

Onset – Assessment builds on the information already provided by the referrer and collected during the verification stage. Therefore, the referral form should become the first few pages of the assessment as a whole – all this information should form the basis for decisions on interventions.

Onset – Assessment is compulsory for all young people included in the 'intensive targeting cohorts' as defined by the YJB's *Counting Rules* for prevention (available from www.yjb.gov.uk).

Onset and Asset

Some of the young people prevention programmes work with will have an arrest history, and therefore have had an *Asset* form completed by their local YOT. In these instances, the latest *Asset* assessment should be made available to prevention workers, even if the young person is not currently on an order. Data-sharing protocols with the YOT should highlight any data-protection policy in place as a result of this.

Asset can:

- provide a good basis for the information requested in *Onset*
- allow practitioners to check their facts and monitor changes that have occurred in the young person's life.

It is not appropriate to simply copy ratings from an *Asset* onto an *Onset*, as it is not yet known how the two assessments can feed in to each other.

History of offending/anti-social behaviour

Many of the young people being referred will:

- already be known to the police
- have committed offences/other acts of anti-social behaviour that were not known to the police.

This is important information when deciding on the level of intervention work with the young person.

Details of any offending or anti-social behaviour can be recorded in this section, together with dates and outcomes of police contact where applicable. This space can also be used to detail any anti-social behaviour sanctions that the young person has against them.

Age at first police contact

If known, this should be the first time the police became aware of any offending or anti-social behaviour by the young person. If the exact age is not known the nearest approximate age should be recorded.

Frequency of police contact

If known, the number of times the police have been in contact with the young person because of his or her behaviour should be noted in relation to the time periods mentioned. This might indicate an escalation or fall in problematic behaviour.

Victim(s)

Any offences or anti-social acts committed by the young person have a victim: either a specific individual, or the community more generally.

If a programme runs victim mediation services, this section can also be used to make a note of appropriate contact details. However, the potential impact of the young person seeing this on the assessment should be kept in mind, and the rules applying to third-party disclosure in relation to assessments must be followed. Managers should be consulted for advice on this issue.

Care history

Is the young person, siblings or other young people in the family/home known to social services?

Details on social services involvement with the young person or any other person in his or her family or home are essential for two reasons:

- to inform the assessment of the young person
- to inform both the intervention plan and possible action to be taken by social services in the future.

It is especially important to provide specific details if there is a 'don't know' answer in this section, as it may indicate the need for further investigation.

Education details

What is the young person's percentage of attendance at his or her educational placement?

This question also appears on both the review and closure summaries, allowing for the percentage to be tracked and any improvements or deterioration to be evidenced.

Accommodation and family details

Who is the young person mostly living with at present?

Tick all the people the young person lives with at his or her permanent address.

The next part of the form asks you to rate how far you think 12 risk areas are associated with the potential offending of the young person. This should make identification of individual problem areas easier to assess and tackle during planning and intervention.

Some sections are linked together if the same evidence will be used for both (for example, 'Physical health' and 'Emotional and mental health').

Examples of high and low ratings for each factor are given below, together with guidance on what kinds of information you should include in the 'Evidence', 'Related protective factors' and 'Other relevant information' boxes.

Ratings

A rating should be provided to indicate the extent to which each particular section is associated with the likelihood of future offending or serious anti-social behaviour by the young person. You should consider all the information collected about the young person and their situation and relate this to:

- the examples given in each section on the form
- these guidance notes
- any other information you consider to be relevant.

Note that you are not being asked to assess the extent to which a section is problematic in the life of the young person in general; it is very specifically focused on risk in relation to offending/anti-social behaviour and requires you to make a judgement about the link between the problems you have identified and future behaviour in these areas only.

When giving a rating you should consider the following questions.

- Was this risk factor linked to past challenging behaviour? If 'yes', do you think the risk factor is more, less or equally significant now?
- Is there a direct or an indirect link between the risk factor and the young person's behaviour?
- Is the risk factor always relevant to the young person's offending or serious anti-social behaviour, or only on certain occasions?
- Is the effect on future offending behaviour likely to be immediate or over a longer period?
- Is the risk factor problematic enough to lead to offending by itself, or is it only likely to contribute to offending behaviour when specific other conditions exist?

The extent to which a section is associated with the likelihood of further offending is rated on a 0–4 scale:

0	Not associated at all.
1	Slight, occasional or only a limited indirect association.
2	Moderate but definite association. Could be a direct or indirect link. May be related to some offending or anti-social behaviour, but not all. Tends to become offending-related when combined with other factors.
3	Quite strongly associated. Normally a direct link, relevant to most types/occasions of the young person's offending or anti-social behaviour.
4	Very strongly associated. Will be clearly and directly related to any offending or serious anti-social behaviour by the young person. Will be a dominant factor in any cluster of behaviour-related problems.

In each section, examples are given to illustrate high and low ratings. It is good practice for key workers to compare assessments and the ratings that were given, in order to help to create a level of local and individual consistency in assessments.

