM20 data source. However, there were some significant differences in the approach that mean the administrative data goes beyond the scope of the survey:

- Tier 1 cases were included in the administrative data but were not covered by the survey.
- All Probation Areas in England and Wales were included where central administrative records were being collected.
- The local data that will be used after the baseline stage was only collected in the ten Areas selected for the survey, but all commencements were included in those Areas, rather than a sample.

In addition, the survey process excluded offenders who Offender Managers believed to present a risk to interviewer safety and those who had entered prison by the time of the baseline survey fieldwork (see discussion in chapter 3). These cases would be included in the administrative data.

The different levels at which the administrative data were collected affects the analysis that can be carried out with each source. Depending on the analytical aims, subsets of the data source being used may be analysed. Demographic and sentence information is available for all offenders across the 42 Areas, and analysis of this information could therefore be carried out at the national level – for all offenders in the ten selected Areas, or for the survey cohort.

3. Survey fieldwork

This chapter covers the progress of the face-to-face fieldwork for the baseline survey. It discusses the ethical, consent and safety issues that needed to be resolved prior to fieldwork. The Probation Service was central to the baseline survey, and a description of its role in the operation is given in Section 3.3. Sections 3.4 and 3.5 discuss the development of the questionnaire and the approach to fieldwork.

3.1 Overview of the survey fieldwork

For the OMCCS survey, face-to-face interviews were carried out with the sampled offenders. The survey fieldwork involved close cooperation with the selected Areas and local offices. Initial access to offenders selected for the study each month was negotiated via these offices and with the help of Offender Managers, and probation offices were the predominant setting for interviews.

The first wave of interviews were carried out, on average, three months after the start of the offender's Community Order in order to provide a 'baseline'. The challenge was to provide data for a period as close as possible to the start of the sentence, given that this was a 'flow' sample where it was not possible to identify offenders commencing Community Orders until their sentence had begun. Subsequent interviews were carried out, with a second and third wave of interviews at points around the middle and after the end of the order.

3.2 Ethics and risk management

NatCen has its own Research Ethics Committee from which all projects are required to gain approval. For the OMCCS there were a number of issues to consider:

- risk to interviewers;
- consent to the survey interview;
- consent to linking to administrative data;
- separation of the study from probation staff and the impact on services.

Risk to interviewers

There is risk to interviewers in any face-to-face survey, and taking steps to minimise this is always a priority. Considerable thought was given to how best to reduce the risk of harm to interviewers given the nature of the sample and the areas/ households in which offenders may be living. The following precautions were taken:

- **Risk assessments:** The relevant Offender Manager was always consulted regarding specific risks. Where they felt there was a heightened risk to the interviewer's safety or where they believed the offender to be too vulnerable, an interview was not sought. This process of assessment was refined over time, with some Offender Managers needing to be reassured that they were not taking on responsibility for the interviewer's safety. In the end, around 2% of the sample was excluded due to heightened risk.
- **Location of interview:** The preference was for the first interview to be conducted in the probation office. This was for both practical and risk reduction reasons. Whilst there may have been no indication that the offender themselves posed a heightened risk, their place of residence or other household members may have posed such a risk. Where it was not possible to conduct the interview in the probation office and there were concerns about the home, a private space was sought within a neutral venue such as a library or hotel.
- **'Buddy' systems:** Where interviewers were visiting an offender in their home, they were required to phone NatCen's operational office to say that they were about to conduct the interview, and then check in afterwards.

Consent to the survey interview

NatCen Research Ethics Committee required that, where there was potential for an approach to offenders at their home address, offenders should be able to opt out of the survey before their contact details were passed from MoJ to NatCen, so that NatCen only received contact information once the opt-out process had been administered. For this reason, NatCen received anonymised data from MoJ containing unique case reference numbers from which to draw monthly samples. Probation offices were then notified of the case reference numbers selected for the sample and Offender Managers passed on opt-out letters to the selected offenders. If a week elapsed with no opt-out, NatCen received contact information for the offender and contacted them to arrange an interview.

Consent to linking to administrative data

Explicit agreement was obtained from the offenders to link their survey responses to administrative records at the end of the survey interview. It was possible for offenders to withdraw this agreement at subsequent points in the research. Only those offenders who provided consent for their data to be linked are included in the Universal Dataset.

Separation of the study from probation staff

It was imperative that respondents understood there was a clear distinction between probation staff and survey interviewers; the probation office setting for the interviews meant clarity about this was particularly crucial. It was important that respondents did not feel that they had to be involved with the survey as part of their general sentence requirements, and that they understood taking part would not influence their sentence. This was necessary for ethical and data quality reasons; open and honest accounts of experiences were encouraged and offenders may not have felt free to respond truthfully about their experiences if they thought what they said may affect their sentence.

It was also important that the survey interview did not affect the relationship between staff and offenders or the delivery of the sentence. For instance, the interviews should not reduce the time Offender Managers spent with offenders.

3.3 Relationship with Probation Areas and Offices

Gaining cooperation from Areas

Following the selection of the ten Areas to be included in the study, research staff from MoJ and NatCen developed a communications package and visited senior figures in each Area with the aim of securing their cooperation. Key to gaining this agreement was the assurance that the study would not be a means of benchmarking performance between Areas. Rather, the aims were to improve the general understanding of how Community Orders were being implemented; and to include some analysis of the differences in implementation patterns and outcomes between Areas at a general level (i.e. without naming them).

Role of local probation offices

Selected probation offices had a number of crucial roles in the survey process. A 'key contact' was identified in each office to be responsible for these processes; the aim was for this to be someone who had day-to-day contact with Offender Managers and who had authority to assign work to them (this was often a Senior probation officer). In practice, the day-to-day work may often be carried out by other staff; for instance reception staff, who controlled diaries, were a useful source of information. Building good and efficient working relationships with these various staff members was a key role for NatCen field staff.

The role of probation offices was:

- **To identify sampled offenders:** Using a case reference number, offenders needed to be identified on local systems and the relevant Offender Manager approached to help with making contact.
- **To provide the opt-out letters:** NatCen prepared opt-out letters to be handed or posted to offenders via Offender Managers.
- **To arrange appointments:** Where no opt-out was received, via either the probation office or NatCen directly, interviewers would liaise with Offender Managers to set up an appointment at a convenient point in relation to the regular meetings that offenders had with probation staff.
- **To carry out risk assessments:** Offender Managers were asked to provide a risk assessment for each sample member as described in Section 3.2 above.
- **To arrange access to private interview space:** Where possible, staff provided a private space for interviews.

Communications strategy

Probation Areas were undergoing considerable change during the fieldwork period and some Areas had very high caseloads. It was anticipated that it would require considerable effort to engage with Areas and local offices and maintain engagement throughout the fieldwork period. The 'key contacts' in the probation offices were crucial for managing the administration of the contact process for the cases selected for interview each month and for ensuring access, and efforts were made to ensure the process was tailored to be as efficient as it could be in each office. Regular communications were developed with the wider office in the form of newsletters and in updates on the NOMS intranet pages.

In addition, to develop rapport between the probation office staff and the survey interviewers, the field interviewers gave an initial briefing to probation office staff at team meetings. Relationships were fostered with a range of probation staff over time. MoJ representatives were occasionally asked to contact probation offices to ensure continuing support for the OMCCS as the study progressed.

