'On Track' Phase Two National Evaluation

Reducing Risk and Increasing Resilience -

How Did 'On Track' Work?

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Policy Research Bureau

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Executive summary

Introduction

This is the final report drawing together key findings from the National Evaluation of On Track, Phase Two (2003-2006)[1]. The research was carried out on behalf of the UK government's Department for Children, Schools and Families, by a consortium of the Policy Research Bureau, The National Centre for Social Research, and the Jill Dando Institute for Crime Science at University College London. This report synthesises results from separate stand-alone publications from eight studies that together comprised the national evaluation. The studies included:

- a tracking and monitoring study of approximately 1,100 On Track services and 17,000 service users
- two longitudinal surveys (separate samples) of pupils in primary and secondary schools in On Track areas, involving approximately 30,000 pupils in 2001 and 20,000 pupils in 2004
- a longitudinal community profiling study of change over time in community indicators in On Track areas and matched comparison areas
- a longitudinal cohort study (panel sample) of over 500 On Track area residents and service users, and a matched comparison sample of families in non-On Track areas, measuring change for parents and children over the course of 12 months in the mid-point of On Track's development (2004-2005)
- a qualitative follow-up of 36 families who took part in the cohort study
- a qualitative study of service providers and stakeholders in six 'exemplar' On Track project areas
- qualitative research with head teachers and their colleagues from 21 primary schools in On Track areas

Background to the On Track programme

- *On Track* was a multi-component, area based initiative operating in 24 (later 23) high-crime, high-deprivation areas of England and Wales. Launched in December 1999 by the Home Office for England and Wales as part of the Crime Reduction Programme, it was eventually merged into the £960m Children's Fund, now run by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. At the time of writing the Programme is due to be wound up in early 2008, having been operational for approximately nine years. Conceived as a time-limited demonstration programme designed to test out new approaches to work with at risk communities, On Track was inspired by the successful schools-based *Fast Track* programme, developed in the US. The programme was aimed at children aged 4-12 and their families. Like Fast Track, it aimed to reduce the propensity for youth crime and antisocial behaviour in high-risk populations, drawing on a public health, 'ecological' model of prevention.

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[1] Phase One (2000-2003) was evaluated separately.

This emphasised the importance of reducing specific risk factors and boosting protective factors related to youth offending.

- In an ecological model of prevention, risk and protective factors are conceptualised as existing at several interconnected levels: individuals, families, peers, schools and the wide local community. To operationalise the model, local On Track projects were asked to develop multi-agency partnerships to deliver suites of services including home-school partnerships, parenting support, home visiting, family therapy, and pre-school services. The five categories of service provision could be supplemented by a sixth 'specialist' category, to enable the provision of services led by specialist practitioners such as speech therapists. Services could be offered on a universal (open to all) or targeted (dependent on need) basis. The intention was that individual service users should be offered as many different services as appropriate to their needs, in a 'multi-modal' service offer.

- No specific guidance was provided on how to deliver these six categories of services, but local projects were urged to have regard to 'evidence-based' service models already known to be effective, and a few key examples were provided. In the event, local projects varied substantially in how they chose to interpret the remit of the programme, with some implementing evidence-based models and others not. There was, in consequence, not 'one On Track' but 'many On Tracks' across the country as a whole. Programme fidelity (the extent to which the same services were offered in the same way in different areas) was therefore hard to assess, with consequent implications for the evaluation of programme impacts.

- Over time, the programme moved from governance by the Home Office (the Department of State responsible for crime and social justice policy) to what is now the Department for Children, Schools and Families, via the Children and Young People's Unit and the Department for Education and Skills. In the wider context of a shifting and evolving policy environment, this to some extent diluted the original crime prevention emphasis of the programme, in favour of a somewhat broader but also less focused agenda concerned with social inclusion, general child wellbeing, and family support. Although some projects retained a strong connection with their local youth offending services over time, others cultivated an ethos of community empowerment and family and youth support and had little direct contact with local youth offending services.

The community context of On Track

- Collation of key data on the demographic characteristics of On Track local areas shows that the local areas covered by projects varied considerably in geographical size, population density, degree of urbanity, ethnicity, lone parenting, rates of crime, and many other socio-demographic indicators.

- However, On Track areas shared in common a substantial degree of poverty and deprivation, with the median district deprivation ranking for all areas being 50, where 500 is the score of the least deprived local authority in England and 1 the score of the most deprived (figures for year 2004), and the median child poverty score ranking being 63.5 (figure for year 2000). Compared to other areas both locally and nationally, together On Track areas represented a group of some of the most highly deprived communities in the country.

- It is significant that many other community and area based initiatives were co-located in the areas in which On Track was established. For example, in several areas there were 15 or more other key initiatives operating at the same time.

Getting started; the development of multi-agency partnerships

- On Track was at heart a multi-agency, cross-sectoral initiative with partners drawn from education, social services, youth offending services, health, local councils and local and national voluntary organisations. Though most of the 'Accountable Bodies' were local councils, the lead agencies varied and included voluntary agencies, social services, education, children's partnerships, youth offending services, regeneration partnerships and Primary Care Trusts. Many On Track projects developed innovative methods for managing multi-agency inputs into services, including multi-agency referral panels, multi-agency intervention co-ordination systems, secondments, and placement of specialist staff.

- Multi-agency partnerships took time to mature in some areas and were more successful in some areas than others. When On Track was subsumed into the larger Children's Fund in 2001, some projects struggled to redefine themselves under the new arrangements and a few more or less ceased to operate as separate entities. A series of budget cuts (and some re-instatements) further destabilised the projects' development. Though some projects seemed to have survived these vicissitudes to become stronger, leaner and in some ways more effective catalysts for local practice development, some weaker projects more or less fell by the wayside in the course of the programme's lifetime.

- Some agencies proved harder to engage than others. In particular, On Track was substantially a school-based programme by the end of the Phase Two evaluation, but engaging schools as active partners took time and persistence in some areas. However, once schools had become convinced of On Track's benefits and 'added value' they became enthusiastic advocates and supporters of the programme.

- Factors that facilitated local projects' survival over the national programme's life course included strong leadership from On Track project managers; senior staff who acted as champions in participating agencies; project staff who thrived on the experimental nature of the work; a strong strategic lead from the local authority; designated project staff with specified duties aimed at promoting multi-agency partnership; projects who cultivated a high profile and high visibility locally; and the development of shared protocols and administrative procedures.

- Factors that undermined survival included failure to develop a strong local profile locally (thus reducing the likelihood of a thriving multi-agency referral practices); frequent changes of project manager or weak leadership from project managers; being located in an area where multi-agency partnerships were not already thriving (sometimes more of problem in geographically spread-out project areas); and situations where one agency in a partnership did not provide the agreed resources or failed to fulfil other commitments.

