

Prevention Practice: Learning from Youth Crime Prevention Activity in Eight Youth Offending Teams during 2008/09 and 2009/10

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Executive summary

Youth crime prevention policy is based on the assumption that it is possible to change the life-course trajectories of young people by reducing risk factors that may lead to offending behaviour and building on protective factors that might help prevent offending. The purpose of the current study was to examine the characteristics and needs of a cohort of young people who completed youth crime prevention programmes, and to look at how these programmes were delivered in some localities.

The study consisted of two components:

1. a small number of interviews – these were conducted with a key member of staff within seven of the eight case study youth offending teams (YOTs)
2. collection and analysis of YOT cohort administrative data from prevention programmes. These data included *Onset*¹ risk of future offending assessment scores, key demographic characteristics and records of offences committed during the year before and the year after involvement in a prevention programme.

A case study approach was taken, involving a purposively selected sample of eight YOTs operating in areas within England and Wales that had been providing youth crime prevention programmes, and which had received some funding from the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB). Overall, data were obtained for a cohort of 934 young people engaged in prevention programmes in 2008/09 and 2009/10. Data were aggregated across the eight YOTs to create a single cohort of young people.

As the largest study to date looking specifically at *Onset* scores of young people involved in prevention programmes, this report offers practitioners in the youth justice field a useful insight into the characteristics and needs of young people completing prevention interventions, and how these programmes were delivered.

¹ *Onset* is a referral and assessment framework, which identifies whether a young person would benefit from intervention at an early stage. It determines the risk factors that should be reduced and the protective factors that should be enhanced in order to prevent him or her offending (see YJB, 2006b, p.3). During an *Onset* assessment interview, YOT caseworkers provide a numeric score of zero (not associated at all with likelihood of offending or serious anti-social behaviour) to four (very strongly associated with likelihood of offending or serious anti-social behaviour) across 12 components that are associated with risk factors that are known to be linked to offending behaviour in young people. While completing the *Onset* assessment, YOT caseworkers need to make a judgement about the link between any problems identified and the young person's offending or anti-social behaviour. This judgement is reflected in the scores given during the assessment. The *Onset* assessment also involves the assessment of protective factors, though these are not rated with a score in the same way that risk factors are.

The following limitations need to be borne in mind:

1. As the study did not contain a comparison group, any changes in YOT data before and after involvement in prevention programmes cannot be attributed to these programmes. A range of other factors may have influenced overall changes in offending behaviour or *Onset* scores.
2. *Onset* has not been validated as a risk assessment tool, therefore scores cannot be interpreted to reflect the actual likelihood of offending occurring in future.
3. The aggregation of data across the eight YOTs may have concealed differences between YOTs and limited the ability to identify lessons relating to particular YOT practices.
4. The small number of interviews conducted, and potential for recall bias,² means that these findings must be treated with some caution.

Key indicative findings

Delivery of prevention interventions

Interviews with staff from seven of the eight YOTs suggested that young people in the cohort experienced similar pathways into interventions. The most common referral routes³ were:

- education (37% of all referrals)
- the police (18%)
- social services (15%).

The implementation of prevention programmes was similar in all areas in that YOTs all used a multi-agency panel for the referral and delivery of prevention programmes. This was underpinned by a holistic approach that, as recommended in the literature on effective prevention interventions, involved parents and families as well as individual young people. There were differences between YOTs in terms of who delivered interventions. Some YOTs provided interventions 'in-house' through seconded staff from mainstream services, while others referred young people to external services.

There was variation in the use of thresholds for referral onto prevention programmes across YOTs. These ranged from no threshold being applied (all referrals of young people accepted) to measurable thresholds, such as an initial total *Onset* score of over 15 out of a possible maximum of 48. Such variation in practice created differences in access to prevention programmes between the eight YOTs.

² Due to the interviews being carried out in May 2012, two to four years after the prevention programmes were delivered.

³ Two YOTs were not able to provide data on referral sources. These figures are therefore based on data from six YOTs.

The prevention cohort

Analysis of YOT data on the characteristics of those young people who completed prevention programmes and for whom there was an opening and closing *Onset* assessment indicated:

- **Age:** Eighty-eight per cent of the cohort were of secondary school age, and the remainder were of primary school age.
- **Gender:** Three-quarters of the cohort were male, and males were on average about one year younger than the females in cohort (average age of 12 years and 6 months compared with 13 years and 5 months).
- **Ethnicity:** Data on ethnicity were provided by seven of the eight YOTs included in this study. The majority of young people in these YOTs were from a White ethnic background (72%). Twenty-one per cent were from an Asian or Asian British ethnic background, 4% from a Black or Black British background, 3% were of a Mixed background, and less than 1% were from an other ethnic group.⁴
- **Education:** Data from five of the case study YOTs suggested that 80% of young people in these areas were receiving 25+ hours of education per week at the time of their opening *Onset* assessment.
- **Offending:** Fifteen per cent of the cohort were known to have offended in the year prior to their opening *Onset* assessment.

Analysis of 'Onset' scores and YOT offending data

As noted above, the absence of a comparison group in this study means that changes in *Onset* scores cannot be attributed to involvement in prevention programmes. The data do, however, provide some insight into the characteristics of cohort members before and after they completed such programmes. Indicative findings were as follows:

- **Cohort as a whole:** A lower total *Onset* score was recorded at the closing *Onset* assessment for 69% of young people in the cohort (compared with their opening assessment).

As a general pattern, scores for components with the highest score at the opening *Onset* assessment reduced most often. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Walker et al, 2007; YJB, 2003). In this study, comparative analysis (excluding those who scored zero at both assessment stages) suggested that those components with reductions recorded for the largest proportions of the cohort were 'statutory education'⁵ and 'thinking and behaviour'.⁶

⁴ These proportions differed from those in the wider population of young people aged between six and 17 years within the case study YOTs. It is not known whether this is due to differences between the wider population and YOT cohort, or due to limitations in the data obtained.

⁵ Risk factors associated with this component, which YOT caseworkers can indicate as relevant to young people being referred, are: 'not currently enrolled in full-time education', 'is regularly absent from school', 'bullies others at school', 'statement of special educational needs has been issued', 'experiences difficulties with current level of school work', 'seems to have lack of attachment to his or her school'.

- **Offending:** According to YOT records, 83% of young people in the cohort did not go on to offend during the year following prevention measures.

Opening *Onset* scores were higher for young people in the cohort who had offended than for those who had not offended. Reductions in average *Onset* scores for individual components were also smaller among young people who had offended than those who had not.

⁶ Risk factors associated with this component are: 'acts impulsively most of the time', 'gets easily bored', 'does not seem to understand consequences of his or her actions', 'seems to give in to others easily, for example, peers', 'is impatient and can't wait for things, getting agitated if made to'.