3.4 Questionnaire development

Cognitive testing

Cognitive testing helps ensure that survey questions are understood consistently by the target population and that they address the intended concepts. Cognitive testing was undertaken as part of the OMCCS questionnaire development. In addition to testing whether questions were generally understood and easy to answer, the work focused particularly on:

- The language used to talk about the elements of Community Orders and about the staff involved in delivering it. For instance:
 - Were offenders able to identify who their Offender Manager was from among several people they may be seeing, and how should the Offender Manager be referred to?
 - Were terms such as ‘sentence plan’ and ‘breach’ understood?
 - What was the best way to describe accredited programmes aimed at offending behaviour?
- The development of attitudinal items concerning relationships with staff, self-assessments of progress and aspirations for the future, such as:
 - ‘My probation officer motivates me to make improvements to my life’
 - ‘I have tried hard to do all the things in my Community Order’
 - ‘Realistically, how likely do you think it is that you’ll be back on a Community Order or in prison at some time in the future?’

The approach for the OMCCS involved specialist cognitive interviewers running through a paper-based questionnaire with offenders and probing them at specified points for comprehension, language issues and the process of answering. Five interviewers interviewed 23 offenders in five different probation offices, based in five of the Areas selected for the survey. Sampling was carried out on a purposive basis to ensure the questionnaire was tested with a spread of offenders of different ages, men and women, and those with different sentence lengths.

Findings were recorded for each interview and analysed by researchers following a day-long debrief with interviewers. This was fed into the development of the questionnaire, which was then used in a pilot (see Section 3.5).

Questionnaire content

The questionnaire used for the baseline survey is included in the Appendix to this report. The survey included:

- detailed personal characteristics and background;
- dynamic factors that might affect likelihood of reoffending, including accommodation, work and training, health and wellbeing, family relationships and drug and alcohol use;
- pro-criminal attitudes, and attitudes towards the sentence and the practitioners delivering it;
- offenders' experiences of the different interventions in their sentence and their assessment of their effectiveness;
- offenders' own accounts of events including breaching the rules of sentences or reoffending; and
- aims, aspirations, needs and sources of assistance.

The mean length of the interview was 42 minutes (with a standard deviation of 14.7 minutes), and the median was 40 minutes. Care was taken to ensure that interviews proceeded at an appropriate pace for those with learning disabilities or whose first language was not English (9% of interviews lasted over an hour).

3.5 Conduct of fieldwork

Piloting

OMCCS followed a feasibility study: Investigating, Targeting, Tailoring and Sequencing Interventions (ITTSI) that was carried out in 2006 by Morgan Harris Burrows (MHB) and Ipsos MORI. This feasibility study demonstrated that it was possible to carry out such a study with offenders, although the questionnaire and approach differed somewhat from the design implemented for the OMCCS.

Therefore, for the OMCCS, following the cognitive work and the subsequent development of the questionnaire, a full pilot was carried out that aimed to test:

- the full questionnaire in context for flow and to identify further issues;
- procedures in the probation offices for identifying offenders from case reference numbers, providing opt-out letters and handling queries and responses;
- procedures for interviewers making initial contact with offenders; and
- risk management procedures and in-home interview protocols.

Ten interviewers conducted 42 interviews with offenders during October 2009. Ten probation offices were involved, one in each of the Areas selected for the OMCCS survey.

Interviewer briefings

Interviewers for the survey were briefed in groups of 10–15 people. These briefings provided them with a description of Community Orders and how they were intended to operate, and the type of language that probation officers and offenders would be used to, based on findings from the cognitive work. The briefings also covered the potentially increased risks that the population posed and the procedures in place to reduce this risk; the communications strategy for dealing with local probation offices; and the detail of how the relationship should work.

Timing of baseline fieldwork

The aim for the timing of the 'baseline' survey interview was that it should be as soon as possible after the offender's start on their order. Eligible offenders could not be identified for selection until their sentences had already begun. The aim, therefore, was to obtain the data about the commencement of the sentence, process this to make selections of cases and issue the case to field interviewers as quickly as possible.

Raw FORM20 data from the ten selected Probation Areas was provided by MoJ towards the end of the month following the month of commencements (for example, commencements during January would be supplied towards the end of February). Cases were then issued to the field interviewers at the start of the following month. In principle, there would then be a period of two to three weeks where staff in offices received the lists of selected cases and arranged for advance letters to be passed on, telling offenders about the study and their options. It was at this point that the interviewers could start to try to arrange interviews with the selected offenders directly or via probation staff.

An analysis of the time between the sentence commencement date and the date of the survey interview reveals that the average time lag was 92 days. Whether or not this gap is significant depends on the research question to be addressed. The survey asked retrospective questions concerning experiences since commencement, but attitudes could only be assessed at the point of interview. The offender would have met with their Offender Manager a number of times by this point.

Baseline fieldwork commenced in December 2009 with offenders who commenced their Community Order in October of that year. It continued until February 2011 (15 months). For the first three months of fieldwork, only those offenders on longer sentences (24 months and longer) were selected. This was to provide a 'soft launch' where only a small number of cases needed to be handled in the probation offices to allow processes to bed down. This also minimised the overall length of the field period, as the third wave of interviews were planned to take place after 24 months for those on the longest sentences (compared with 13 months for those on 12-month sentences).

Interview process

Interviews were carried out using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). The baseline interviews lasted an average of 50 minutes each. In 84% of cases the interviews were conducted in the local probation offices after a regular meeting between the offender and a member of probation staff. In 12% of cases interviews were conducted in the offender's home and in 4% at neutral venues.

Responding to the challenges

The fieldwork for OMCCS presented some significant challenges:

- **Probation office and Offender Manager engagement:** As explained in Section 3.3, substantial effort was put into maintaining good relationships with staff in probation offices and improvements were made to processes and communications strategies over time. However, Offender Managers did not always 'sell' the case to offenders in the way intended.
- **Tracing offenders:** It was not always possible to obtain offender contact information from probation offices in time for fieldwork, and in some instances there were no current address records and no ongoing contact. Interviewers therefore had limited opportunities to trace offenders, but made discreet enquiries with those at the address provided or neighbours where possible.
- **Gaining agreement to the interview:** Broken appointments were very common (30% of offenders who participated in the study missed appointments). Anecdotal feedback from Offender Managers who were helping to set up appointments suggested that this is particularly common where offenders had chaotic lifestyles linked to, for instance, problematic drink and drug use.

The effect of these issues on the survey response rates is discussed further in Chapter 4.

4. Response to the survey

This chapter presents the response rates to the survey. It breaks down the process to provide a description of where individuals were lost to the survey and provides an indication of the relative likelihood of different groups participating.

4.1 Overall response

A total of 7,873 cases were issued to field interviewers for baseline interviews. Of these, 2,919 cases resulted in a productive baseline interview, which represents a 44% response rate once the ineligible cases were removed.