- Local projects took different approached to 'branding' themselves as part of the On Track programme. Some took the view that the association of the programme with prevention of youth crime could be stigmatising, and might deter families from using the services. Accordingly they de-emphasised the On Track 'badge' and used local or generic names for the project. Others found the On Track badge positive and felt that local families understood and responded well to the model of risk-reduction and resilience-enhancement that On Track represented. Overall, the research suggested that projects that were clearly identifiable both in the community and to other agencies had better sustainability than projects that had a low or unclear profile.

The On Track workforce

- Workforce issues loomed large for On Track. Although the principal of working across disciplinary boundaries is now well-established in the UK, underscored by key policy and practice restructuring into multi-agency Children's Trusts, in the earlier phases of On Track the programme was very much at the vanguard of new ways of working. On Track projects to some extent nurtured the 'new breed of professional' that is now required to operate in the new environment of increasingly integrated services.

- Project managers were identified as playing a crucial role. Many described their work in On Track as extremely challenging. There appeared to be no standard background that guaranteed success; rather, project managers needed to be highly flexible, and skilled in a range of areas from direct work with service users to business management and human resources. Those who were described as most successful were people with excellent local networks, able to pull in support from a wide range of external agencies, and also a good knowledge of the local community. They were often described by colleagues

and stakeholders as having strong personal charisma and evident commitment to the On Track mission. Frequent changes of project leadership, on the other hand, were not good for projects' longer-term survival.

- Project staff were generally rated highly by service users for competence and approachability. Staff generally reported that they felt well-provided for in terms of training within the projects, but many struggled (at least initially if not long term) with the innovative nature of the On Track work and structures. Some workers experienced a sense of dislocation once uncoupled from the reassuringly familiar settings of their previous single-agency positions. They felt unprepared for the uncertainties of working across disciplinary boundaries, and some felt de-skilled and exposed in terms of risk-management, especially when working with very needy families. They found the 'vague' job descriptions for On Track work difficult to deal with.

- Others found working at the edge of their professional comfort zone stimulating and rewarding. These staff tended to be the ones that thrived and stayed with projects on a longer-term basis.

- The explicitly time-limited nature of the programme, coupled with budget changes that interfered with staffing levels made some staff feel insecure. However, some project managers were able to create a virtue out of necessity, emphasising the learning and development opportunities arising out of On Track's status as a 'cutting edge' demonstration programme, and helping staff to turn the shorter term aspect of the programme to their advantage in future career moves. Nevertheless, many projects suffered from problems with staff retention, and against a backdrop of expansion in the sector and competition for good staff, some projects had posts unfilled on an ongoing basis. This naturally resulted in disruption to the services provided.

The services that were delivered: process and implementation factors

- Broadly speaking, projects structured themselves according to one of three models: those that managed 'contracted out' services from a central base; those that provided services by means of specially created 'in-house' team; and those that combined the two ('mixed economy'). Each model had its advantages and disadvantages, but in general, the mixed economy projects reached a larger proportion of local children and families.

- Across 23 projects, over eleven hundred (n1,103) different services were offered as part of the On Track programme. Most of these had been developed as new to their local areas. Across the 23 projects there was substantial variation in the number of different services offered locally, ranging from as few as 13 services in one area to 106 elsewhere.

- Just over half of all services were offered as universal services (55%), and just under half (45%) were offered as targeted on the basis of need. Again, local projects varied in terms of the balance of universal and targeted services that they chose to offer. One project for example offered 86% of all its services as universal, another only 13%. Though not an infallible guide, projects with a broad 'social inclusion' ethos tended to favour universal models of delivery whereas projects with a stronger focus on crime prevention favoured more carefully targeted approaches.

- Overall, the home-school partnership category accounted for the greatest proportion of services (33%) by the end of the second phase of evaluation (up substantially from 20% of services in Phase One). By Phase Two, in some areas On Track was almost entirely school-based. Parent support and training accounted for nearly one in ten of all services (9%), and family therapy and home visiting each accounted for 6%. Pre-school education accounted for only 2% of services, and had more or less ceased as a service category by 2005.

- Nearly half of all services were, however, categorised by projects as 'specialist', a label that encompassed at least ten different sorts of intervention. A large proportion (nearly 40%) of these were 'specialist' as originally envisaged, and included counselling and speech therapy. However the remainder included one-off events, sports, play and drama, and health and curriculum support.

- Referrals to On Track projects came from a variety of routes. Overall, education agencies were the largest single source of referrals (35% of all referrals), but over one quarter were self-referrals, direct from families or children themselves.

- Across the programme as a whole, nearly seventeen thousand children and parents (16,761) were recorded as users of On Track services in Phase Two. Again, the project average (749) masks considerable variation at the local level. The project with the lowest throughput recorded only 129 users in this period; the largest, 1,441. Larger numbers of users were, not surprisingly, associated with the extent to which services were offered on a universal as opposed to targeted basis. It should however be noted that less detailed information was collected about users of universal services than about users of targeted services, and that in addition universal service users were almost certainly undercounted by some projects. These figures are therefore likely to be underestimates to an unknown degree.

- Using data from Census 2001, it was possible to calculate an approximate figure for project 'reach' or throughput, as the proportion of children aged 5-14 in each area who were recorded as users of an On Track project. The average 'reach' for the 23 areas calculated in this way was 18% of the child population, with the range varying from 94% in one area to 3% in others.

Again, the number of users reached was related to the distribution of targeted and universal services.

- Three quarters of all service users were children (53% female), and almost a quarter were parents (mostly mothers – 88%). Just over half (54%) were of White British ethnic background. Amongst users of at least one targeted service (which accounted for 46% of all users), male children somewhat outnumbered female children (59% boys), and again just over half were of White ethnic background (54%).

- Users of targeted services were recorded by project staff as presenting with a number of risk factors in their background. Around a quarter were recorded as having a known risk factor in only one dimension of functioning (from a list of nine different dimensions, including extreme poverty, family violence, learning problems, antisocial behaviour etc), but most had risks in two to five distinct dimensions.

- Over half of all users of targeted services were offered a multi-modal service, in the sense that they were in touch with more than one On Track service, including at least one targeted service. Users of targeted services received an average of around 16 hours of direct service contact time each. Each universal service averaged around 113 hours of service time to their users in aggregate in Phase Two.

The impact of On Track

- Assessment of the impact of On Track involved synthesising data collected in different strands of the evaluation. The key strands used were a longitudinal survey of On Track area residents and service users ('cohort study'); two longitudinal surveys of primary and secondary school pupils at schools in On Track areas ('schools surveys'); a longitudinal study of community-level indicators ('community profiling study'); and qualitative research with service providers, service users and schools staff. Research measures included validated instruments and scales widely used in previous studies, as well as bespoke measures designed by the research team.

- We explored impact from a number of perspectives. First, we considered the extent to which statistically significant change over time was observed in parents' and children's attitudes and behaviours, and in other indicators, across a range of risk and protective factors. Second, we looked for evidence of trends across more than one strand of the evaluation, identifying where the results were consistent and where they were contradictory. Third, we considered qualitative evidence from the perspective of service users, service providers, and schools. Below, we summarise the key findings on impact at each of the five ecological levels: individual children; families; peers; schools; and community.