1. Introduction

Youth crime prevention policy is based on the assumption that it is possible to change the life-course trajectories of young people by reducing risk factors that may lead to offending behaviour and building on protective factors that might help prevent offending.⁷

Over the last few years there have been a number of publications that make the case for focusing on early intervention. In 2011, the Allen review *Early Interventions: The Next Steps* emphasised the need for early intervention strategies to pay particular attention to certain groups of children and young people, including young offenders. The review recommended 19 ‘top programmes’ of early intervention appropriate to support positive outcomes for children from birth to 18 years of age. In January 2013, the National Audit Office report *Early Action: Landscape Review* echoed the Allen review, stating that “A concerted shift away from reactive spending towards early action can result in better outcomes and greater value for money.” (NAO, 2013: p7). Also as recommended by the Allen review, the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) was established in April 2013, with the purpose of promoting the adoption of prevention programmes to help tackle the root causes of social problems among those aged 0 to 18 years.⁸

At the time the current study was undertaken, a key feature of youth crime prevention policy was intervention at an early stage through a range of programmes for young people who were deemed to be at risk of offending. The development of policy and practice in this area aligned with a national emphasis on reducing the number of first-time entrants⁹ to the youth justice system, for example through National Indicators,¹⁰ a Youth Taskforce and the Youth Crime Action Plan.¹¹

Aims

The YJB tasked the University of York with completing a study of young people involved in prevention programmes within eight YOTs¹² in England and Wales that had received some funding from the YJB.¹³

⁷ The theories and models of risk and resilience that have emerged over the last 15 years suggest that, if young people receive appropriate services that reduce known risk factors, then they should be less likely to offend (Walker et al, 2007: p17).

⁸ For further information see: <http://www.earlyinterventionfoundation.org.uk/> (Accessed 16 January 2014).

⁹ See glossary at Appendix A.

¹⁰ See glossary at Appendix A.

¹¹ See glossary at Appendix A.

¹² There were 157 YOTs in existence during the study period.

¹³ By 2011, prevention funding accounted for around 8.5% of total YJB programme expenditure.

The purpose was to assess the following:

1. **Delivery of prevention interventions:** how were prevention interventions delivered across eight case study YOTs in England and Wales?
2. **Characteristics and ‘distance travelled’ by those young people involved in prevention programmes (funded in part by the YJB):** what were the *Onset*¹⁴ scores and offending behaviour of the young people involved, according to administrative data from the case study YOTs?

As the largest study of its kind to date, looking specifically at *Onset* scores of young people involved in prevention programmes, this report offers practitioners in the youth justice field a useful insight into the characteristics and needs of the young people completing prevention programmes, and how prevention services were delivered at a local level.

Methodology

The study consisted of two components (see Appendix B for further details on the methodology):

1. A small number of interviews, conducted in May 2012, with a key member of staff from seven of the eight case study YOTs.¹⁵ These provided information on local policy context and practices during the study period, and on developments since that time.
2. Collection and analysis of YOT administrative cohort data from prevention programmes which had received funding from the YJB.

YOTs provided anonymised data on the young people who were involved in prevention programmes during 2008/09 and 2009/10. These data included key demographic characteristics, *Onset* assessment scores and records of offences committed during the year before and year after involvement in a targeted prevention programme.

¹⁴ *Onset* is a referral and assessment framework, which identifies whether a young person would benefit from intervention at an early stage. It determines the risk factors that should be reduced and the protective factors that should be enhanced in order to prevent him or her offending (see YJB, 2006b, p.3). During an *Onset* assessment interview, YOT caseworkers provide a numeric score of zero (not associated at all with likelihood of offending or serious anti-social behaviour) to four (very strongly associated with likelihood of offending or serious anti-social behaviour) across 12 components that are associated with risk factors that are known to be linked to offending behaviour in young people. While completing the *Onset* assessment, YOT caseworkers need to make a judgement about the link between any problems identified and the young person’s offending or anti-social behaviour. This judgement is reflected in the scores given during the assessment. The *Onset* assessment also involves the assessment of protective factors, though these are not rated with a score in the same way that risk factors are.

¹⁵ Although it was the intention to conduct interviews in all of the eight case study YOTs, due to time constraints, only seven of the eight members of staff identified by YOTs were able to take part.

As a cohort study, the aim was to generate greater understanding about a group of young people who received prevention interventions; including their risk and needs (*Onset*) scores before and after programme completion. Consequently, those young people who did not have closing *Onset* assessments have been excluded from the study.¹⁶ Overall, data were obtained for a cohort of 934 young people engaged in prevention programmes within the eight case study YOTs during 2008/09 and 2009/10.¹⁷ As these YOTs were involved on a confidential basis, findings from the study have been presented anonymously.

Participating YOTs were all operating in areas that were providing a range of youth crime prevention programmes, and had received funding for prevention activity from the YJB during the two-year study period. As the eight YOTs were purposively selected, the results of this study cannot be considered representative of the wider population of young people who received prevention interventions in 2008/09 and 2009/10.

The following limitations need to be borne in mind when interpreting findings:

1. As the study did not employ a matched (or other) comparison group, any changes cannot be attributed to the prevention interventions delivered. A range of other factors may have influenced overall changes in offending behaviour or *Onset* scores. The study was also undertaken during a period of wider targeted prevention activity, which aimed to reduce youth crime and in particular first-time entrants to the youth justice system.¹⁸ For example, in 2008 the Youth Task Force was established, and, as a result, the Youth Crime Prevention Programme was launched; these, along with other initiatives, may have had an impact on the results presented in this study.¹⁹

¹⁶ Only information on those with opening and closing *Onset* assessments was provided by YOTs. The number of individuals with an opening but not a closing *Onset* assessment is not known.

¹⁷ From 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2010 inclusive.

¹⁸ The published Youth Justice Statistics for 2011/12 show that the number of first-time entrants has fallen each year since its peak in 2006/07 (see Youth Justice Board/Ministry of Justice, 2013).

¹⁹ In 2008, the Ministry of Justice, the Department for Education, and the Home Office introduced the Youth Crime Action Plan. This set out priorities for tackling youth crime and anti-social behaviour, specifically in relation to enforcement and punishment, support and prevention. As part of the Youth Crime Action Plan, 'Triage' was widely being rolled out with the aim of diverting young people away from the youth justice system and reducing first-time entrants. Other notable programmes include the Knife Crime Prevention Programme, which was designed by the YJB in collaboration with YOTs and other stakeholders to reduce the prevalence of knife carrying and use by young people. It was initially piloted in 12 YOTs between June 2008 and April 2009, as part of Phase I of the Tackling Knives Action Programme. After April 2009, the Knife Crime Prevention Programme was rolled out to 97 YOTs. Phase II of the Tackling Knives Action Programme (Tackling Knives and Serious Youth Violence Action Programme) began in April 2009 and ended in March 2010. For more information, see Ward and Diamond (2009), Ward, Nicholas and Willoughby (2011), and YJB (2013).