Table 4.1: Response to baseline survey

	N	% of total issued	% of total eligible for survey	% of total eligible for survey, excluding opt-outs
Total cases issued	7,873			
Out of scope for the survey	1,302	17%		
Not interviewed due to risk to interviewer	137	2%		
Community order not started / not identified	82	1%		
Offender transferred out of survey Offices	218	3%		
Respondent in prison	448	6%		
Not in touch with PO, no address	246	3%		
Other ineligible	171	2%		
In scope for the survey	6,571			
Non-contact	1,037		16%	19%
Non-contact – probation office related	485		7%	9%
Non-contact – sample member	342		5%	6%
Non-contact – no correct address information	210		3%	4%
Refusals	2,227		34%	19%
Opt-outs	1,209		18%	
Refusals (in person or via household)	482		7%	9%
Broken appointments, no recontact	536		8%	10%
Other unproductive	388		6%	7%
Productive interviews	2,919	37%	44%	54%

The overall response rate was lower than originally anticipated by MoJ following the ITTSI feasibility study. It is thought that this was principally due to different procedures relating to making contact with offenders, with an opt-out opportunity provided to offenders in the OMCCS. The rate of ineligible cases was also higher than anticipated.

Cases ineligible for fieldwork

There were 1,302 out-of-scope cases, representing 17% of all those issued (Table 4.1):

- 6% of cases issued were out of scope because the offender being in prison when their baseline interview was due;
- 3% had been transferred to a Probation Area or office that was not selected for the OMCCS survey;
- an additional 2% were considered to be too much of a risk to safety to be interviewed;
- other out-of-scope cases (5% of cases) included those where the Community Order had not started, where there was no address for the offenders, and other 'ineligible' cases.

Opt-outs

Eighteen per cent of offenders (1,209 cases) who were eligible for fieldwork chose to opt out of the study (Table 4.1) (see Section 3.2 for details of the opt-out process).

Work was undertaken to reduce this level of opt-out through better communication of the aims and benefits of the research, and this resulted in a modest improvement in the later months of fieldwork. This involved NatCen contacting offices where it was felt that 'key contacts' required further clarity regarding the survey processes, particularly emphasising the importance of home visits to interview offenders not regularly attending or not wishing to be interviewed in the office. A crib sheet was also developed for Offender Managers, with guidance on 'selling' the study to offenders in a uniform manner. MoJ also made efforts to publicise the study more widely internally, including communication via the Probation Service intranet. There was also direct intervention in a small number of cases, to provide reassurance about concerns regarding data protection.

Following this work, the level of opt-outs decreased from 20% across the sample issued in May and June 2010 to around 16% from August 2010. However, the opt-out rates varied widely between offices and Probation Areas (see Table 4.2). Anecdotally, the research team were aware of increasing pressures on probation staff during the study. In such circumstances, there was understandable variation in the priority assigned to the OMCCS given local operational commitments.

Refusals and non-contact

Among eligible cases, 16% (1,037 cases) were not contacted. The largest part of this non-contact (7% of eligible cases) related to there being no contact between staff at the office and the offender, or staff not passing on contact details to interviewers. In 5% of cases the interviewer was unable to make contact with the offender, despite the opt-out materials having been passed on. In a further 3% of cases the contact information supplied to the interviewer was incorrect.

Among eligible cases, excluding opt-outs, around a fifth (19%; 2,227 cases) 'refused' the interview. This group was split evenly between those who refused the interviewer directly (9%) and those who broke appointments (10%). The next few sections present an analysis of the variation in response between subgroups in the sample.

4.2 Response by Probation Area

As Table 4.2 shows, response rates to the baseline survey varied considerably by Probation Area, with the highest response rate being just under half of all cases issued resulting in a productive interview (Area 5 at 49%), and the lowest at just over a quarter (Area 4 at 27%).

The opt-out rate varied from 10% to 33% among the ten Areas (Table 4.2). Whilst some of the variation might be attributed to differences in the profile of offenders between Areas, it is also likely to reflect variation in practice between interviewers and staff in the offices when establishing initial contact with offenders about the survey.

When comparing response rates at the office level, there was an even greater range, although sample sizes were relatively small (no table provided due to small base sizes and the size of the table).

Feedback was gathered from a meeting of senior NatCen interviewers who were each managing relationships with a small group of local probation offices. This confirmed the variation in approaches to the study on the part of probation staff (both key contacts and Offender Managers). It also highlighted variations between the approaches that interviewers were taking in terms of who they spoke to in order to gain access to responsible Offender Managers and sampled offenders. In some instances, senior probation officers were very helpful in ensuring Offender Managers helped interviewers with the task, whereas receptionists proved to be strategically useful for others.

Table 4.2: Response to baseline survey by Probation Area*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Total cases issued	851	797	827	817	837	801	632	827	807	677
Out of scope for the survey (net)	136	160	123	160	137	129	78	148	125	106
In scope for the survey (net)	715	637	704	657	700	672	554	679	682	571
Non-contact (net)	62	47	135	195	58	135	87	91	71	156
Non-contact – probation office related	12	23	25	101	12	101	46	48	22	95
Non-contact – sample member	50	24	110	94	46	34	41	43	49	61
Refusals (net)	118	81	83	122	122	75	103	70	183	61
Opt-outs	97	209	109	88	81	164	110	178	68	105
Refusals (in person or via household)	118	81	83	122	122	75	103	70	183	61
Other unproductive	40	19	35	32	25	50	80	37	30	40
Productive interviews	398	281	342	220	414	248	174	303	330	209
Response (% of in-scope)	56%	44%	49%	33%	59%	37%	31%	45%	48%	37%
Response (% of all cases)	47%	35%	41%	27%	49%	31%	28%	37%	41%	31%

* Probation Area names not included; see Section 3.3

4.3 Response by offender and sentence characteristics

To provide a fuller understanding of the nature of non-response to the survey, breakdowns are provided on key variables relating to the characteristics of offenders and their sentences in Tables 4.3 to 4.8:

- There was a clear relationship with age, with participation in the survey more likely among older participants; 39% of eligible offenders aged 18–24 participated compared to over half (52%) of those aged over 50 years.
- There was little difference in rates of participation between women and men, with levels at 45% and 44% respectively (Table 4.4).
- There was some variation by ethnicity, with response highest among white offenders (45%) and lowest amongst Black or Black British (39%) and Chinese or other ethnic groups (32%) (Table 4.5).
- Of particular importance to the aims of the study was offenders' risk of reoffending at the start of the sentence (measured using OGRS3, which is based on static risk factors, such as offending history). There was no clear pattern in response rates to the survey by risk of reoffending; those in the low and very high-risk categories had similar levels of response. However, there was a much higher rate of out-of-scope cases among the high-risk group (compared with the low-risk), largely because of offenders in this group being in prison during fieldwork. Those on longer sentences were more likely to respond to the survey (53% among those on 19–36 month sentences compared to 43% among those on sentences of 12 months or less)

(Table 4.7). Those on longer sentences are more likely to be coming into the probation office to meet with staff there on a regular basis, so they may have been easier to contact and persuade to take part in the survey.

- The relationship with management ‘tier’ also reflects the level of contact intended between the offender and their Offender Manager (Table 4.8). Those subject to more control and management (Tier 4) were more likely to respond to the survey compared to Tier 1 cases, who may rarely visit the office (48% and 39% respectively).