- Overall, the findings were mixed. The most strikingly positive results were found at the level of families, and specifically, in relation to parenting factors. These included positive impacts on parents' self-assessed levels of coping; on parenting practices including discipline; on parent-child relationships; and on levels of home-school interactions. School factors also seemed to have changed for the better in a number of ways, and there are hints that the presence of On Track was a key influence in this. For example, for several indicators there were significant differences between primary schools with higher levels of On Track activity compared with those with lower or no On Track activity. The least impact was found, as expected, at the level of the wider community, and also at the level of individual child behaviour. Results across the various strands of the research showed less consistency in these respects. For example, some child behaviours such as antisocial behaviour, offending, truancy and poor performance at school appeared to have improved in some studies but had remained stable or even got worse in others.

Impact at the level of individual children

At the outset, the main aim of On Track as a programme was to reduce the propensity for youth offending. Reducing youth crime *per se* was not the aim in the short to medium term. Accordingly, there was only weak evidence of impact in reducing youth crime and antisocial behaviour at the level of individual children. However, in respect of the attitudinal and behavioural precursors to youth crime, the results were more promising, especially for younger (primary school aged) children.

In the boxed text below we summarise the evidence of impact at the individual level.

Individual level impact

Youth offending and antisocial behaviour

- Not unexpectedly, in the time frame of the evaluation we did not find clear evidence of a decrease in offending by children and young people in On Track areas, particularly in the studies that had a comparison group. In fact, one strand of the evaluation showed that community-wide rates of youth offending appeared to have gone up relative to comparison areas, and another showed that overall rates in both On Track and comparison samples went up. However, the schools surveys told a different story: here, both primary school aged and secondary school aged pupils in Wave 2 (2004) reported less antisocial and offending behaviour than their counterparts at Wave 1 (2001).

Precursors to youth crime

- A validated instrument for measuring emotional and behavioural problems used in the cohort study showed a decline in overall levels of difficulty for children in On Track areas and for children using On Track services. Over time, although children in the On Track samples still had higher rates than those in comparison areas (as they also had at the outset), the differences ceased to be statistically significant. The change over time was especially notable for one area of difficulty: peer problems.

- Over time, primary school aged children in On Track areas reported increased rates of 'happiness' with family life. However for older children there was no evidence of an increase in self esteem (used as a proxy for happiness), as measured by a validated instrument.

- Attitudes to bad behaviour grew markedly less antisocial over time amongst primary school children.

Impact at the level of the family

Some of the strongest evidence of impact was found at the level of the family. Protective factors at the family level – including parental coping, home-school interaction, relationships and involvement with children, and use of both formal and informal sources of social support – showed strong and consistent evidence of positive change that appeared to be associated with the presence of On Track. This was especially true for families with primary school children. Impacts were detected in relation to parents' attitudes and practices, and were especially notable in relation to interactions between home and school. There was also evidence from several sources that parent-child relationships had improved over time.

Family level impact

Parenting attitudes, skills and behaviours

- Some protective factors, such as parents' assessments of how well they coped with parenting, showed strong signs of strengthening over time. Children in the schools surveys also reported significant increases in levels of parental supervision and monitoring, another important covariate of youth antisocial behaviour.

- One important aspect of parenting practice that is known to increase the risk of development of conduct problems is over-reliance on physical discipline. On Track service users in the cohort reported a significant decrease in the use of minor forms of physical punishment (smacking, slapping) over time. Qualitative data supported this finding, illustrating how parents had learned to use other disciplinary strategies apart from hitting.

Parent-child relationships, home-school interaction, and social support

- Children in On Track areas and those using On Track services reported increasing warmth and praise from parents over time (and conversely decreasing hostility and criticism), with primary school aged children especially likely to report this.

- In the primary school age range, both children and their parents reported increased communication (talking often together) over time.

- In the schools survey there were very encouraging reports by younger children of 'reading often' with parents significantly more over time.

- In relation to attending parents' evenings, 'feeling involved' in children's school life, and having special discussions with school staff, parents residing in On Track areas and using On Track services reported significant improvements over time when compared to parents in non-On Track areas. This was especially the case for parents of primary school children.

- Social support for parents also increased in On Track areas. Over time, On Track service users in the cohort study reported increasing use of formal and semi-formal sources of support for advice and 'someone to talk to', and increasing use of informal sources of regular help with childcare – a finding that was supported by qualitative data.

- In the qualitative study on service users, parents reported widening personal networks and diminishing sense of isolation as a result of the social benefits of participating in parenting support services provided by On Track projects.

Impact at the level of the peer group

Peer group impacts, like impacts at the level of individual children, showed mixed results. Overall, we concluded that evidence for impact of On Track on peer group *behaviours* was unproven. However, the evidence for improvement in children's peer *relationships* was encouraging. On Track did seem to have helped children in the highest need groups in particular to make new friends and to have more positive relationships with other children.

Peer level impact

Peer antisocial behaviour

- Secondary school age children in the schools survey reported decreases over time in the level of antisocial behaviour by siblings and peers, as did primary school aged children in the cohort study, though in the latter the changes were not large enough to reach statistical significance. However, in some studies/groups there were some notably negative findings that suggested there had been *increased* antisocial behaviour by peers over time (for example, the older children in the cohort study). However, negative findings were not confined to On Track samples: older children in the cohort study comparison sample also reported increased antisocial behaviour by peers over time.

Peer networks and relationships

- More positively, there was some evidence that the extensiveness and quality of children's own peer networks and relationships had improved where they were resident in On Track areas or were users of On Track services. Peer problems, as measured by a validated instrument, diminished over time for children living in On Track areas or using On Track services.

- Children in the 'booster' cohort of high intensity services users (i.e., the highest need children) reported the greatest decreases of any group, and also gained the greatest number of new friends over time (having started with the smallest networks). Qualitative data supported these findings.

Impact at the level of the school

Much of On Track's work took place at, or was carried out in partnership with, schools – increasingly so as the programme matured over time. Reductions in risk factors or increases in positive factors at the school level would therefore be an encouraging sign of the positive influence of the initiative. Overall, there were positive changes at the school level in a number of dimensions, especially in relation to protective factors, although data on risk factors were subject to substantial inconsistencies.

School level impact

Truancy and exclusions, and attainment and performance

- Truancy and exclusions are important correlates of poor outcomes for young people and strongly associated with youth antisocial behaviour and offending. Findings for these indicators - were mixed, in much the same way as were findings on antisocial behaviour itself. Overall, the evidence was not strong for an impact on truancy, with rates rising over time in some strands of the evaluation and falling in others. Exclusions followed a similar pattern, though there were stronger indications from the cohort study that for primary school children and for children and young people in the booster sample of high-need families, temporary exclusions had dropped substantially over time.

- Self-assessed attainment and performance at school showed positive changes for primary school children, but not for young people in secondary school.

Bad behaviour at school

- Results here were also mixed. Primary school children taking part in different waves of the schools survey self-reported a substantial decrease in bad behaviour at school over time, and self-reports in the cohort study of bullying other children dropped in both On Track area and On Track user samples. However, rates rose amongst children in the booster group.