2. *Onset* has not been validated as a risk assessment tool, and therefore the scores cannot be interpreted to reflect the actual likelihood of offending occurring in the future. Furthermore, the overlapping, inter-connected and dynamic nature of the risk factors included in the *Onset* assessment means that it is not possible to link any single component with perceived change over time.
3. Data were aggregated across YOTs to create a single cohort of young people. This approach was driven by the small number of cases in some areas, as well as similarities in both the approach to prevention work and the profiles of young people involved. However, differences between the YOTs mean that this aggregation may have some limitations. Specifically, the differences in thresholds applied to *Onset* scores means that a young person with a relatively low *Onset* score would be included in prevention programmes within some of the case study YOTs, but not in others. YOTs also operated different modes of implementation for prevention programmes, which could impact on the *Onset* scores.
4. Given the very small number of interviews conducted, the information presented may not be representative of the views of staff across the eight case study YOTs. In addition, as the interviews were conducted in May 2012, they relied heavily on staff members' recollection of prevention activity up to four years prior to the interviews taking place. The potential for recall bias²⁰ and the small number of interviews make it necessary to treat these findings with caution.
5. It was initially hoped that the study would be able to track individual young people completing specific programmes in order to compare outcomes across localities as well as across programme types. However, as the local configuration of prevention programme delivery was both complex and varied, the study was unable to provide a breakdown of findings for particular programmes or interventions. As noted above, this study was also undertaken at a time when a range of other youth justice interventions with prevention elements were being implemented, which makes it difficult to attribute changes to any particular approach.

²⁰ Recall is seen as being particularly prone to bias when the period of recall is especially long, during which time interviewees can reassess their memories in light of their current life situation (Holland et al, 1999).

2. Approach to prevention services: interviews with YOT staff

Interviews with YOT staff were conducted in order to provide a contextual background, which would help frame the analysis of the YOT cohort data. This element of the overall study consisted of telephone interviews with seven members of YOT staff²¹ identified by case study YOTs as YOT prevention managers (or equivalent) in post during 2008–10.

The interviews provide some insight into the overall context within which the participating YOTs were working. However, as the number of interviews was very small and they took place in 2012, requiring staff to respond retrospectively to questions about prevention activity during 2008–10,²² interview findings are limited and should be regarded with a degree of caution.

Types of prevention work

None of the YOTs were solely reliant on the traditional Youth Inclusion and Support Panel (YISP)/Youth Inclusion Programme (YIP)²³ model, with all respondents mentioning a range of initiatives and programmes operating during 2008–10.²⁴

All case study areas relied on a network of multi-agency partnerships and referral systems, each of which operated slightly differently according to local priorities and resources. There was limited evidence of well-known interventions being used in any of the sites at this time, and none of the respondents indicated that young people were involved in the planning or design of any of the interventions. Instead, all respondents identified individually tailored packages of interventions that were designed and delivered locally as being central to their prevention strategy.

Alongside individually tailored packages of interventions, all respondents referred to the importance of ‘holistic’ approaches to prevention work and, in particular, the importance of parenting and family interventions. The latter were identified by all respondents as a key element in their overall intervention strategy, with five respondents specifically identifying the importance of parenting work in the overall success of any prevention intervention, arguing that without it any short-term improvements for young people were unlikely to

²¹ All of the eight YOTs identified an appropriate member of staff to take part in the interviews, but not all of these were still working for the YOT directly and one was unable to participate due to time constraints.

²² The telephone interview topic guide is included in Box A.1 in Appendix B: Additional information on research methods.

²³ See the glossary at Appendix A.

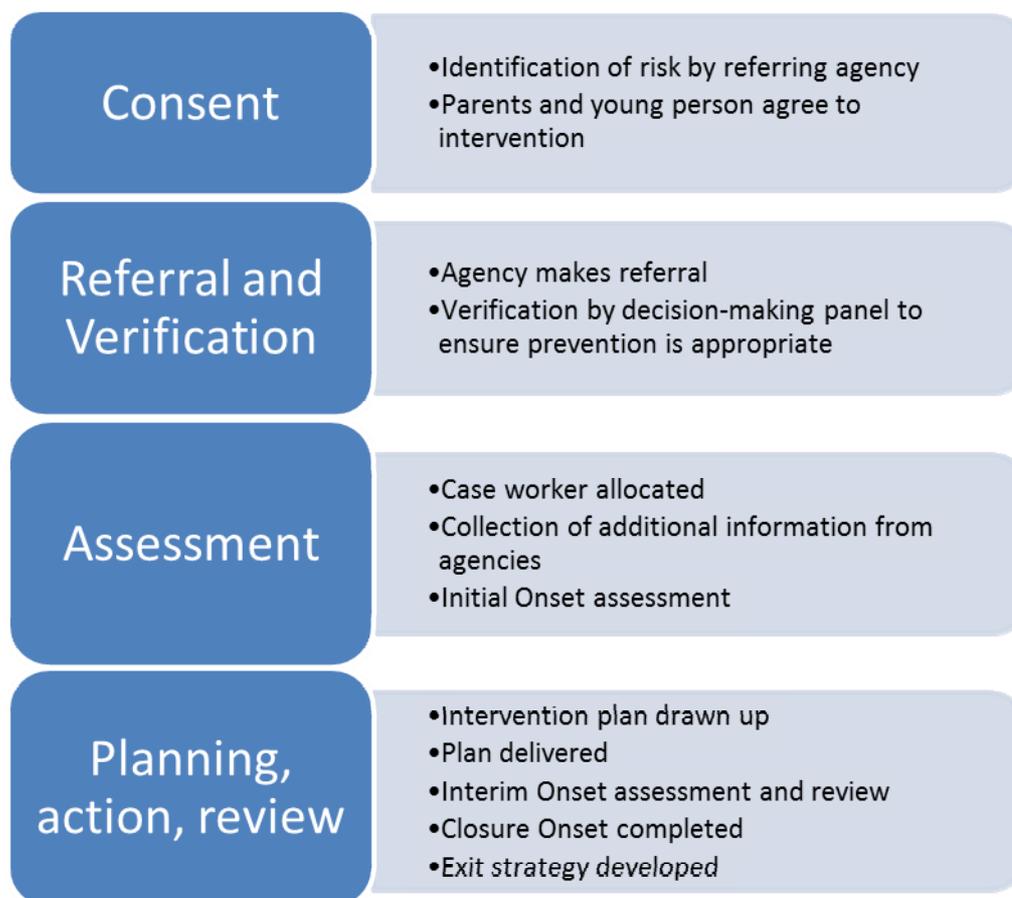
²⁴ Respondents were asked for information about initiatives, but none of the case study sites were able to provide a definitive list.

be sustained. Indeed, there is good international research evidence that interventions that aim to improve family relationships can be effective in reducing youth offending behaviour.²⁵

Referral and verification

Interviews with all seven of the YOT staff confirmed that young people experienced similar pathways into interventions. Typically the pathway corresponded to the four stages that characterise the *Onset* assessment and referral framework process of ‘consent’, ‘referral and verification’, ‘assessment’, and ‘planning, action, review’ (see Figure 1 and Ministry of Justice, 2011).

Figure 1: The ‘Onset’ process



Source: YJB, 2011.

²⁵ See, for example, Allen (2011) and Ministry of Justice (2013). Parental support has also been identified as being particularly important in motivating young people, and in contributing to the effectiveness of programmes (see Smith, 2010). The importance of family-based interventions was also highlighted in Welsh and Farrington (2007).