Table 4.3: Response to baseline survey by age group

	18–24	25–29	30–39	40– 9	50+
Total cases issued	2,622	1,503	2,129	1,207	412
Out of scope for the survey (net)	533	252	321	155	41
In scope for the survey (net)	2,089	1,251	1,808	1,052	371
Non-contact (net)	364	208	292	128	45
Non-contact – probation office related	172	98	124	67	24
Non-contact – sample member	192	110	168	61	21
Refusals (net)	357	213	255	152	41
Opt-outs	447	222	302	171	67
Refusals (in person or via household)	357	213	255	152	41
Other unproductive	112	72	115	64	25
Productive interviews	809	536	844	537	193
Response (% of in-scope)	39%	43%	47%	51%	52%
Response (% of all cases)	31%	36%	40%	44%	47%

Table 4.4: Response to baseline survey by gender

	Female	Male
Total cases issued	1,671	6,202
Out of scope for the survey (net)	225	1,077
In scope for the survey (net)	1,446	5,125
Non-contact (net)	244	793
Non-contact – probation office related	117	368
Non-contact – sample member	127	425
Refusals (net)	212	806
Opt-outs	219	990
Refusals (in person or via household)	212	806
Other unproductive	117	271
Productive interviews	654	2,265
Response (% of in-scope)	45%	44%
Response (% of all cases)	39%	37%

Table 4.5: Response to baseline survey by ethnicity

	White	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Mixed	Chinese or other ethnic group
Total cases issued	6,486	360	425	259	94
Out of scope for the survey (net)	1,071	57	60	48	18
In scope for the survey (net)	5,415	303	365	211	76
Non-contact (net)	805	50	76	49	19
Non-contact – probation office related	361	21	46	30	9
Non-contact – sample member	444	29	30	19	10
Refusals (net)	870	37	46	28	6
Opt-outs	974	73	84	33	18
Refusals (in person or via household)	870	37	46	28	6
Other unproductive	317	16	17	17	9
Productive interviews	2,449	127	142	84	24
Response (% of in-scope)	45%	42%	39%	40%	32%
Response (% of all cases)	38%	35%	33%	32%	26%

Table 4.6: Response to baseline survey by risk of reoffending

	Risk of reoffending (OGRS 3)			
	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Total cases issued	4,508	1,853	1,204	294
Out of scope for the survey (net)	607	297	282	111
In scope for the survey (net)	3,901	1,556	922	183
Non-contact (net)	563	268	173	31
Non-contact – probation office related	259	127	83	15
Non-contact – sample member	304	141	90	16
Refusals (net)	563	279	137	38
Opt-outs	678	306	203	21
Refusals (in person or via household)	563	279	137	38
Other unproductive	210	97	70	10
Productive interviews	1,887	606	339	83
Response (% of in-scope)	48%	39%	37%	45%
Response (% of all cases)	42%	33%	28%	28%

Table 4.7: Response to baseline survey by original sentence length

	Length of sentence		
	1–12 months	13–18 months	19–36 months
Total cases issued	6,165	945	763
Out of scope for the survey (net)	1,074	145	83
In scope for the survey (net)	5,091	800	680
Non-contact (net)	877	97	63
Non-contact – probation office related	401	46	38
Non-contact – sample member	476	51	25
Refusals (net)	801	114	103
Opt-outs	902	186	121
Refusals (in person or via household)	801	114	103
Other unproductive	298	54	36
Productive interviews	2,213	349	357
Response (% of in-scope)	43%	44%	53%
Response (% of all cases)	36%	37%	47%

Table 4.8: Response to baseline survey by NOMS management tier*

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Total cases issued	273	3,278	3,543	479
Out of scope for the survey (net)	41	442	652	119
In scope for the survey (net)	232	2,836	2,891	360
Non-contact (net)	38	445	454	55
Non-contact – probation office related	21	187	227	25
Non-contact – sample member	17	258	227	30
Refusals (net)	28	453	442	53
Opt-outs	57	533	518	63
Refusals (in person or via household)	28	453	442	53
Other unproductive	18	155	180	18
Productive interviews	91	1,250	1,297	171
Response (% of in-scope)	39%	44%	45%	48%
Response (% of all cases)	33%	38%	37%	36%

* Although Tier 1 cases were excluded in the sample design at the point of commencement, tier was sometimes revised at an early stage of the Community Order, and this is reflected in the number of Tier 1 cases in the table.

5. Administrative data collection

This chapter describes how administrative data widens the perspective of the study. It details the sources of data and the timing of collection.

5.1 Scope of the administrative data collection

To complement the survey data, administrative data were collected from both central and local data sources. This provides the opportunity to analyse the full cohort of Community Order commencements, including Tier 1 cases and other cases not included in the survey sample. It also allows for subgroup analysis not possible in the survey, as the administrative data cover a larger number of offenders.

The administrative data sources were merged with the survey data to form the Universal Dataset. The Universal Dataset is used to observe the level of corroboration between the administrative data and data from the offender interviews, and to provide fuller answers to the specific research questions in relation to offender management.

The process of administrative data collection commenced in 2010. Firstly, a pilot study was conducted to review the locally and centrally held data. The baseline download of the centrally held data was conducted in December 2010. Whilst the principle of obtaining local data was proven in the pilot process, further quality assurance work was needed before it could be used in analysis. It was not planned to use the local data for the baseline reporting, and therefore it was not collected at this time.

5.2 Centrally held data collected

The central data consist of three main data types:

- FORM20 data detailing Community Order commencements and terminations;
- Offender Assessment System (OASys) data, containing details of the needs and risks that offenders present with OASys assessments; and,
- Interim Accredited Programmes System (IAPS) data on offenders' attendance on accredited programmes.

The FORM20 commencements and terminations data and the OASys data were collected for the baseline. Although it was collected, IAPS data was excluded from the baseline Universal Dataset as it required further quality assurance work and was concerned with the implementation of Community Orders – a focus for the analysis after the baseline stage.

The main variables sought to be extracted from each of these data types are shown in Table 5.1. The commencement data were extracted from the FORM20 returns containing all Community Order commencements between October 2009 and December 2010. The OASys assessment data, which were merged to the commencement dataset by NOMS, include all assessments for offenders commencing their sentence during this same period (October 2009 to December 2010). The termination data were extracted from FORM20; this included all Community Order terminations within the same period. Additional downloads of these three main datasets were conducted throughout the course of the study. Further information will be included in future technical reports on the OMCCS.

IAPS data were extracted for the offenders who commenced Community Orders between 1 October 2009 and 31 December 2010.

Table 5.1: Main variables extracted from centrally held data sources

Data type	Main variables
Commencements	Order types Start dates Areas Case Reference Number PNC numbers Tier OGRS3 score Sentence length Requirements Age Gender
OASys assessments (start, mid order and end order)	Needs and risk assessments Sentence plan OGRS3 General and violent predictors of reoffending Risk of Serious Harm
Terminations	Termination date Reasons for termination
IAPS	Programme types Programme start Programme completion Number of sessions Dates of sessions Completion dates

5.3 Locally held data collected

Although the central data sources provided a rich source of administrative data, local administrative data from ten Probation Areas were also collected. Data were downloaded from the same Probation Areas that were sampled for the survey. The following data types were collected in the pilot:

- contact log attendance records;
- breach;
- contact log text; and
- non-accredited programme data (where available).