Evidence

The evidence box provides the opportunity for further details to be provided and to make a note of the sources of important information. This provides evidence of the basis for your decisions and judgements, and enables you to explain the complexity of a young person's situation and elaborate on the key issues.

Details of any related protective factors

As well as assessing problems, it is important to identify the positive aspects of a young person's life, in order to build up a complete picture of his or her circumstances, and to identify factors that can help him or her tackle any risk factors.

Sometimes a section may contain just one positive factor amid many problems. For example:

- in the 'Statutory education' section, a young person may experience severe difficulties at school, but have a good relationship with one particular teacher
- in the 'Family and personal relationships' section, there might be one family relationship that has a stabilising influence on the young person
- In the 'Motivation to change' section, the young person may be willing to deal with one problem while refusing to acknowledge others.

It is important to record positive factors even if they appear to be quite small in comparison to a young person's problems, because this can highlight areas in which to encourage the young person during any intervention.

As well as protective factors that already exist you should also highlight potential protective factors that could be secured by way of an intervention: for example, a strong, stable relationship with a parent may be established through a successful parenting programme

Details of any other relevant information relating to the young person

If there is any other information relevant to the young person's situation that has an impact on his or her risk of offending, or welfare needs in relation to the intervention plan, it can be noted here.

1. Living arrangements

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 3 or 4

- the young person lives with known offenders who are clearly involving or encouraging him or her into offending behaviour
- the young person is living on the streets and is offending to survive
- the accommodation is stable, but the young person is living with someone he or she has previously stolen from or victimised
- the living arrangements give the young person access to potential vulnerable victims (for example, younger siblings)

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 1 or 2

- the accommodation is unsuitable and lacks basic facilities, but there is no clear link between this and the young person's offences/anti-social behaviour (for example, because the offences are mainly driving related)
- the young person's unhappiness with his or her living arrangements is one of several factors contributing to feelings of stress and frustration

2. Family and personal relationships

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 3 or 4

- there is a close family member who is criminally active and is potentially involving the young person in offending
- supervision is inconsistent and parents/carers do not know where the young person goes or who he or she is with
- the young person's behaviour is to obtain attention from carers who show no interest in him or her
- there is a combination of problems (for example, one parent has a mental health problem and one is criminally active)

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 1 or 2

- the young person looks up to a family member who is criminally active, but as yet there is no evidence of them offending together or of the family member trying to directly involve the young person in offending
- the young person has generally stable relationships, but occasional difficulties when he or she has contact with a particular member of the family

3. Statutory education

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 3 or 4

- most of the young person's troublesome behaviour occurs when he or she is not attending school
- the young person has committed offences or acts of anti-social behaviour while on school premises and sees school as providing opportunities for such behaviour

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 1 or 2

- the young person's behaviour may be linked to non-attendance sometimes, but not consistently
- there is an indirect link with behaviour (for example, underachievement at school contributes to low self-esteem, which in turn may contribute to offending activity)

4. Neighbourhood

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 3 or 4

- all of the young person's offending or anti-social behaviour occurs within the same neighbourhood
- there are many opportunities for offending in the area which seem attractive and profitable to the young person

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 1 or 2

- the neighbourhood has a lot of social difficulties, but this is not the main reason for the young person's behaviour
- the young person commits offences and acts of anti-social behaviour in different areas, not just one particular neighbourhood

5. Lifestyle

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 3 or 4

- all of the young person's offending or anti-social behaviour occurs with a particular group of friends
- the young person offends to obtain money for a gambling habit
- the young person is bored, has little to do and sees his or her behaviour as a necessary way of getting some excitement
- the young person is involving younger friends in offending or anti-social behaviour

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 1 or 2

- the young person is sometimes involved in reckless activity, but this does not usually involve offending or anti-social acts
- the young person has pro-criminal or anti-social friends, but tends to act alone rather than with the group

6. Substance misuse

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 3 or 4

- the young person offends to obtain money for substances
- all the young person's troublesome behaviour occurs while under the influence of substances
- the young person's attitudes and willingness to experiment with substances increases the likelihood of the young person being found in possession of illegal drugs

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 1 or 2

- infrequent and/or minor offending or anti-social behaviour is linked to occasional substance use

7. Physical health

The links between physical health and offending behaviour will usually be indirect: and consequently there will be a tendency towards lower ratings in this section.