Prior to referral to a programme, young people and their parents needed to agree to being involved in the process, usually through a referring agency.²⁶ Recent YOT inspection reports indicate that this referral process can be a positive experience for parents, who may have struggled to access services, and for young people who recognise the potential benefits of engaging in prevention interventions (HMI Probation, 2010). The voluntary nature of prevention programmes has also been recognised as a key feature in helping maintain young people's engagement (Smith, 2010).

Six YOTs were able to provide data about the referral agencies for young people in this study. Consistent with previous studies on YOT prevention programmes (YJB, 2003; YJB, 2008; Walker et al, 2007), these data suggested that the majority of referrals were made by public sector agencies. The most common referral routes were education (37% of all referrals), the police (18%), and social services (15%).²⁷

Given the substantial guidance available on the *Onset* assessment and referral framework (see, for example, YJB, 2006a; YJB, 2006b), it was not anticipated that there would be any variation in YOTs' approaches to this. However, the small number of interviews conducted suggested that none of the YOTs used the same process for referral, verification, assessment or review. The only stage of *Onset* that was the same across all localities was the delivery of interventions based on individual intervention plans.

Referral criteria varied across different prevention programmes. Youth Inclusion Programmes (YIPs)²⁸ for example, set up panels of referring agencies operating within their areas, which would agree the criteria for referral. Some criteria would only be relevant to particular referring agencies on the panel. For example, schools might have a criterion to refer those with attendance levels of 50% or less. YIPs would target 50 young people with referrals from multiple agencies.

At the 'verification stage', referrals were checked to ensure that those young people accepted onto prevention programmes were likely to benefit from interventions designed to address risks associated with offending behaviour. The guidance on *Onset* suggests that a focus on offending behaviour is critical to the success of prevention interventions, and young people with other (e.g. welfare-related) needs may be better handled by other non-justice related agencies (see YJB, 2006a).

²⁶ For example, the police, school or social services.

²⁷ Smaller proportions of referrals were made by local authorities (8%), voluntary agencies (7%), YOTs (7%), and a mixture of others sources, including individuals (7%). The term 'individual' was used as a YOT recording category that contained unspecified individuals as well as individuals such as family members and friends of the young person.

²⁸ Youth Inclusion Programmes are tailor-made programmes to prevent youth crime among a targeted group of young people who are at risk of involvement in crime or anti-social behaviour. They seek to achieve this by providing a range of activities designed to reduce factors most associated with youth crime, and to enhance 'protective' factors that reduce the likelihood of offending (see YJB, 2005).

The interviews with YOT staff revealed variation in the verification process, with all seven interviewees reporting use of slightly different 'threshold' criteria for referrals. These ranged from no threshold (all referrals accepted)²⁹ to measurable thresholds, such as an opening total *Onset* score of over 15 (out of a possible maximum of 48). These variations may be positively interpreted as showing YOTs' abilities to be responsive to local needs. However, two respondents expressed concerns that the lack of clarity over thresholds for engagement meant it was possible for young people with wide-ranging welfare needs (not always directly linked to offending) to be placed on prevention programmes focused solely on offending-related risks. Consequently, it was suggested by those interviewed that decision-making should be based on whether risks related to potential offending, and whether available prevention programmes were appropriate for that young person at that particular time. This would help to ensure that the resources available for prevention programmes are directed towards those for whom they were intended, rather than potentially drawing young people not at risk of offending into the criminal justice system and offending behaviour.³⁰

'Onset' assessment

As part of the *Onset* assessment and review framework, caseworkers are required to undertake an opening *Onset* assessment within two weeks of a referral. Although additional information would be collected³¹ prior to assessment to help to inform the process in most YOTs, the interviews with YOT staff suggested there was variability in the amount of information collected.

Opening *Onset* scores indicate the levels and types of risk factors for young people accepted onto prevention programmes. Although the *Onset* assessment is based on a standardised method, it is completed by caseworkers operating in a wide variety of organisational settings with different levels of training and experience, and, as acknowledged in previous reports, they may be subject to bias.³² Among the seven interviewees, there was a consensus that the quality of the *Onset* assessment was dependent on individual caseworkers, meaning that assessments would not necessarily be consistent within or between areas. This also needs to be taken into account when interpreting findings.

²⁹ This was the case in one of the eight case study YOTs.

³⁰ The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime (McAra, L. and McVie, S., 2007) showed that, when controlling for other factors, children who become known to the criminal justice system and social services tend to be slower to desist than those who are similarly involved in criminal behaviour but do not become known to these services.

³¹ From agencies including the police, social services and education.

³² These variations, and lack of rigour in completing *Onset* assessments have been identified in previous studies (for example, Walker et al, 2007). In contrast, recent inspection reports found that an *Onset* assessment had been completed for 71% of cases and these were judged to be of 'good quality' overall (HMI Probation, 2010: p19).

Planning, action and review

Opening *Onset* assessments are used by caseworkers to develop intervention plans for young people. Each case study area provided different types of interventions, of varying durations, and with differing modes of delivery. Not all of the young people participated in all these interventions, and in most case study areas, prevention managers could not describe a 'typical' prevention package. Instead, the focus was on individually tailored packages of interventions³³ designed to address the individual needs of each young person. Thus, it was inappropriate to 'map' the range of interventions that the cohort received.

In keeping with the generally flexible and individual-focused approach to planning interventions, the length of engagement with those young people in the cohort ranged from less than one month up to a maximum of 22 months in one instance. Most commonly, programmes lasted for just over two months, as was the case for 31% of the cohort; the mean programme length was four and a half months and the median was three months.

³³ The effectiveness of these will not necessarily have been evaluated.

3. The prevention cohort

This chapter describes the characteristics of the cohort of 934 young people completing prevention programmes in the eight case study YOTs. It covers only those for whom an opening and closing *Onset* assessment were available.

Demographics at opening ‘Onset’ assessment

An analysis of YOT administrative data for the cohort of young people completing prevention programmes indicated:

- **Age:** Eighty-eight per cent of the cohort were of secondary school age (e.g. aged 11+) and the remaining 12% were of primary school age. Seventy per cent were aged 12 to 15 years.
- **Gender:** Seventy-five per cent of the cohort were male. Females were on average almost one year older than males (13 years and 5 months compared with 12 years and 6 months).
- **Ethnicity:** Data on the ethnicity³⁴ of cohort members were available for seven of the eight case study YOTs. Seventy-two per cent of the cohort were White, 21% were from an Asian or Asian British background, 4% were from a Black or Black British background, 3% were of a Mixed ethnic background, and less than 1% were from an other ethnic background.³⁵

Engagement with education

Five of the eight case study areas were able to provide a record of the number of hours of education that young people in the cohort were receiving. The age profile indicated that almost all of the total cohort were of compulsory school age, and therefore could have been expected to be fully engaged in full-time education (that is, 25+ hours per week). Across these YOTs, 80% of young people were receiving 25+ hours per week of education at the time of their opening *Onset* assessment.

³⁴ The 2001 census ‘16+1’ classification was used. Findings were collapsed into broad ethnic groupings due to the small numbers of cases in several categories (http://www.ethnicity.ac.uk/census/eth_categories.html).

³⁵ The cohort was not representative of ethnicity in the population of young people aged between six and 17 years within the case study YOTs, although the reason for this is not known.