- Rates of being bullied, however, showed no decline over time in the schools survey for either age group, though they did decline in the cohort study. Qualitative data included observations by professionals that general behaviour and levels of concentration in class had improved in some primary schools following On Track services being established.

School ethos, and satisfaction and involvement with school

- School level protective factors showed a much more encouraging picture, however. The only factor that showed a negative movement over time was how secondary school pupils in the schools survey rated the 'clarity of school rules', which was used a proxy indicator of positive school ethos.

- Encouragingly, older children's attachment to and enjoyment of school showed substantial and significant positive changes over time, as did secondary school pupils' reports of involvement and participation at school.

- Primary school aged children also reported substantial increases on a measure of satisfaction at school, and very interestingly, these rates were also statistically significantly higher in schools with a 'high' level of On Track activity (defined as eight or more On Track services or activities based at or associated with the school). Qualitative data from a range of sources supported these findings.

Impact at the level of the community or neighbourhood

The 'logic model' for the On Track programme suggested at the outset of the research that we would be unlikely to find community level impacts so early in the life of the programme. Accordingly, overall, the community level was not where On Track had its greatest impact. What we found is that community level risk factors did not generally improve, but some of the protective factors that were measured did in fact show positive movement over time.

Community level impact

Community-wide youth crime rates

- The community profiling study found that community-wide rates for youth offending did not reduce in On Track areas compared to comparison areas. In fact they may even have gone up, though the findings are inconclusive due to missing data for many areas.

Youth views of the neighbourhood, social support for youth, and out of school activities

- Youth views of the local neighbourhood got more positive over time for primary school children and especially so for children at schools with high levels of On Track activity. However, the same was not found for secondary school aged children, who in fact got more negative about their local area over time. Correspondingly it was not surprising to find that secondary school aged pupils also did not report increasing levels of social support for youth within their wider community over time.

- On the protective side of the equation, participation in out-of-school activities, perhaps contrary to expectations, did not show an increase over time for children in general in either the schools or the cohort surveys. However, in primary schools with a high level of On Track activity, children reported statistically significantly higher levels of this kind of activity compared to those in other schools.

Service uptake (services other than On Track)

- Service uptake in general showed mixed results at the community level, but generally the pattern was for increased agency activity over time, with the exception of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). This may indicate that On Track projects were absorbing some referrals that formerly would have gone into the CAMHS case load.

- Service uptake in general by families participating in the cohort study did not increase over the two Waves of the survey for families *resident* in On Track areas, but did increase for those who self-identified at Wave 1 as On Track *service users*. In other words, those already in direct contact with On Track services also reported increasing use of other services over time. There were signs that increases in service use had been especially sharp amongst households where the main language was other than English, where children's school performance was rated by parents as poor, or where children had abnormal levels of emotional and behavioural problems. These findings are good indicators that On Track projects were successfully reaching out to parents and children in higher need groups, though to the extent that levels of absolute service use at Wave 2 were not equivalent for all groups, there was still some way to go.

On Track as a multi-modal intervention

- On Track was originally envisioned as a 'multi-modal' intervention, offering multiple services to users with multiple needs to provide a more multi-faceted, comprehensive package of support. However, as noted earlier, there was wide variation in the number of different services offered by the 23 projects ranging from as many as 106 to as few as 13.

- The number of services offered did not, however, necessarily reflect how many families and children were reached via On Track projects. For example, one project reached 1,271 children and parents with only 43 services on offer, whereas another reached almost half this number (689) with 81 services. These discrepancies are largely due to differences between the projects in terms of the proportion of universal and targeted services offered to children and their parents: those offering a larger proportion of universal services tended to have higher reach overall.

- Nevertheless, the degree of multi-modality was highly correlated with 'reach' or overall project throughput[2]. Four of the five projects who had greatest throughput were also those with the greatest levels of 'multi-modality.'

- The tracking study showed that 46% (n3,615) of all users of targeted services received multiple services, whereas 54% (n4,173) received a single service. Amongst people using at least one targeted service, over a third were using two or three services and 7% used five services or more.

- Users of targeted services who were classified as high risk (with risk factors identified on more than five dimensions) were more likely to receive multiple interventions compared with users of other risk groups, confirming that On Track was successfully offering more services to people with higher levels of need.

- Data for users of universal services showed that most had received a single intervention (76%, n6,864), and only a minority (24%) were multiple intervention users (n2,109). If users of universal services were, on average, less needy than users of targeted services, then this is exactly what we would expect to find.

- The data did not allow us to assess whether those who used multiple On Track services had better outcomes than those who used only one service. However, an analysis of the relationship between project-wide throughput (which was highly correlated with multi-modality) and levels of risk and protective factors in the second wave of the schools surveys (2005), showed that generally speaking, where project throughput was higher, protective

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[2] r = 0.56

factors were higher and risk factors were lower for secondary school aged pupils. Results for primary school children were less clear, however.

- The qualitative studies suggested that the ability to work in a cross-disciplinary way with families was an important factor in successfully meeting their needs. Perhaps the biggest 'added value' of multiple service use came from multiple intervention use within families, where both children and their parents were accessing On Track services. The ability to produce simultaneous change in both parent and child was seen as important for sustained good outcomes. Workers did feel it was possible to see positive outcomes from services that only reached children, but that these might be slower to occur.

What happened next: mainstreaming On Track services

- In line with its demonstration, 'experimental' status, On Track was always intended as a time limited programme. However, it was expected that local projects would embed, or 'mainstream', effective practices and services into local service provision in order to increase the longevity of their work. Forming effective partnerships were seen as being the primary vehicle for mainstreaming.

- Findings from telephone 'exit interviews' with a sample of project managers in late 2006 indicated that at least half of the On Track projects had successfully mainstreamed at least one of their services. In some instances, managers reported a very high degree of success – saying that most, if not all, On Track services had been successfully mainstreamed into their local area's core service provision.

- Mainstreaming occurred in a variety of ways. Although the integration of specific On Track services into local core provision (for example, in schools) was the most common form of mainstreaming, there were also examples of On Track projects having changed or improved ongoing practice, refocused services for specific at-risk groups, provided training to statutory and voluntary agencies, and influenced strategic decisions at the community level.

- Projects occasionally encountered barriers when attempting to mainstream their services. Poor communication, conflicts of interest, limited funding and limited staff time all hindered mainstreaming.

- Processes that facilitated the mainstreaming of services included the availability of additional funding, support at the higher strategic level, and perceptions that the service was effective. On Track services that were recognised as effective in schools were particularly likely to be mainstreamed, especially if the school was able to obtain additional funding, or the local authority saw it as a priority. In addition, On Track services that were seen to

support the *Every Child Matters* outcomes framework (DfES, 2003) were also more likely to become integrated into the ongoing work of core health or educational services.

- Overall, it was clear that the On Track programme, both in terms of its staff and activities, added value to core services both for at risk families and for the community in general.