The main variables originally intended to be extracted from these Probation Areas are outlined in Table 5.2. However, the pilot study identified variability in both the recording and availability of data across the ten Probation Areas. The following actions were therefore taken for the baseline data collection:

- Areas were asked for raw contact log data to reduce the burden on information teams within the Probation Areas and to allow Matrix and NatCen to understand that data source better; and
- Matrix attended the London Probation Offices to write Delius code to assist with the data extraction, ensure data quality and establish a process that could be replicated in future. This code was shared with the West Midlands probation offices as well.

Table 5.2: Main variables extracted from locally held data sources

Data type	Main variables
Breach	Case reference number Dates of breach/absence Date of court outcome Outcome (withdrawn/proven, etc.)
Non-accredited programmes	Title of programme Number of sessions Average length of sessions
Contact Logs	Case reference number Contact date Contact type Contract description Contact text Attendable contact* Attended Unacceptable absence

* These are meetings with the Offender Manager that the offender was meant to attend. There may have been other meetings related to the offender that they were not meant to attend, i.e. case conferences between the Offender Manager and their superior. Unplanned contacts – where the offender turns up without an appointment – are not marked as ‘attendable’.

Work is ongoing to assess the nature of missing data, the quality of what data are available and the processes associated with the original entry of items into administrative systems. An iterative process of carrying out analysis and returning to data providers with detailed queries has been established that will provide metadata to assist interpretation. This will be discussed in future analysis and technical reports.

6. Weighting

This chapter sets out the aims for a weighting scheme for the survey data, the approach taken and its effect on key estimates. It also mentions the administrative data and the reasons for not attempting to develop weights in the case of these data.

6.1 Weighting the survey data

Background

The aim of weighting the survey data was to adjust the achieved survey sample to reflect the population of offenders and thereby minimise any bias in the survey results. The weighting corrects for unequal probabilities of selection (caused by BME/gender oversampling – see chapter 2) and differential non-response, both of which had the effect of distorting the sample composition.

The survey data were weighted to the population profile of Tier 2–4 offenders beginning Community Orders over the period of interest (October 2009 to December 2010). This population profile was taken from all Probation Areas (the survey sampled ten Areas: one Area per region), and was based on FORM20 and OASys administrative data to describe the population. The administrative data suffers from varying degrees of missing data and inaccuracy (the latter evidenced by discrepancies between the two databases, for instance in relation to OGRS scores, and between the respondent data and the administrative data, for instance in relation to age and ethnicity). The population profile is an estimate of the true profile of Tier 2–4 offenders beginning Community Orders in October 2009 to December 2010, rather than a definitive picture.

Method and choice of weighting targets

The most efficient way to derive the weights was to use calibration weighting, which performs the weighting in one simple step.⁵ Calibration adjusts the sample to reflect the population profile on the target variables chosen; these included region, gender, ethnicity and sentence length as these were all affected by the OMCCS sampling procedure.

In addition, all the available administrative data were considered in order to construct suitable weighting targets. When considering suitable target variables, the following criteria were used:

⁵ It was decided that the alternative of deriving selection and non-response weights prior to calibration would have been overcomplicated and would have produced unnecessarily variable weights.

- evidence of a relationship with survey outcomes; this was key as weighting reduces the efficiency of the sample and therefore it must help to reduce bias as a trade-off;
- evidence of a bias in the unweighted sample, i.e. a difference between the sample profile and the population profile; and
- low rates of missing data (to provide accurate population estimates).

The final target variables chosen were:

- Region
- Sentence length
- Age (banded) by sex (six categories)
- Ethnicity by sex (four categories)
- OGRS3 band⁶
- OGP band⁷
- OVP band⁸

Other inter-locking targets were considered (e.g. region by sentence length), but these would have produced large numbers of cells and resulted in greater variability in the weights, with little obvious benefit. In addition, the following variables were considered but not included:

- Tier of commencement; this was excluded as the administrative data on tier was incomplete and often contradictory.
- Offence category; this was not included because there was little evidence of bias on this variable in the unweighted survey sample.
- Criminogenic needs (drug, alcohol, etc.); this was also excluded as there was little evidence of bias on these variables in the unweighted survey sample.

Trimming

After calibration, there were a handful of outlying weights (above 3.00) which were trimmed back to the next largest weight (2.91 approx.). Trimming extreme weights reduces the instability of estimates that can otherwise result where a small number of cases represent a relatively large part of the weighted sample. This had a negligible effect on the final sample profile, as can be seen in Table 6.1.

⁶ A static model of risk of reoffending based largely on offending history.

⁷ A model of risk of reoffending that includes dynamic risk factors as assessed in OASys.

Comparison of sample and population

Table 6.1 compares the final sample and population profiles on key variables. It demonstrates that the profile of the weighted sample successfully matches that of the population. Any slight discrepancies were introduced by trimming; this mainly affects the proportion of high/very high-risk offenders, as these were the cases with large weights.

Table 6.1: Comparison of population and weighted sample characteristics

	Population estimate %	Weighted sample %
Region		
North West	16.6	16.6
North East	8.1	8.1
Yorkshire and Humberside	11.9	11.9
East Midlands	8.1	8.1
East of England	7.8	7.8
West Midlands	11.1	11.1
South East	11.9	11.9
South West	6.8	6.8
London	11.4	11.4
Wales	6.3	6.3
Sentence length (months)		
1–12	76.7	76.7
13–36	23.3	23.3
Age band x Gender		
Male 18–20	13.1	13.1
Male 21–24	15.2	15.2
Male 25–40	39.4	39.4
Male 41+	16.3	16.3
Female 18–24	4.6	4.6
Female 25+	11.4	11.4
Gender x Ethnicity		
White Male	72.8	72.8
BME Male	11.2	11.2
White Female	14.4	14.4
BME Female	1.6	1.6
OGRS3 band		
Low	40.6	40.7
Medium	31.6	31.7
High/ Very high	27.9	27.7
OGP band		
Low	38.9	39.0
Medium	36.5	36.6
High/ Very high	24.6	24.5
OVP band		
Low	51.3	51.4
Medium	40.5	40.6
High/ Very high	8.2	8.0

⁸ A dynamic model of risk of violent offending.

Comparison of weighted and unweighted estimates

The weighted and unweighted sample estimates were compared on a selection of key outcomes. In general, the weighting appears to have a small effect on the sample estimates. This suggests that non-response to the survey did not introduce a very high degree of bias. The largest differences were found on measures that would be expected to correlate with the risk of reoffending. Some examples of the comparisons made are given in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Comparison of unweighted and weighted sample estimates on key variables

<i>Bases vary due to specific question routing</i>	Unweighted %	Weighted %
Have you received any written warnings for not complying with your Community Order?		
Yes	30.4	33.3
No	69.6	66.7
Have you been taken back to court for breaching your Community Order?		
Yes	8.4	9.4
No	91.6	90.6
How would you describe your relationship with [your PO name]?		
Excellent/good	81.8	80.8
OK	16.2	16.8
Not very good/bad	2.0	2.3
Which, if any, of these things has your Community Order involved? : Unpaid Work		
Not mentioned	72.8	71.4
Mentioned	27.2	28.6
Which, if any, of these things has your Community Order involved? : Curfew and / or tagging		
Not mentioned	87.0	86.2
Mentioned	13.0	13.8
I have been sentenced to prison or community sentences several times		
Not mentioned	81.5	78.4
Mentioned	18.5	21.6

6.2 Administrative data

Baseline analysis of the administrative data concentrated on the full cohort of commencements across all Probation Areas in England and Wales, and so the data did not need to be weighted.