Previous offending

According to the YOT records, 15% of the cohort were known to have offended during the year prior to their opening *Onset* assessment. Of those who had offended, 62% had offended once, about 23% had offended twice and 14% had offended three or more times.³⁶

Generally, levels of offending among the cohort were low, and where offending did occur, it mostly related to non-serious offences. Nine per cent of those who had offended had committed a serious offence³⁷ during the 12 months prior to referral.

³⁶ Details of the recording of offence data are included in Appendix B.

³⁷ The YJB (2012) classifies certain offences as 'serious', many of which are offences involving violence against the person, such as manslaughter, murder, and a range of types of abduction and kidnapping. Other examples of offences classified as serious include certain types of sexual offences, robbery, aggravated burglary of a dwelling, handling stolen goods and arson.

4. 'Onset' scores and offending behaviour: indicative findings

This chapter presents indicative findings on young people's *Onset* scores and offending behaviour before and after involvement in a prevention programme.

As the YOT sample was small and purposively selected, and there was no obvious source of comparative data to check how well the sample of young people in this study represented the wider population receiving YOT prevention services, no tests of statistical significance were conducted.

Taking into account the point above and the fact that a comparison group was not employed in this study, changes cannot be attributed to the prevention programmes and findings should therefore be viewed with caution.

Overview of changes in 'Onset' scores

Comparative analysis indicated that the total closing *Onset* score was lower for 69% of the cohort than their total opening score (with an average reduction of 21%). For 16% of the young people, the score was unchanged, and, for the remaining 15%, it had increased.

Table 4.1 shows the distribution of opening *Onset* scores for the whole cohort for each individual component. Overall, across all 12 components, 28% had a score of zero (i.e. no risk), 57% were of a value of one or two (some risk) and 15% were given a value of three or four (i.e. definite association with the likelihood of future anti-social behaviour or offending).

Table 4.1: Opening scores for the 12 *Onset* components, by proportion of young people

<i>Onset</i> components	Opening <i>Onset</i>			
	0 (%)	1-2 (%)	3-4 (%)	Mean score
Thinking and behaviour	5	66	28	2.0
Statutory education	9	61	30	1.9
Lifestyle	9	66	24	1.8
Family and personal relationships	17	58	24	1.7
Perception of self and others	15	75	9	1.5
Emotional and mental health	27	56	17	1.4
Neighbourhood	21	64	14	1.4
Attitudes to offending	28	65	7	1.1
Living arrangements	46	46	8	0.9
Motivation to change	39	56	5	0.9
Substance misuse	59	35	7	0.7
Physical health	67	31	2	0.5
All components¹	28	57	15	16.0

Base: All case study areas (N. 934).

Note: Figures may not total to 100 due to rounding of percentages.

1. The bottom row of the table shows all the *Onset* scores across all of the 12 components for each of the scores indicated. For example, 28 per cent of all the *Onset* scores across the 12 components were of a value of zero at the opening *Onset* assessment.

Table 4.2 shows the proportions of the cohort receiving each of the scores available (i.e. zero to four) at the time of the closing *Onset* assessment. The clustering of scores of two or below was more marked at this assessment stage. A higher proportion (36%) scored zero, while 55% (a similar proportion to the opening assessment) scored one or two and 8% scored three or four (compared to 15% at opening assessment).³⁸

³⁸ Seven per cent of all scores across the 12 components were given a value of three, and just 1% a value of four.

Table 4.2: Closing scores for the 12 *Onset* components, by proportion of young people

<i>Onset</i> components	Closing <i>Onset</i>			
	0 (%)	1-2 (%)	3-4 (%)	Mean score
Thinking and behaviour	12	75	12	1.5
Lifestyle	20	66	15	1.4
Statutory education	19	65	16	1.4
Family and personal relationships	22	66	12	1.3
Emotional and mental health	32	58	9	1.2
Neighbourhood	26	65	10	1.2
Perception of self and others	22	73	5	1.2
Attitudes to offending	42	53	5	0.9
Living arrangements	51	42	7	0.8
Motivation to change	50	45	6	0.8
Substance misuse	66	29	5	0.5
Physical health	74	26	1	0.3
All components¹	36	55	8	12.6

Base: All case study areas (N. 934).

Note: Figures may not total to 100 due to rounding of percentages.

1. The bottom row of the table shows all the *Onset* scores across all of the 12 components for each of the scores indicated. For example, 36 per cent of all the *Onset* scores across the 12 components were of a value of zero at the closing *Onset* assessment.

The 12 ‘*Onset*’ components

The overlapping and dynamic nature of the *Onset* risk factors means that analysis of the individual *Onset* components will not provide an indication of the overall ‘distance travelled’. Such analysis does, however, provide indicative information on how the level of risk might have changed for particular factors.

This section discusses changes in *Onset* scores across the 12 individual components for all cohort members, and includes those cases where an *Onset* score of zero was obtained at the two assessment stages.

Table 4.3 shows that, across the cohort, average (mean) closing *Onset* scores were lower than average opening *Onset* scores across all of the components. As a general pattern, components with the highest risk scores at the opening

Onset assessment reduced most often. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Walker et al, 2007; YJB, 2003).

Table 4.3: Average (mean) opening and closing *Onset* scores

<i>Onset</i> components	Opening <i>Onset</i> (mean)	Closing <i>Onset</i> (mean)
Statutory education	1.9	1.4
Lifestyle	1.8	1.4
Substance misuse	0.7	0.5
Attitudes to offending	1.1	0.9
Thinking and behaviour	2.0	1.5
Physical health	0.5	0.3
Family and personal relationships	1.7	1.3
Emotional and mental health	1.4	1.2
Motivation to change	0.9	0.8
Perception of self and others	1.5	1.2
Neighbourhood	1.4	1.2
Living arrangements	0.9	0.8
Total score	16.0	12.6

Base: All case study areas (N. 934).

‘*Onset*’ scores between 1 and 4

There were high proportions of ‘unchanged’ scores for all components. In the main, these ‘unchanged’ scores reflected a relatively high proportion of scores of zero at both stages of *Onset* assessment (that is, the group of young people in the cohort whose opening risk assessment could not reduce, and whose score did not increase by the time of their closing assessment).

Table 4.4 sets out the proportions of the cohort for whom risk scores were reduced, unchanged, or increased for each of the 12 *Onset* components after those who scored zero at both the opening and closing *Onset* assessments were removed. In some cases, the removal of those who scored zero had a marked impact on proportions. For example, 55% of the whole cohort scored zero at both *Onset* stages for substance misuse. Excluding this 55%, 43% of the remaining young people (who scored between 1 and 4 at the initial assessment) had a reduced risk at the final *Onset* stage. This proportion compares with 19% of all cases (that is, including those who scored zero at both assessments), and would place substance misuse fourth highest in terms of the proportion of young people with a reduction in scores.

The analysis showed that statutory education and thinking and behaviour were the components where reductions in *Onset* scores occurred for the highest proportion of the cohort between opening and closing assessments.