Conclusions

- Developing and implementing On Track 'from scratch' to the point of reaching close to 20,000 users (by 2005, when we ceased to collate data) has been a major undertaking and in general a major achievement by local projects. The On Track 'journey' has not been an entirely smooth one, including substantial problems created by changes in governance at national and local level and cuts in funding mid-way. In spite of this, many projects survived long enough to develop, test, and eventually mainstream the best elements of their service packages, and it was clear that in respect of multi-agency working, the On Track programme will leave a positive legacy in many, if not all, the areas in which it functioned.

- Schools became an increasingly major part of On Track's identity, even though at the outset school-based work and home-partnerships were envisaged as just one element of the programme package. Family and parenting work was also an area in which On Track's work appeared to be making a particularly valuable contribution.

- Taking into account all the evidence that was gathered on the positive impact of the programme, it is important to note than none of the findings prove that On Track itself 'caused' changes at any level. There are many possible competing drivers of change, not least of which was the proliferation of other community-based initiatives that were co-located in On Track areas. Use of other mainstream services locally may also have contributed to positive change, where it occurred.

- However, with this caveat in mind, we concluded that the presence of On Track was likely to have been an influential factor in reducing risk factors and boosting protective factors for children and parents. For example, for some factors there were significant differences between primary schools with higher levels of On Track activity compared with those with lower or no On Track activity. There was also a range of significant differences between On Track service users and On Track area residents compared to carefully selected comparison areas containing families who were not exposed to On Track. Throughput of users at area and service level was also related to a range of positive changes, suggesting that, as far as our analysis was able to establish,

some elements of risk appeared to be lower and some protective factors higher where a larger proportion of the local child population was reached.

- These results can be construed in three ways. If throughput is considered a measure of the *intensity* of On Track delivery, then we can say that where On Track was most intense, results were often more positive. On the other hand, throughput could be one measure of the *success* of implementation, to the extent that the more families reached, the more 'successful' the project. In this interpretation, the more successfully On Track was implemented, the better the results. Third, and perhaps most plausibly, higher throughput might have been just one indicator of a package of 'good practice' factors, not all of which were measured, which together increased the likelihood of better outcomes for children and families. Review of data collected across different strands of the evaluation suggested that projects that did well on one outcome indicator tended to do well on others, and also tended to be associated with process factors that created the most 'permitting circumstances' for the project to flourish and its work to take root. Thus, in projects with high throughput, we also found a wide range of service provision, more multi-modality, structures that facilitated and optimised multi-agency working, staff teams that cohered, and project managers who gave strong and consistent leadership. At the other end of the scale, projects that were struggling in one aspect of their work often struggled in others too – inconsistent leadership, high staff turnover, difficulty establishing cross-agency relationships, low visibility to the wider community of service providers, and work that was limited in reach and impact.

- The lack of programme fidelity in the way services were delivered across On Track as a national programme created headaches for the research team and was an important limiting factor in our ability to clarify the impact of On Track on users and communities. The degree of local flexibility allowed was, of course, also positive, in that it permitted projects to develop locally relevant services and to exploit the varying opportunities present in specific local circumstances. Nevertheless, somewhat more prescriptive guidance from government at the outset of the initiative might have helped optimise the position. This would have created more coherence and consistency in the way local projects operated within the national programme. This in turn would have made it more likely that research could isolate which specific bits of the package that was 'On Track' had been most effective and most replicable in the future.

- Lastly, though there was much to be positive about regarding the implementation and impact of On Track, it is important not to gloss over the limitations of the programme. The glass may just as easily be viewed as half empty as half full. On Track was a not a magic bullet for problems such as youth crime, truancy, low attainment and bullying at school. On these sorts of indicators the results were much more mixed. 'Fixing behaviour' remains the most difficult thing to achieve in community-based interventions across the

world, and it is always easier to achieve 'soft' impacts (change in attitudes, confidence, intentions) than it is to achieve 'hard' impact – i.e. lasting change in behaviour. In this respect, it is also important to remember that the 'crime prevention' focus of On Track as a programme became much diluted or diverted over time, towards more general 'child wellbeing' objectives. On Track was therefore spreading its net very wide in terms of objectives. As we have noted, there was not 'one On Track' but 'many On Tracks', all doing different things in different ways. In relation to improving child wellbeing – including by supporting parents and schools – On Track had some of its most encouraging results. However it seems likely that to tackle the most challenging youth behaviour problems like crime and antisocial behaviour, a more narrowly focused programme would be required.

Chapter One: Background and Introduction

1.1   The On Track Programme: introduction and overview

On Track Phase One was launched in December 1999 by the Home Office for England and Wales as part of the national Crime Reduction Programme. A multi-component area-based initiative (ABI), On Track was aimed at children and the families of children aged four to twelve who might be at risk of offending or engaging in antisocial behaviour. The aims, objectives and shape of the initiative had their roots in the successful US programme *Fast Track*, which we discuss later in this chapter - a preventative intervention targeting early onset conduct problems amongst high risk school-age children. It was also intended to be complementary to the *Sure Start* programme, a much bigger initiative working with families with infants and pre-school children across the country, inspired by the US programme Head Start and the flagship of a major child poverty reduction agenda. Initially funded for three years, On Track was extended into a second phase in 2003. From April 2001 the programme was incorporated into the Government's £960m *Children's Fund* under the auspices of the Children and Young People's Unit, which was itself later absorbed by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), renamed the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in 2007. Though not widely known outside the areas in which it worked, On Track was a substantial programme, offering by Phase II over eleven hundred different services to families and reaching around seventeen thousand users nationally.

Initially, 24 (later 23) local On Track projects in England and Wales were funded, all in areas of high social deprivation, and each covering a population of around 2,000 school aged children. In each local area a range of preventive services was developed, with a budget of around £400,000 per annum. Central to the ethos of On Track was co-operation and joint working between relevant agencies in order that children at risk of offending were identified early. The aim was that they and their families should be provided with consistent services extending through the period of transition to school and to early adolescence. The services delivered included both universal (open access) and targeted (provided on the basis of need) approaches and were both school and home-based, were supposed to utilise 'evidence-based' methods. That is, they were intended to use methods of delivery shown by research to be effective (or at least 'promising') in reducing antisocial behaviour and offending. Local On Track projects were also expected to shape educational and health outcomes, and so each project was managed by a local partnership comprising the main health, educational and social service providers, and including youth offending teams, the police and relevant voluntary sector organisations. The projects were intended to build on and link together existing services and initiatives for children and families. Described from the outset as a pilot or demonstration programme, the idea was that local projects would trial the delivery of a wide range of services within this multi-agency partnership model, testing out different approaches and demonstrating new ways of working within their local areas.

The towns, cities and boroughs in which On Track was operating at the time of the research are shown below in Box 1.1.