Local administrative data were not used in the baseline Universal Dataset or the analysis for the baseline reporting. When local administrative data are used in the analysis of the implementation of Community Orders, this will be based on *all* commencements in the ten

selected Areas. This is unlike the survey, where Areas were selected with probability proportionate to size and then equal numbers of offenders selected from each. In the local administrative data, the larger Areas will be overrepresented in the administrative data. However, it is unlikely that these data will be weighted. Instead, if looking at estimates for the full commencement caseload of the ten Areas, careful interpretation will be required, involving a good understanding of their profile in comparison to the other 32 Areas.

7. Creating the Universal Dataset

The Universal Dataset brings together the full range of data available for the cohort of Community Order offenders. This chapter describes its aims and principles and how the data were brought together.

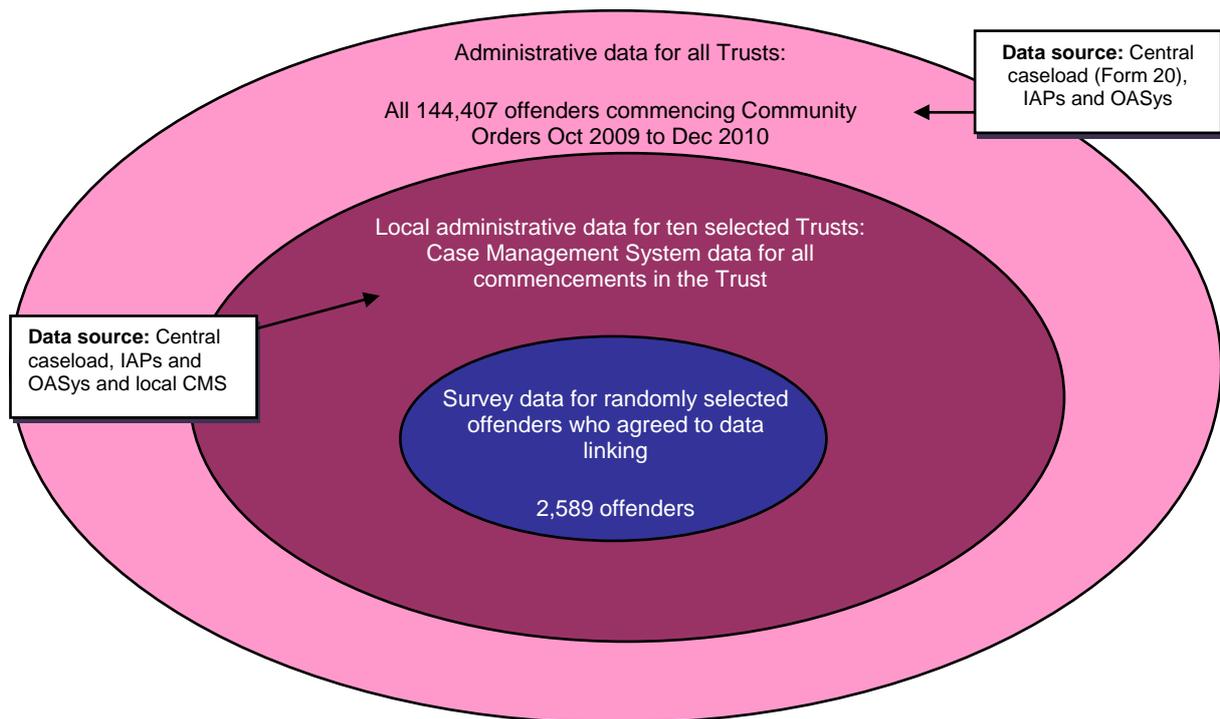
7.1 Aims and approach for the Universal Dataset

The Universal Dataset aims to combine the data available for the cohort of offenders on Community Orders. At its core is the survey of offenders, which provides a perspective on the experience of these sentences not available elsewhere. However, as noted in earlier chapters, it was not intended to represent the full cohort (Tier 1 offenders are excluded) and the size of the sample, while substantial, does not enable all subgroups of interest to be analysed. Administrative data improves the coverage of the data and the range of analyses possible.

Figure 7.1 shows how the different datasets relate to each other in terms of their coverage of the offender cohort. The full cohort of 144,407 offenders are covered by the FORM20 returns data on commencements.⁹ Within this population, local data is available from all offenders commencing their sentence in the ten participating Areas. Finally, the sample of offenders selected for the survey are contained within these ten Areas (2,589 were interviewed and gave their permission for their survey information to be matched to their administrative records).

⁹ The first iteration of the Universal Dataset (created in July 2011) included 144,388 offenders; that dataset was used for the Assessment and Sentence Planning report (Cattell, J., Mackie, A., Prestage, Y. and Wood, M. (2013) *Results from the Offender Management Community Cohort Study (OMCCS): Assessment and sentence planning*. London: Ministry of Justice). The Universal Dataset was updated in November 2011 and a further 19 commencements were added; this version of the Universal Dataset is described here.

Figure 7.1: Coverage of the data in the Universal Dataset



7.2 Linking national and survey data

The Universal Dataset contained 144,407 records. This section describes how the Universal Dataset was constructed from the FORM20, OASys, IAPS and survey datasets. The following three tasks were carried out to match the national data and survey data:

- linking commencements and terminations data
- linking commencements and OASys data
- linking the survey data.

Linking commencements and terminations data

The Community Order sentence commencements that started between 1 October 2009 and 31 December 2010 were matched to the terminations data using a unique commencement constructed from the following fields:

- Area
- Case Reference Number (CRN)
- Commencement data

Where an offender had more than one Community Order commencement within the sample period, the first commencement was added to the Universal Dataset. In these data there were 144,407 valid commencements, of which 66,622 had a termination record.

Linking commencements and OASys data

The OASys assessments were matched to the commencement data by analysts in NOMS Planning and Analysis Group. This matched all start and termination assessments completed within 90 days (before and after) of an offender's commencement date and within 90 days of the termination date, if applicable; 93,173 start assessments and 17,148 termination assessments were matched to the Universal Dataset.

Linking the survey data

In preparation for merging the survey data with the commencements data, a unique offender identifier was also created by using the CRN and area codes. Survey respondents were asked at the end of the interview whether they were willing for their interview answers to be linked to administrative records. Only those offenders who gave their consent were matched into the Universal Dataset. This excluded those who said they did not give consent, and those who did not get to this point in the questionnaire.

Of the 7,873 offenders sampled for the baseline survey 2,589 gave permission to link their survey responses to the universal data.

7.3 Storing the data

The administrative datasets were held separately in a SQL Server database. Variables were brought together from each set using SQL code into an SPSS dataset (the Universal Dataset) for analysis. The survey dataset was very large and was therefore taken into the database in sections.