The components where the smallest proportion of young people had reduced *Onset* scores at their closing assessment were neighbourhood, perception of self and others, and living arrangements. The risks associated with neighbourhood and living arrangements may be considered as 'static' to some extent, in that crime prevention interventions at an individual level might have limited ability to address such risks.

Table 4.4: Proportion with changed or unchanged *Onset* scores at closing assessment (excluding those with zero scores at both assessments)

<i>Onset</i> components	Reduced (%)	Unchanged (%)	Increased (%)	Proportion excluded¹ (%)	N.²
Statutory education	47	44	9	7	866
Thinking and behaviour	46	47	7	4	898
Lifestyle	43	50	7	8	857
Substance misuse	43	45	12	55	418
Attitudes to offending	41	48	11	24	708
Family and personal relationships	41	50	9	14	799
Emotional and mental health	40	52	8	24	709
Motivation to change	39	46	14	35	603
Physical health	35	56	9	64	333
Living arrangements	34	51	15	40	557
Perception of self and others	33	59	9	13	813
Neighbourhood	29	64	7	19	755

Base: All case study areas.

Note: Figures may not total to 100 due to rounding of percentages.

¹ The proportion of young people excluded as their score was zero at both *Onset* assessments.

² The number of cases after those with zeros at both *Onset* stages have been excluded.

Offending behaviour

The eight YOTs provided details and dates of known offences for members of the cohort who had committed an offence resulting in a substantive outcome.³⁹ The data were retrieved from the YOT case management records (locally held data) and covered a four-year period from 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2011. These data allowed analysis of offending behaviour during the year before the opening *Onset* assessment and the year after the closing *Onset* assessment.

Overall, 73% (686 young people) of the cohort did not offend either before or after a prevention programme. Twelve per cent did not offend before a prevention programme but went on to offend afterwards, 10% offended before a prevention programme but not afterwards, and 5% offended both before and after a prevention programme. As previously noted, due to the lack of a comparison group and the range of other factors that may affect behaviour, it is not possible to attribute such changes in offending behaviour to prevention activity.

Offending behaviour and 'Onset' profiles

An analysis of average (mean) opening and closing *Onset* scores was undertaken across the 12 components. This compared cohort members who a) had not offended at all during the year before or the year after their prevention programme with those who b) had offended during the year before their prevention programme and c) those who had offended during the year after.⁴⁰ It showed two key patterns. Firstly, the non-offending group of the cohort had lower initial opening *Onset* scores on average than the two groups of offenders for the majority of components. The two exceptions to this pattern were the physical health and emotional and mental health components, where non-offenders scored slightly higher on average than those who went on to offend after involvement in a prevention programme. Secondly, non-offenders often seemed to have the greatest reductions in average scores for individual components.

Prevalence and type of offences

Young people who offended during the year following a prevention programme were more likely to have committed multiple offences than those who offended during the year before a prevention programme. Of those who offended during the year following a prevention programme, 52% went on to offend once, 17% twice, 13% three times, and 18% from four up to a maximum of 19 times. As a result, the overall number of offences committed by the cohort after involvement in a prevention programme (368 offences) was higher than the number committed before involvement (326 offences).

³⁹ The Ministry of Justice defines a substantive outcome as one where a young person has a proven offence or disposal and has to engage with a youth offending team. This typically excluded Reprimands and Final Warnings – see YJB/MoJ, 2013. (Under the provisions of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012, Reprimands and Final Warnings have been repealed and replaced by a new out-of-court disposals framework, which offers Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions as formal disposals. This change took effect on 8 April 2013.)

⁴⁰ Please note that the latter two groups are not mutually exclusive. As previously noted, 5% offended both before and after involvement in a prevention programme.

Of the total number of offences (694) committed by the cohort, 69 were classified as 'serious' (10%). Perhaps reflecting the slightly higher number of offences following a prevention programme, 39 (11%) of offences following a prevention programme were of a serious nature, compared with 30 (9%) of offences committed before a prevention programme.

5. Conclusions

This concluding chapter considers the main findings of the study in relation to the delivery of youth crime prevention services across the YOTs participating in this study.

The delivery of youth crime prevention services

All eight case study areas were engaged in youth crime prevention activity, which, together with other activity, was designed to meet locally agreed targets and aligned with national indicators⁴¹ to reduce the number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system. Multi-agency working dominated both referral and delivery of prevention work, and all areas provided a broad range of interventions. This work was underpinned by a holistic approach that, as recommended in the literature on effective prevention interventions, involved parents and families, as well as individual young people.⁴²

However, there were differences in the arrangements for delivery of prevention work across the case study sites, with some YOTs providing interventions 'in-house' through seconded staff from mainstream services, and others referring young people on to external mainstream services. It has not been possible to shed light on the nature and scope of the interventions or their delivery within or across the YOTs, or how these factors impact on prevention outcomes.

Thresholds for inclusion in prevention programmes varied across case study YOTs, ranging from no threshold (all referrals being accepted) to measurable thresholds, such as an initial *Onset* total score of over 15. Not only could this generate geographical variation in terms of access, it also makes comparisons between YOTs difficult since young people with similar needs may or may not have been offered prevention services.

All case study YOTs relied on an assessment of needs using the *Onset* tool to create individually tailored packages for young people, rather than using standardised intervention models. Thus, the young people in this cohort were likely to be receiving a wide variety of interventions aimed at addressing a combination of needs that were relatively unique to the young person involved.

⁴¹ The abolition of these locally agreed targets (local area agreements) and the national indicators from which they were selected was announced in October 2010.

⁴² The voluntary nature of prevention programmes has been recognised as a key feature in helping maintain young people's engagement, and parental support has been identified as being particularly important in motivating young people, and in contributing to the effectiveness of programmes (Smith, 2010). A number of reviews have concluded that there is good evidence that interventions that aim to improve family relationships and parenting can reduce offending among young people (see, for example, Ministry of Justice, 2013).

Given some of the diversity in delivery mechanisms and different thresholds for engagement, there was remarkable similarity in the profile of the cohort of young people involved in prevention programmes in terms of their age, gender and level of prior offending. The cohort was comprised predominantly of males, those aged 12 to 15, and those from a White ethnic background. Only a small minority had offended in the year prior to their engagement with a prevention programme, and most of those who had done so had offended just once, usually committing an offence of a non-serious nature.

Youth crime prevention services for young people

This study examined *Onset* scores for young people within the cohort at opening and closing assessment stages. It also considered their offending behaviour during the year prior to their opening *Onset* assessment and the year following their closing *Onset* assessment. However, as previously noted, findings must be viewed as indicative only.⁴³

Opening *Onset* scores indicated particular needs among the cohort in relation to statutory education, lifestyle, and thinking and behaviour. For these three components, fewer young people were given a score of zero (no association with likelihood of offending) and more were given a score of three or four (definite association with likelihood of offending) than was the case for the other nine *Onset* components.

Indicative findings suggested there may have been a reduction in total *Onset* scores for 69% of the cohort by the time of the closing assessment.

Comparative analysis of scores across the 12 *Onset* components (excluding those who scored zero at both assessment stages) suggested that those components where reductions were recorded for the largest proportions of the cohort were statutory education and thinking and behaviour.