Box 1.1 Areas in which On Track was operating

Bradford	Easington (Co Durham)	Luton	Rhondda (South Wales)	Solihull
Brent (London Borough)	Greenwich (London Borough)	Manchester	Rochdale	Southwark (London Borough)
Bridgend (S Wales)	Haringey (London Borough)	Northampton	Sandwell	Sunderland
Brighton	Haverhill (Suffolk)	Oldham	Scarborough	Wirral
Bristol[3]	Kerrier (Cornwall)	Portsmouth	Sheffield	

This type of integrative, 'multidimensional' or 'multi-modal' approach was very much in keeping with the model of service design and delivery advocated in successive Green Papers produced by the British Government on services for children and families beginning with *Supporting Families* in 1998. Later, *Every Child Matters*, 2003, and related papers spelling out a 'Change for Children' agenda took up and further developed this theme. Indeed, the development of On Track can be seen in the context of a substantial evolution in policy and practice in children's services in the UK over the last decade. These include, for example, the larger Sure Start initiative, another multi-component programme launched in 1998 as part of the child poverty reduction strategy, targeted at infants and pre-school children aged birth to four and aimed at improving children's readiness to learn by means of locally organised services delivering a range of support in early education, childcare, health advice and family support for young children and their parents. Since its inception, over 500 local Sure Start programmes have been established within the 20% most deprived wards in England (Anning, Stuart, Nicholls, Goldthorpe and Morley, 2007). Other more recent developments in this 'family' of initiatives aimed at reducing poverty, reducing crime and antisocial behaviour, and enhancing good outcomes for children include the establishment of multi-agency *Children's Trusts*, bringing together health and social care services for children under one umbrella; the gradual introduction of information-sharing systems and protocols now known as *Contact Point (Every Child Matters 2003),* and the rolling out of the *Common Assessment Framework (Every Child Matters 2003),*from April 2006, intended to provide a common tool for practitioners working with children to assess family strengths and weaknesses, and to assess children's development along a range of important dimensions *(Every Child Matters 2003)*. As a strongly school-focused programme, On Track also belonged in the family of new initiatives such as *Extended Schools* and the

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[3] Bristol On Track was absorbed into the Children's Fund in 2004 and ceased to operate as an On Track project from that point.

Safer Schools Partnership Programme, which have established a principle for schools to be at the heart of a range of activities focused on child and family wellbeing. The establishment of funding streams such as the *Children's Fund* (of which On Track is a part), the *Parenting Fund* and the *Family Support Grant Fund* have made it possible for wide range on innovative new services to be set up and trialled across Britain.

Unlike some of the other programmes, however, On Track was always envisaged as a time-limited, demonstration programme. At the time of writing, the end of the funding period (Spring 2008) is now clearly in view and many projects are starting to re-shape themselves or mainstream their services into other, more sustainable forms.

1.2   Policy evolution and the development of On Track

1.2.1   'New Labour' and the drive to tackle antisocial behaviour

In May 1997 when the New Labour government came into office after eighteen years of Conservative rule, crime, and especially youth crime, was high on the policy agenda. 'Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' was an electioneering slogan intended to indicate that the new administration, if elected, would be taking both the prevention and control aspects of crime very seriously. A series of crime reduction and prevention policy initiatives followed rapidly, including far-reaching changes to the criminal justice system following the enactment of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The youth justice system arguably received the lion's share of the attention – the set-up and roll-out of the new multi-agency Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) under the auspices of the brand new Youth Justice Board, the introduction of a wide range of new disposals for young people, the introduction of the first ever and highly controversial disposal for parents of persistent young offenders (the Parenting Order), the setting up of the new Secure Training Centres for the most serious young offenders – all of these marked a whole new era for youth justice and youth crime prevention. Both government and media were clearly focused on the issue of youth antisocial behaviour, which appeared to be on the increase in terms of seriousness and frequency, and there was burgeoning interest in 'new' ways to tackle this problem – new ways that drew on innovative, multi-modal models of social intervention pioneered in other countries; new ways that integrated family support with social intervention for youth and treated families holistically; new ways that involved interventions delivered to whole communities, not just high-risk individuals; new ways that 'got in early' in intervention terms to divert at-risk children from the inevitable downward trajectory brought about by poverty, poor parenting, living in high crime areas, and low educational attainment and aspirations. Moreover, the new government claimed to be most interested in models of intervention that were 'evidence-based' – where interventions had been trialled and tested, and where research indicated that outcomes were promising. Large amounts of money from the public purse were made available to address this high-priority agenda, academics and expert practitioners were called together to engage in 'blue skies' thinking, policy makers made fact-finding visits to forward-thinking agencies overseas, and new initiatives came thick and fast. These were exciting times for practice development, and for the testing out of new policy directions. Terms

hitherto confined mainly to the academic and clinical literature became common currency: early intervention, prevention, risk and protective factors, resilience, cost-effectiveness, 'what works', multi-modal intervention – all these became woven in to the common language of the practice, policy and research communities as the next few years unfolded.

1.2.2 New models for intervention

In 1998, not long into the first term of the new administration, the Home Office commissioned a research study entitled 'Reducing Offending' to inform the development of their new Crime Reduction Programme. The primary aim of this Programme was to develop 'cost-effective' ways of reversing the 5% annual increase in crime that had occurred in the UK since the 1920s, and about which there was considerable moral panic. The report focused on 'what worked' in three areas of practice: prevention at the individual level (with a primary focus on early childhood intervention), prevention at the community level, and sentencing policies in the criminal justice system. 'Reducing Offending' placed a strong emphasis on the need for multiple interventions that targeted more than one risk factor. A chapter by John Graham (1998a), a criminologist then working in government as a policy adviser on 'what works in reducing criminality' addressed this issue by summarising the main characteristics of over fifteen initiatives proven to be effective (mostly in the USA) in targeting the risk factors associated with youth offending at the family, school and community level. *Fast Track*, a promising new multi-modal intervention based in the community and in schools in the USA that worked with parents and children through schools and the wider community had especially caught the eye of British policy makers, and there was an eagerness to try the model out in the UK context. The *On Track* initiative was, in many ways, a direct result of Graham's review.

The Home Office subsequently launched On Track in 1999 at a meeting of expert practitioners, academics and policy analysts in Central London, as an area based, experimental programme aimed at reducing the risks associated with youth offending through early intervention with children 4-12 years old. Sure Start was also being planned and rolled out at this time, and On Track was described as the sister initiative, taking up where Sure Start left off in providing services to children, youth and their families.   The primary objective of On Track was to work within disadvantaged, high crime communities reduce the propensity for antisocial behaviour in children by reducing risk factors and boosting protective factors shown by research to be influential in moderating the path to antisocial behaviour. It was anticipated that one of the ways On Track would achieve this would be by improving children's access to social and educational opportunities, and by boosting parents' skills in 'high risk' populations. Thus, although On Track was badged as a 'crime prevention' initiative, many of its primary benefits fell into the more general category of family support. Indeed the 'five core interventions' that were to form the heart of On Track (family therapy, pre-school services, home visiting, parenting

support and education, and home-school partnerships; see below) read much more like a list of family support interventions than 'crime prevention' activities.