7.4 Analysis using the Universal Dataset

The Universal Dataset, as described above, brings together data from various sources. While consistent definitions have been applied, and a sample frame that describes the population is provided by the FORM20 data, other data cover a subset of this population, and this should be considered when interpreting findings provided in the Assessment and Sentence Planning report.¹⁰ Key points to bear in mind are:

¹⁰ Cattell, J., Mackie, A., Prestage, Y. and Wood, M. (2013) *Results from the Offender Management Community Cohort Study (OMCCS): Assessment and sentence planning*. London: Ministry of Justice.

- **Overall population for the study:** This has been defined by Form20 data, which records commencements of all Community Orders. The population for the study consists of commencements between October 2009 and December 2010. It covers all Probation Areas in England and Wales and includes 144,407 offenders who commenced a Community Order within that period.
- **Survey data:** The survey includes offenders on Tiers 2 to 4 of the National Offender Management Service's tiering framework but excludes offenders on Tier 1. The survey sampled ten of the Probation Areas, but selections were made in such a way as to be representative of all Areas (weighting was also applied to achieve this). Findings from the survey data should be thought of as applying to all offenders in Tiers 2 to 4 at commencement. In total, 2,919 offenders were interviewed and of these 2,589 agreed to have their answers matched to administrative data. Some analysis is based on the full survey sample, but where administrative data is used as well, it will be the smaller base (separate weights are applied in each case to provide representative estimates).
- **OASys data:** OASys assessments are completed for a subset of the population (those in Tiers 3 and 4 and in Tier 2 with a supervision requirement). This affects the analysis of needs, sentence plan information and some characteristics of the offender. Nine per cent of the OASys records matched to offenders were from Pre-Sentence Reports.

7.5 Data checks, cleaning and processing

The following data cleaning steps were taken during the creation of the Universal Dataset:

- All commencement CRN numbers were complete;
- It was ensured that commencement dates were between 1 October 2009 and 31 December 2012;
- Non-Community Order commencements were removed;
- It was checked whether an offender has more than one commencement and if so, the first commencement was retained in the dataset;
- It was checked that all CRNs
- had seven digits;
- Duplicate assessments were removed from the dataset;
- Assessments with an unknown purpose code were removed from the dataset; and
- All US formatted dates in the commencements, OASys, IAPS and terminations data were converted into UK formats.

Appendix: Fieldwork documents

Included in this appendix are:

1. Approach letter for probation offices to pass on to offenders
2. Crib sheets for Offender Managers
3. Interview consent form
4. Data linking consent form

The Baseline survey questionnaire is available as a separate document on the MoJ website.

Approach letter for probation offices to pass on to offenders



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PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

National Centre for Social Research
Freepost CL499
Brentwood
CM14 4LX

A research study about Community Orders

We are writing to ask for your help with an important study about the services provided as part of Community Orders. The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), an independent research institute, has been asked by the Ministry of Justice to find out about peoples' experiences of the Probation Service and what they think about Community Orders. We would like to hear about your views and experiences as part of this.

An interviewer from NatCen will make arrangements to speak to you at the Probation Office or somewhere else if you prefer. After the interview you will receive a £10 WH Smith voucher to thank you for your time.

- **Your answers will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Your Probation Officer will not know what you have talked about.**
- **Your involvement in this study will not affect your Community Order, or any dealings you may have with any government department or agency.**

This is a chance for your views to be heard, but the interview is entirely voluntary. If you do not want an interviewer to get in touch, please let us know in the next week. You can phone us on 0800 652 4572 (Freephone), email us at omccs@natcen.ac.uk or write to the Freepost address at the top of this letter (please give us the reference number at the top of this letter when you make contact). You can also let your Probation Officer know.

You can get in touch with us in any of these ways if you have any questions about the research. Thank you for your help. We hope you enjoy talking to the interviewer.

Yours sincerely

Tanja B. Sejersen

Researcher, NatCen

Crib sheets for Offender Managers



The Offender Management Community Cohort Study (OMCCS)

Information for probation staff

NatCen, an independent research organisation, is carrying out a study with offenders on Community Orders. The study will assess the Offender Management Model by tracing offenders from sentencing through to the completion of their orders and beyond. It will aim to understand how Community Orders help reduce offending and for whom. In doing so it will consider the contribution of the mix of services and requirements experienced by offenders, together with the central role of Offender Managers and others.

The study will involve NatCen interviewers speaking to a selected group of offenders over the next three years. Many of the interviews will take place in Probation Offices, and staff at the office will be asked to help with making some of the arrangements. The study has been set up to help ensure the procedures work smoothly and have the minimum impact on the day to day work of the office.

The study has been discussed with senior management in each participating Probation Area and is supported by Phil Wheatley, Director General of the National Offender Management Service. Workshops have been held between Probation areas, NatCen and MoJ to set up procedures that minimise the draw on probation staff resources.

How is this probation office involved?

Across the country, ten probation areas are involved in the study. Each area has between four and nine local office involved in the study depending on the area set-up. In each of these offices we have identified a 'Key Contact'. This person is the central point of contact regarding the study for NatCen and Probation staff.

The Key Contact for the OMCCS in your office is _____

How to set up interviews

STEP 1 (week 1): Our 'Key Contact' in your office should provide you with a letter (or letters) to hand to the selected offender(s).

STEP 2: Consider whether the selected offender would be a risk to the safety of the interviewer in an interview situation. The assessment of risk should lead to one of four categories:

A risk to interviewer safety, even if the interview was to take place within the Probation office
A risk to interviewer safety in the case of home visits, but limited risk in the Probation office
Alternative venues for interviews can be used excluding home visits
No indication of risk to interviewer safety.

The interviewer will discuss risk with the Key Contact before attempting an interview and it is therefore important that you inform the Key contact or the interviewer of any potential concerns.

STEP 3: Hand the letter to the selected offender as soon as possible.
You could mention:

The £10 W.H.Smith voucher

The interviewer will be in the office to interview them following your meeting in two weeks time

That you think it would be a good idea for him/her to participate

That people normally enjoy taking part

The letter gives further information

If the offender no longer attends meetings in the probation office, please post the letter to him/her.

STEP 4 (week 2): After the selected offender has had a week to consider the information in the letter, we would like to set up an appointment to see the interviewer. At your next meeting with the selected offender, let them know that a NatCen interviewer will be in the office after your next meeting to interview them. If they are unsure about whether or not they want to participate, tell them that the interviewer will be happy to answer any questions when they meet and they can still decide not to participate at that point. They can also contact NatCen using the contact information on the letter and leaflet.

If the offender is clear that they do not want to take part in the research, please inform the Key Contact of this. If the offender does not opt out of the research at this stage, you can pass their contact information to the interviewer.

STEP 5: Please inform our Key Contact of the date and time for your next meeting with the selected offender so that they can let our interviewer know. If an interview room needs to be booked they should make arrangements for this.

Week 3 onwards: Interview

STEP 6: If the time for the next meeting changes, please let the Key Contact know as soon as possible so they can change arrangements with the interviewer. If you are unable to arrange another interviewer with the offender, the interviewer will attempt to contact the selected offender directly.