Analysis of *Onset* data suggested that, as might be expected, opening *Onset* scores were lower for non-offenders than for those who had offended during the year before their prevention programme, and those who had offended during the year after their prevention programme. Non-offenders also seemed to have the greatest reductions in average scores for many individual *Onset* components.

⁴³ This is due to limitations in methodology, including the absence of a comparison group and young people's likely exposure to a range of other factors (and possibly other programmes) that may have affected their likelihood of offending.

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Appendix A: Glossary

Department for Children, Schools and Families: The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) was a department of the UK government, between 2007 and 2010, responsible for issues affecting people in England up to the age of 19, including child protection and education. The DCSF was replaced by the Department for Education after the change of government in 2010.

FIP: Family intervention project. A FIP is a targeted programme of interventions working with those families with the greatest and most complex range of needs. It seeks to join up a range of services and contacts with these families so that they are more effective in improving outcomes all round.

First-time entrants: First-time entrants to the criminal justice system. Young people (aged 10 to 17 years) who receive their first substantive outcome (relating to a Reprimand, a Final Warning with or without an intervention, or a court disposal for those who go directly to court without a Reprimand or Final Warning).⁴⁴

HMI Probation: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. This is an independent Inspectorate, funded by the Ministry of Justice, and reporting directly to the Secretary of State on the effectiveness of work with adults, children and young people who have offended. It is aimed at reducing reoffending and protecting the public.

National Indicators: The single set of National Indicators (National Indicator Set) was announced by the Department for Communities and Local Government following the government's Comprehensive Spending Review in 2007. Effective from April 2008, the National Indicator Set was implemented as the only set of indicators on which central government performance-managed local government. These included six youth justice National Indicators which came to an end in March 2011.

MoJ: Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice is one of the largest government departments. It works to protect the public and reduce reoffending, and to provide a more effective, transparent and responsive criminal justice system for victims and the public.

Onset: The *Onset* referral and assessment framework was designed by the Centre for Criminology at the University of Oxford for the YJB. *Onset* identifies if a young person would potentially benefit from intervention at an early stage, and determines the risk factors that should be reduced and the protective factors that should be enhanced in order to prevent him or her from offending.

⁴⁴ Definition correct with reference to the time period of this study. However, under the provisions of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) Act 2012, Reprimands and Final Warnings have been repealed and replaced by a new out-of-court disposals framework, which offers Youth Cautions and Youth Conditional Cautions as formal disposals. This change took effect on 8 April 2013.

YJB: Youth Justice Board for England and Wales. This is an executive non-departmental public body created by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to oversee the youth justice system for England and Wales. Its Board members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Justice.

YIP: Youth Inclusion Programme. The principal aim of a Youth Inclusion Programme is to prevent youth offending or anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood in which it is based, by working with a targeted core group of 50 children and young people aged 13 to 16 years. It seeks to achieve this by providing a range of activities designed to reduce those factors most associated with youth crime, and to enhance those 'protective' factors that reduce its likelihood.

YISP: Youth Inclusion and Support Panel. The principal aim of a Youth Inclusion and Support Panel is to reduce and prevent the involvement of children and young people aged 8 to 13 years in offending or anti-social behaviour. YISPs can choose to extend this age range above and below these core limits. It seeks to achieve this by using multi-agency planning to help these children and young people to better access mainstream and statutory services.

YOT: Youth offending team. YOTs were set up following the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 with the intention of reducing the risk of young people offending and reoffending, and to provide counsel and rehabilitation to those who do offend.

Youth Crime Action Plan: Launched in 2008 and backed by £100m of government funding, the Youth Crime Action Plan is a programme of work tackling youth crime and anti-social behaviour. It offers a comprehensive approach across enforcement, support and challenge for young people and families, and prevention.

Appendix B: Additional information on methodology

Selection of case studies

A case study approach was taken, involving a purposively selected sample of eight YOTs operating in areas within England and Wales that varied according to a range of characteristics, such that differing experiences, dynamics of prevention services, and local policies and practice could be captured. Areas were selected to include a range of characteristics:

- geographical spread
- rural, urban, and mixed types of area (including areas within Greater London)
- differing local authority types (two-tier or single tier)
- differing ethnicity profiles of young people
- differing rates of recorded crime
- a range of scores on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 and the Child Wellbeing Index 2007.

The YJB contacted YOTs in a sample of areas during the spring of 2012 to request their participation. As a number of the YOTs declined to participate due to other pressures, these were substituted with YOTs in other areas that had broadly similar characteristics, although this process inevitably involved a degree of compromise in terms of the preferred area characteristics.

Each of the eight YOTs that agreed to participate in the study was visited by the research team and the research managers from the YJB to explain the study strategy and requirements, and to assess the YOT's ability to provide the data required for the study on the young people passing through their prevention programmes during 2008/09 and 2009/10.⁴⁵ Due to concerns that one of the YOTs visited might have been unable to provide the requested data within a workable timescale, a replacement YOT was selected, visited, and subsequently included.

Table A.1 shows the characteristics of the eight case study areas included in the study. Due to a commitment to preserve the anonymity of the case study YOTs, the characteristics of areas are indicated in broad terms, rather than providing accurate figures for the ethnic profile, Index of Multiple Deprivation, and recorded crime rates.

⁴⁵ This time period was chosen to be the most recent possible which allowed an analysis of offending behaviour for the cohort during the year before and the year after they were involved with a prevention programme.

Table A.1: Broad characteristics of the eight case study areas

Region	Local authority structure	Ethnic profile (2001 census data)	Rural/urban character	Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 local authority/ county summaries	Recorded crime rates per 1,000 population (2008/09)
Wales	Single tier	Very high White population	Mixed rural/urban	N/A	Medium
Greater London	Single tier	High Asian or Asian British population, and high Black and Black British population	Highly urban	High	High
England	Two tier	High White population, moderate Asian and Asian British population	Mixed rural/urban	Moderate	Low
England	Two tier	High White population, moderate Asian and Asian British population	Mixed rural/urban	Low	Low
England	Single tier	High Asian or Asian British population	Urban	High	Medium
England	Single tier	High White population, moderate Black and Black British population	Urban	High	Medium
Greater London	Single tier	Very high Asian or Asian British population, and high Black or Black British population	Highly urban	Very high	High
Wales	Single tier	High White population	Urban	N/A	Medium

Interviews

A telephone interview was sought with an appropriate member of each of the eight YOTs with knowledge of their prevention work during the study period. Interviews were completed with a staff member in seven of these YOTs during May 2012, using the topics listed in Box A.1. These interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewee.

Box A.1: Telephone interview topic guide

Your role in 2008–10: Background information about position held/role in relation to prevention work and YOT.

Questions about the local policy context in 2008–10

We would like to understand the way in which the YOT prevention work was organised at that time and what kinds of work were being undertaken within and beyond the YOT that might have impacted on young people and their families.

In relation to prevention work, what challenges or problems did your area face at that time in terms of youth offending and anti-social behaviour?

Was there a local authority/YOT prevention strategy in place at that time? What were the main aims of the prevention strategy? If no strategy, what kinds of issues were you focusing on in prevention work?