1.2.3   Changes of governance and intervention emphasis

As time passed, this shift (or drift) of policy became more apparent, so that by the time On Track was drawing to the end of its demonstration period, it seemed to be as much, and sometimes more, about child well-being in a broad sense as about the prevention of antisocial behaviour. This process was certainly helped by the passing of departmental responsibility for On Track from the Home Office in 2001 to the newly established Children and Young People's Unit, and later, in 2004, to the Children and Families Directorate within a newly re-organised Department for Education and Skills (DfES). (DfES had at this point begun to take over leadership of the agenda laid out in *Every Child Matters* to pull together education and social services for children and families into a more integrated model that has now taken shape as Children's Trusts, and the Children's Fund, from which the money for On Track was drawn, was located within DfES). The 'crime prevention' badge did not become entirely dislodged (as indicated by a guidance letter to On Track project managers in 2004 from the then Minister of State for Children – Margaret Hodge - stating that 25% of the funding for On Track should still be spent on youth crime prevention work), and as late as 2006 many On Track projects still identified themselves as 'about' crime prevention as well as child and family well-being (see for example Graham, Corlyon, Bhabra, Woodfield, Hauari and Ghate 2006[4]). Nevertheless there was an unmistakable loosening of the crime prevention branding of the programme over time, to the point that in some projects (though certainly not all) this element of the remit had been more or less abandoned in favour of a more 'social care' discourse about community empowerment and child and family development and welfare.

1.3   Evolution of the theory base for On Track

What then was the theoretical basis for On Track? In the next section we explore the general state of knowledge about how to prevent poor outcomes for children, and the specific evidence base and intervention programmes that were cited as having influenced the policy makers in England who developed On Track at the outset.

1.3.1   The public health model of risk and protection

Over the past 25 years, there has been a substantial increase in what is known about poor outcomes for children and youth, including conduct and behaviour difficulties and the factors that contribute to it (Prior and Paris, 2005; Loeber and Farrington, 1998; Rutter, Giller and Hagell, 1998; Youth Justice Board, 2001). This research suggests that poor outcomes for youth (including offending) are multiply determined by a complex interplay of circumstances occurring at the individual,

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[4] Note that throughout this report, references in small font (only) denote related publications arising out of the National Evaluation study in Phase Two and authored by members of the evaluation consortium, including independently published strand reports.

peer, family, school, community and ultimately the societal level. In order to understand the ways in which these variables interact, researchers and policy makers have increasingly adopted a public health model of 'risk' and 'protective' factors to describe the processes associated with youth crime. 'Risk' factors include any individual characteristic or circumstance that increases the likelihood of poor outcomes, whereas 'protective' factors are processes that buffer or reduce the chances of poor outcomes and increase the chances of better ones.

It is beyond the scope of this report to describe all the ways in which risk and protective factors individually and collectively influence poor outcomes such as antisocial behaviour.   Excellent reviews are available elsewhere, including Rutter, Giller and Hagell's (1998) text on *Antisocial behavior in young people*, the Youth Justice Board's *Risk and protective factors associated with youth crime and effective interventions to prevent it* (2001) and Prior and Paris' *Preventing children's involvement in crime and antisocial behaviour: A literature review* (2005). However, Table 1.1 below provides a summary of all of the risk and protective factors found to be significantly associated with conduct problems (adapted from Prior and Paris, 2005; US Surgeon General Report, 2001). As the Table suggests, risk and protective factors fall into nested categories that exist at the individual, family, peer-group, school and community level. Community is seen as vitally important, with recognition that in poor (disadvantaged) communities, risk factors at other levels proliferate and protective factors may be diminished. This follows a model of human development that has come to dominate the modern human sciences, Uri Bronfenbrenner's 'ecological model' (Brofenbrenner, 1974; 1979). These categories are not conceptually discrete, however, and risk and protective factors often exist on multiple levels, and interact bi-directionally. For example, low school achievement is a risk factor that manifests itself at both the individual and school level. Although we know rather less about protective factors than we do about risk factors, researchers have proposed that protective factors reduce the likelihood of offending behaviour by helping children become resistant or *resilient* to the risks imposed by adverse circumstances (Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker, 2000). For example, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) significantly increases the chances of children engaging in problematic or antisocial behaviour. However, a supportive family and positive school environment can and does reduce the likelihood of these children engaging in antisocial behaviour. Furthermore, protective factors at the family and school levels can work to help children become resilient to the risks (e.g. impulsiveness) associated with the condition (Goldstein, 1997; Levine, 2003; Teeter, 1998).

Like risk factors, protective factors tend to come in clusters and can have an additive, cumulative effect in reducing the chances of antisocial behaviour, although they do not guarantee that it will not happen. Nevertheless, the relationship between protective factors and positive behaviour has created a great deal of interest in how protective factors can be used to increase children's resilience to adversity and prevent their involvement in antisocial behaviour. This has become an important part of the public health model of risk and protection – and the recognition that intervention to build strengths as well as reduce weaknesses can be effective has spawned an array of innovative, positive-thinking interventions, of which On Track

is an example, that are very far from the deficit-based 'treatment' model of social intervention popular in the 1960s and 1970s.

Table 1.1: Summary of risk and protective factors influencing antisocial behaviour by young people		
Domain or ecological level	**Risk Factors**	**Protective Factors**
Individual	- Being male - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) - Other behavioural problems incl aggressive and impulsive behaviour - Cognitive impairment - Low intelligence - Poor reasoning skills - Attitudes that support antisocial behaviour - Previous antisocial behaviour	- Being female - Sense of self-efficacy and good self esteem - Positive, sociable disposition - High intelligence - Perceived consequences for misbehaviour
Peer Group	- Weak social ties - Antisocial and/or substance misusing peers	Friends who engage in and value conventional behaviour
Family	- Low birth weight or other antenatal complications - Poor maternal response, due to substance abuse or depression - Parental mental health problems - Low parental involvement - Harsh or violent discipline - Physical or verbal abuse - Family conflict - Parental attitudes that condone antisocial behaviour - Low parental monitoring or supervision - Lone parenting or reconstituted family - Low socio-economic status	- Commitment to school and academic achievement - Warm, supportive relationship with at least one parent or other adult - Parents positively regard peers - Parents model positive problem-solving skills - Consistent, contingent discipline setting clear boundaries
School	- Poor attitude and attachment to school - Truancy and exclusion - Low attainment and performance - Punitive or chaotic school environment - Prevalent bullying and bad behaviour	- Recognition for involvement in school activities - High quality of schooling - Whole school approaches to bullying, truancy and antisocial behaviour
Community	- Neighbourhood poverty and disorganisation - Lack of social support for parents - Neighbourhood crime, drugs - Racial tension and discrimination	- Strong community bonds and natural surveillance - Social support for youth - Opportunities for constructive use of leisure time - Accessible services

Although there is still much to learn about how risk and protective factors (and especially the latter) operate to increase or reduce the likelihood of poor outcomes for young people, the growing body of research evidence provides us with a set of useful principles, which are set out in Box 1.2 below.