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 1 or 2

- the young person has a condition that leads to disruptive behaviour at school and possible exclusion
- the young person has an impairment that makes it more difficult for him or her to find suitable work or training in the future
- the young person's frustration with a health problem contributes to his or her aggressive behaviour

8. Emotional and mental health

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 3 or 4

- there is a direct link with symptoms of mental illness (for example, challenging behaviour due to hallucinations, delusions, hearing voices)
- the young person struggles to cope with strong feelings of anger or hatred, and is likely to take this out on other people
- the young person offends and commits acts of anti-social behaviour at specific times related to his or her health (for example, when he or she fails to take medication or misses psychiatrist appointments)

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 1 or 2

- the young person tends to deal with emotional difficulties internally rather than expressing them through anti-social or offending behaviour

9. Perception of self and others

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 3 or 4

- the young person displays discriminatory attitudes that provide a clear motive for his or her challenging behaviour
- the young person sees crime as a 'career', and thinks that he or she will always be in trouble with the police, parents etc.
- the young person's self-esteem is dependent on the sense of achievement that he or she gets from such behaviour

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 1 or 2

- the young person's low self-esteem contributes to a feeling that he or she has nothing to lose by offending or anti-social behaviour
- the young person shows a lack of understanding for others, which although it may not lead directly into offending, suggests that he or she could be persuaded to take part in criminal activity more easily than someone with a greater ability to empathise

10. Thinking and behaviour

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 3 or 4

- the young person displays a combination of impulsiveness, poor temper control and aggression, resulting in a high risk of violent behaviour
- the young person's need for excitement frequently leads him or her into situations where offending or anti-social behaviour is likely

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 1 or 2

- the young person's lack of assertiveness does affect his or her behaviour, but only when with particular friends
- the young person presents him or herself in a way that is occasionally inappropriate and perceived by other people as deliberately provocative, which may lead to aggressive situations

11. Attitudes to offending

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 3 or 4

- the young person's attitude provides a direct motive for his or her offending or anti-social behaviour
- the young person genuinely believes that further offending or other challenging behaviour is inevitable

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 1 or 2

- the young person displays attitudes that may not directly motivate him or her to behave in a challenging way, but which make it unlikely that he or she will refuse to participate in criminal activity if friends suggest it

12. Motivation to change

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 3 or 4

- the young person has no understanding of the problematic aspects of his or her behaviour
- the young person cannot identify any incentives to stop such behaviour
- there is no evidence from the young person's behaviour of a desire to change

Examples of circumstances that would result in a rating of 1 or 2

- the young person is very motivated to stop offending, but is unlikely to receive much support from family/carers
- the young person has a good understanding of the consequences of his or her offending in the future, but has less understanding of the impact of this behaviour on other people

Indicators of vulnerability

This section focuses on the possibility of harm (physical or emotional) occurring to *the young person*. Examples are given on the assessment form.

If you answer 'yes' to any of these questions, consider whether another agency needs to be involved. If there are immediate concerns, follow local child protection procedure.

Indicators of serious harm to others

Serious harm means death or injury (either physical or psychological) which is life-threatening and/or traumatic and from which recovery is expected to be difficult, incomplete or impossible. Examples are throwing stones onto cars from a motorway bridge, arson or serious violence toward a sibling. Only a small minority of young people referred through *Onset* will cause a risk of serious harm to others, but in such cases it is important to ensure that a thorough assessment is made.

If you answer 'Yes' to any of these questions, the *Onset – Risk of Serious Harm to Others* form should be completed. *Onset* is designed to assist in assessing the level of risk that a young person presents to other people and in determining the implications of this for any intervention. It cannot, however, cover all the practical issues surrounding the management of high-risk cases: these will need to be addressed through local procedures, training and team discussions.

Any risk of serious harm to others assessment should only be undertaken by staff who have received appropriate training, and be discussed with a manager.

Any risk of serious harm to others assessment completed in a prevention programme needs to be directly linked into the review processes within the local YOT. Therefore, prevention programme managers need to be aware of:

- the risk management policy in their local YOT
- how risk of serious harm to others assessments link in with *Onset* and *Asset* assessments
- risk management procedures if issues are identified.

Views of the young person

The full participation of the young person is essential for any intervention to have an impact. This is an opportunity to summarise the views of the young person, using the *Onset – Over to YOU!* questionnaire, interviews and any other sources of information. This can inform any subsequent reports or plans.

Views of the parents/carers or other person with parental responsibility

This is an opportunity to summarise the views of the parents/carers. Information can come from the *Onset – Over to YOU!* questionnaire, interviews and other sources. Again, this will inform any subsequent reports or plans.

Summary

The summary provides an opportunity for the assessor to bring all the information together and consolidate his or her thoughts on the young person and the situation. It can also act as a convenient starting point for any reports that follow the assessment.

Total ratings score

Add up the 0–4 ratings you gave each risk factor and put the total in this box.

Key factors identified

These should include:

- problems that have been identified and need to be tackled by one of the participating mainstream agencies, the young person and his or her family/carers
- positive elements of the young person's life that need to be maintained or cultivated further to help counteract the risk factors.

The list of key factors should inform any reports and intervention plans, and will form a convenient basis for future action. There is space for five factors but they do not all have to be filled (any more than five factors to work on at once may be too much for the young person and his or her family, and so should be avoided).

Does the assessment highlight the need for any immediate referrals?

It may be the case that the assessment highlights an immediate case for referral to a mainstream agency, in order to benefit either the young person directly, or his or her family (for example, getting child protection involved with the young person as soon as possible, or referring the parents to a marriage counsellor at their request).