What types of prevention work were the YOT involved with? (Any named/specific programmes or intervention types, for example YIP, YISP, FIP, SSP, Splash)

How were interventions designed? Were they ever reviewed or changed? How prescriptive were the models used – did you ‘tweak’ existing models or take them ‘off the shelf’? Were young people involved in planning/delivery of interventions?

Can you describe the types of work and the young people involved? (Age range/locality/any differences for different groups)

Who provided these?

Were any of the programmes more widely used than others? Why?

How were they funded? How did funding for prevention compare with other areas of YOT work?

What was the geographical catchment area for the programmes? (Were services ‘universal’ or targeted? And if so, to whom?)

Were you able to implement the range of prevention services that you felt were needed in the locality? Were there any gaps in provision?

Links with other organisations in relation to prevention work:

- a. Wider local authority strategy and programmes (Sure Start or other children’s services? Early intervention services? Family and parenting programmes).
- b. The police – did they operate prevention work with young people? How did that fit with the YOT approach?
- c. Health services – drug awareness/CAMHS
- d. Education services.

In general, was prevention work supported locally? If so, how? Was there anything in particular about this period that was important?

Questions about assessment and processes of engagement in programmes

Our data collection has provided information about Onset scores and offending behaviour and we would like to understand more about how the process of assessment and engagement worked in your area in 2008–10.

Can you describe a typical process involving a young person from identification, referral and engagement to end of programme intervention?

At what point in this process would *Onset* have been used?

Were all programmes/practitioners using *Onset* at that time? If not, is there any reason why and can you tell us which programmes would have been using *Onset* as a standard tool?

What threshold of risk would a young person need to have to be accepted on a prevention programme? Why was the threshold set at this level? Did this have any positive or negative impact on prevention work?

What would have been a typical expectation of engagement/contact on prevention programmes at that time? Were there any minimum or maximum periods assumed on any of the programmes? Did this have any positive or negative impact on prevention work?

Our analysis is using the initial and final *Onset* scores to try to understand distance travelled by young people in prevention programmes. Do you think this is a useful measure to use?

What has changed since 2010?

What kinds of policy changes have occurred since 2010 within the YOT/local authority that might affect prevention work?

What are the current programme arrangements?

Are the same range of partners involved? Have there been any changes?

What are the current aims of prevention?

What challenges do you think face local authorities and YOTs in terms of operating prevention work in the future? How could these be overcome?

Collection and analysis of YOT data

Box A.2 sets out the range of data requested from each of the eight YOTs. A short explanation of the variables was provided to help guide the YOTs to identify the relevant fields from within their records.

Box A.2: YOT administrative data request	
Variables/data fields requested	Explanation of use
First <i>Onset</i> completion date: Assessment	These are the key dates. Both the first and final <i>Onset</i> completion dates need to fall between 01/04/2008 and 31/03/2010 inclusive, so that the impact of the programmes can be assessed across this 24-month period.
Final <i>Onset</i> completion date: Closure	
First <i>Onset</i> completion scores: Assessment 1. Living arrangements 2. Family and personal relationships 3. Statutory education 4. Neighbourhood 5. Lifestyle	The 12 factors associated with offending and anti-social behaviour that are each scored 0 to 4 on the <i>Onset</i> Assessment. The scores for each of the 12 individual factors as well as the total score are required.

6. Substance misuse 7. Physical health 8. Emotional and mental health 9. Perception of self and others 10. Thinking and behaviour 11. Attitudes to offending 12. Motivation to change Total assessment score from sections 1–12	
Final Onset completion scores: Closure 1. Living arrangements 2. Family and personal relationships 3. Statutory education 4. Neighbourhood 5. Lifestyle 6. Substance misuse 7. Physical health 8. Emotional and mental health 9. Perception of self and others 10. Thinking and behaviour 11. Attitudes to offending 12. Motivation to change Total closure core from sections 1–12	These are the 12 factors associated with offending and anti-social behaviour that are scored 0 to 4 on the <i>Onset Closure</i> . The scores for each of the 12 individual factors as well as the total score are required.
Date of birth Ethnic background Gender	Required to provide a demographic profile of the cohort. They are collected at the time of referral and screening.
Date of referral to the YIP/YISP Completion date of YIP/YISP	These are required as back-ups/checks for the <i>Onset</i> dates
Referring agency name	The name of the referring agency is required – for descriptive purposes
Reason for referral	The aspects of behaviour that the referrer was concerned about – for descriptive purposes
Employment, training and education (ETE) at the first <i>Onset</i> Assessment date Employment, training and education (ETE) at the final <i>Onset</i> Closure date	ETE is probably recorded in four bands of hours per week (0, 1–15, 16–24, 25+). The ETE at the beginning and end of the programme will allow a comparison over the period to be made. Is there any more detail available, e.g. on the type of ETE?
The offending record covering the four-year period of 01/04/07 to 31/03/11 inclusive	The offending record over this period will allow for a comparison of pre and post offending of 12 months either side of the <i>Onset</i> Assessment and Closure dates. For each offence over this period, please provide the offence type, the date of the offence and the outcome.
Offence type	
Offence date	
Outcome	

Following receipt, YOT data were checked, and YOTs were re-contacted for clarification where necessary. In some cases, particular fields could not be supplied, which was either due to non-recording of certain pieces of information in some cases, or because of the high level of resources necessary to manually extract the information in others.

Each YOT dataset was cleaned, to ensure that only records within scope were included in the analysis. Cases out of scope were excluded from the analysis, which in some instances included the majority of a caseload provided, since some YOTs had provided their entire databases of administrative records over a number of additional years, or had included cases without one or both sets of *Onset* assessment scores.

All of the YOTs were able to provide:

- opening *Onset* scores for all 12 components, and the date of the assessment
- closing *Onset* scores for all 12 components, and the date of the assessment
- known offences with a substantive outcome, with the dates of the offences
- gender
- date of birth.

Seven of the YOTs were able to provide details of the ethnic background of the young people, five of the YOTs could give details of the number of hours of education received, and six of the YOTs were able to provide details of the referring agencies.

The data from the eight YOTs were used to create a set of variables with consistent codes, which were combined together for analysis. There were a total of 934 cases for analysis which had both opening and closing *Onset* assessments within the two-year study period.

The offending data reported are based on YOT records of offences committed by young people in the cohort for the 12 months prior to their initial *Onset* assessment, and the 12 months following their final *Onset* assessment. The analysis uses the date of offence (as recorded by the YOT) to determine whether a young person was known to have offended before or after their engagement in the *Onset* process. The offending data relate to those offences committed for which there was a substantive outcome. As such, it is a record of 'known' offending, drawing on existing administrative data provided by the police to YOTs.

This definition differs from the proven reoffending measure used by the Ministry of Justice,⁴⁶ which was not suitable for use with the prevention agenda due to there not being a single starting point to the programme, and also because most young people participating in prevention programmes have not previously been sentenced for any crime. As a result, the offending data in this study serve to

⁴⁶ <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/statistics/reoffending/proven-reoffending-09-definition-measurement.pdf>

illustrate the behaviour of the young people rather than to establish any authoritative link between the programmes and offending.

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