Frequently asked questions

Who will be asked to participate?

The study focuses on tier 2-4 offenders on Community Orders. A few offenders will be selected for their first interview each month for the next 15 months. Offenders will be randomly selected from those recently commencing their sentences. The key contact will let you know if any offenders under your supervision are selected.

What is the role of probation staff?

NatCen will not be able to access offender contact details or names until a week after he/she has received the advance letter and have had the chance to opt out. This is the reason why we ask you to distribute the advance letter.

Who should participate in the interview?

It is very important to the success of the study that we hear about a full range of views and experiences, so we sincerely hope the selected offenders will be willing to participate. NatCen is interested in interviewing all types of offenders and our Interviewers are trained in dealing with a broad spectrum of the community. We have previously worked on studies with respondents in drug treatment, arrestees and understand the potential difficulties involved with interviewing offenders. Only highly experienced interviewers are conducting OMCCS interviews.

What is the format of the interview?

The interview takes about 50 minutes and the participant will receive a £10 W.H. Smith Voucher for their time. People generally enjoy giving their views in studies like this.

The interview is completely voluntary and respondents can choose not to answer particular questions if they would prefer this for any reason. They can also end the interview during the interview if they change their mind about participating.

Which topics are covered in the interview?

The interview will cover issues relating to attitudes to sentence and the different requirements and activities offenders are participating in. We are also asking for information about the respondents' living situation such as accommodation, employment, education, family, drugs, alcohol, attitudes, and offending.

NatCen interviewers are trained in interviewing vulnerable adults and are very sensitive to any questions which may cause an emotional reaction from the participant. The interview is quantitative in nature and the limited number of questions evolving around sensitive issues are asked in a way to avoid respondents to delve on these or go into any details about events or feelings regarding these.

Confidentiality and data protection

The interview is strictly confidential and no staff members, individual offender, or local office will be identified in the research findings. There are no links between this study and performance ratings for different areas, local offices or staff.

Only the research teams at NatCen, Matrix Knowledge Group and the Ministry of Justice will be able to access the questionnaire responses. Offenders are asked for signed consent to the interview at the beginning of the interview. The offender can withdraw their consent during or after the interview. We will not share any responses with probation staff and taking part will not affect anything to do with respondents' Community Order or any other dealings they may have with the Probation Office.

The only limit to confidentiality is if the respondent talk about current suicidal thoughts or an intention to do harm to somebody who can be identified (these types of topics are not part of the interview). In those cases, a duty of care would mean NatCen have to inform a relevant authority.

Respondents will be asked to sign a data linking form which will give MoJ researchers access to data from other Government departments. Consent to data linking is not essential to the selected offender taking part in the study and consent can be withdrawn at any time.

Data security is a high priority for MoJ and NatCen and appropriate procedures have been set up in cooperation with the involved probation areas.

NatCen interviewers

NatCen is responsible for the actions of NatCen interviewers whilst they are working on this study and all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that interviewers are suitable for the work involved. All interviewers go through rigorous training and are CRB checked. Their work is subject to detailed quality control checks, and is regularly supervised and reviewed. Structured refresher training is provided and interviewers are expected to maintain regular contact with group leaders and project managers. Interviewers have attended a full day briefing about the OMCCS by NatCen researchers where safety issues are highlighted.

Interviews in the Probation office

The majority of interviews should take place within the probation office. In order to minimise risk within probation offices, interviewers will be given an introduction to the safety procedures on their first day in the probation office. Interviewers will follow safety guidance given by probation staff when interviewing in the probation office.

All interviewers working for NatCen are required to provide signed confirmation that they have read and retained NatCen's written guidance in respect of Working Safely and that they will carry out their work in accordance with NatCen's Guidance on Data Protection and Confidentiality.

Offenders with English language difficulties

We are aware that some respondents may have difficulties completing an interview in English. If you believe a sample member will not be able to complete an interview in English please let the Key local office contact know about this. Dependent on the availability of translations and interpreters an interview will be attempted in the respondent's first language.

What do I do if I want more information about the study?

If you want further information your first point of contact is the key local office contact in your local office. You can also contact the National Centre for Social Research, on 0800 652 4572 (Freephone) or email us at omccs@natcen.ac.uk. Offenders are also welcome to use these methods of contact.

The National Centre for Social Research is an independent research institute, and the study is being conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Justice. You are welcome to contact Research Officer Chantelle Fields, at the Ministry of Justice, on 020 3334 5090 or email: Chantelle.Fields2@justice.gsi.gov.uk if you have any further questions about the OMCCS.

Interview consent form

BLUE TEAM

Operations Department

101-135 Kings Road, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4LX

Telephone 01277 200 600

Fax 01277 214 117



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NatCen
National Centre for Social Research

P2941	Offender Management Community Cohort Study
BLUE TEAM	

SERIAL NUMBER:	
INTERVIEWER NAME:	
INTERVIEWER NUMBER:	
CONSENT FORM	
<p>Consent to take part in research</p> <p>I confirm that I consent to take part in this study being conducted by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen), Matrix and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and they will have access to the answers from the survey, for research purposes only. I understand that it is entirely voluntary, and that I can withdraw my consent at any time. The answers I give will not influence my Community Order now or in the future.</p> <p>I understand that anything I say will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The data controller for this study is the MoJ (however during data linking exercises other Government departments, or a third party acting on their behalf, may be the data controller). My answers will only be used for research and statistical purposes.</p> <p>I understand that anything I say in the survey will only be known to NatCen, Matrix and the MoJ. The only limits are if I talk about current suicidal thoughts or risking harm to somebody else.</p> <p>SIGNED: _____</p> <p>NAME (BLOCK CAPITALS): _____</p> <p>DATE: _____</p>	

Data linking consent form

BLUE TEAM

Operations Department

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Fax 01277 214 117



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NatCen

National Centre for Social Research

P2941	Offender Management Community Cohort Study
BLUE TEAM	
SERIAL NUMBER:	
INTERVIEWER NAME:	
INTERVIEWER NUMBER:	
DATA LINKING CONSENT FORM	
<p>I confirm that I give my consent for my answers from this interview to be linked to administrative records held by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) and other Government departments. I understand that this will in no way affect my community order now or in the future, and that I can withdraw my consent at any time.</p> <p>The information will only be used for research and statistical purposes.</p> <p>Either the MoJ or another Government department's research team (or a third party acting on their behalf) will carry out the data linking. The survey answers will not be passed on to other Government departments. The only information that will be passed from the MoJ to other Government departments is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your Name • Your National Insurance Number • Your Date of Birth • Your Address • Your Gender <p>The data controller for this study is the MoJ. However during data linking exercises, another Government department research team (or a third party acting on their behalf) may be the data controller. The data above will remain confidential to Government departments' research teams (or a third party acting on their behalf) and will be used solely for research and statistical purposes. The results from this study may be used in publications or reports, but data will be anonymous, and it will not be possible to identify you. This will not affect your dealings with MoJ or any other Government department in the future.</p> <p>You may at any time withdraw your consent simply by informing the research team at NatCen or the MoJ.</p> <p>Participant Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) _____</p> <p>Signed (Participant) _____</p> <p>Witness (Interviewer) _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	