In the early guidance on On Track, it was made explicit that the programme rested upon a theory base that acknowledged the important role of risk and protective factors in the pathway to poor outcomes. Interventions should tackle specific risk factors, but should also adopt a strengths-based approach that identified and built upon protective factors in the community, family and individual. Over time, most projects firmly kept hold of this idea, with project front-line workers as well as managers able to articulate clearly this part of the theory base for On Track (see e.g Graham et al, 2006). The clear theory base for On Track seems to have been one of its major strengths, and may well have been what helped the programme to evolve and survive the vicissitudes of policy direction and governance at the centre.

Box 1.2   Risk and protective factors: key learning from the research so far

- Risk factors do not *cause* poor outcomes, and protective factors do not necessarily prevent them. Rather, these factors are significantly *related to the likelihood of development* of later problems.
- No single risk or protective factor is sufficient to explain developmental outcomes. Negative child outcomes, such as youth offending, are almost always the result of multiple factors (Rutter, et al, 1998; Wachs, 2000).
- In many instances protective factors are the opposite of risk factors (e.g. high intelligence vs. cognitive impairment), but not always. For example, an outgoing and sociable personality may reduce the likelihood of engaging in antisocial behaviour, but shyness does not increase one's chances of committing a crime.
- Risk and protective factors, like London buses, tend to come in clusters. For example, low school achievement is significantly linked to a higher likelihood of drug use. Research also suggests their impact may be cumulative and additive (see for example Rutter 1979; Ghate and Hazel, 2002; Cabinet Office, 2007). In other words, the more risk factors a child is exposed to, the greater likelihood he or she will experience poor outcomes.
- Risk and protective factors are not static states or enduring traits. Instead, they change as children and families develop. For example, association with a deviant peer-group is a risk factor for adolescent antisocial behaviour, but is not applicable for pre-schoolers.
- The saliency and impact of risk and protective factors vary as children develop. For example, neighbourhood is a greater risk factor for adolescents than it is for primary age children. High parental supervision and monitoring is essential to protect a pre-school child, but will need to be moderated and applied differently as the child grows in adolescence.
- The older a child is, the greater the risk he or she will engage in. Research also shows that the single most important risk factor for offending behaviour is previous offending or aggressive behaviour. Children who engage in offending behaviour before the age of 14 are far more likely to continue doing so after the age of 14 (YJB, 2001).
- Once problematic and aggressive behaviour begins, it is difficult to stop. Short-term interventions targeting difficult behaviours (such as behavioural and social-cognitive therapies) have often yielded disappointing results (Kazdin, 1985; Lytton, 1990). Researchers have attributed this to the fact that most of these interventions address only one risk factor (such as the child's social skills), whilst ignoring others, such as family stress or poor parenting skills (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, (CPPRG) 1992). 'Uni-modal' interventions are unlikely to be effective, therefore (Utting, Monteiro and Ghate, 2007)
- Children appear to be at greater risk for problematic behaviour during transition periods. For example, research suggests that entry into school and the transition from primary school to secondary school times when young people are more likely to exhibit disruptive or antisocial behaviour.

- Whilst some have argued racial discrimination is a risk factor (Berthoud, 1999), ethnicity, in and of itself is not, since research demonstrates that risk and protective factors appear consistently across all ethnicities and cultures (YJB, 2001; US Surgeon General, 2001).
- However, differences exist between ethnicity in terms of the prevalence of risk factors. For example, ethnic minorities are often exposed to a higher number of risk factors (such as poor neighbourhoods) and thus are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour. In this respect, race *per se* is not a risk factor, but the circumstances linked with it are. Similarly, it is not necessarily lone parenting that is a risk for poor parenting and child outcomes, but the poverty and disrupted family relationships that so often go with lone parenting (Ghate and Hazel 2002).

1.3.2   Early intervention as prevention: The Fast Track Model in the US and its influence on On Track

The US initiative FAST Track (Families and Schools Together) was one model of intervention that combined developmentally appropriate methods with a multi-component approach to reduce the risk factors associated with antisocial behaviour in children between the ages of six to 16. As the similarity in names suggests, Fast Track was at least in part the inspiration for On Track. The programme was introduced in 1990 at four sites across the United States known for having a high percentage of students with conduct problems. Since the programme began, numerous evaluations have found it to be an effective way of reducing antisocial behaviour and the risks associated with it, including increased emotional and social coping skills, improved reading skills, better peer relations, better school grades and fewer behavioural difficulties (Conduct Problems Research Prevention Group 1999, 2002; Bierman, Coie, Dodge, Greenberg, Lochman, McMahon and Pinderhughes, 1999a, 1999b, 2002). Appendix 1 contains further detail on the structure, content and evaluation results in relation to Fast Track. The wide spread of school-based interventions for preventing offending behaviour is not surprising. Gottsfredson (1998) argues that schools are ideal settings for introducing multi-modal interventions because a variety of individual and school based risk factors (such as low achievement and exposure to bullying) can be addressed at the same time. For this reason, initiatives with a school-based component are often highlighted in 'what works' reviews of reducing the risks associated with antisocial behaviour and preventing youth crime (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak and Hawkins 2004; Graham, 1998b; YJB, 2001). School-based initiatives are also advantageous because they are a point where the individual, family, peer group and issues meet. Although as we describe below On Track was not by any means a strict copy of Fast Track, the innovative nature of the US intervention and its impressive evaluation results appealed strongly to the UK originators of On Track. Below, we describe in more detail how On Track developed in practice.

1.4   Evolution of practice in On Track – key defining features

In practice terms, how did On Track evolve over time? This is an important question, but one that is not easily answered. Though there was a 'vision' for On Track set out in general terms at the outset, including an implicit theory of change and a set of expectations for outcomes spelled out in early Guidance documents from

government, was there in fact ever such a thing as 'On Track'? By the start of Phase Two, the point at which this evaluation picked up, the answer to this question was both 'yes' and 'no'.   To the extent that a common name, an overarching theoretical framework of risk and protective factors, a general model of management and partnership structures, and guidance on content, delivery mode and location were provided at the start of Phase One, the answer was yes. But to the extent that substantial variation in all of these was clearly visible by the start of Phase Two, the answer is no. Despite the similarity of name, On Track was quite unlike Fast Track in many respects. For example, though an initial set of categories for intervention resembled Fast Track's model in clear ways, the lack of firm guidance as to how to translate general categories into actual delivery packages meant that each project interpreted the content of delivery differently. Though some projects used schools as a delivery location from the outset, many only came to this slowly and over time. Whereas some projects operated a centralised management structure, with staff deployed from a central On Track office and team, others 'contracted out' to other local providers, some of whom only very loosely defined themselves as 'On Track' providers. And, as noted earlier, whilst some projects identified strongly with the original crime prevention brief and retained this identification over time, others rejected this in favour of something more closely related to community development and family support. In Chapter Six we describe in detail how the projects within the national programme varied locally, but here we note simply that there was no single 'On Track', but rather many On Tracks, each with a distinctive local flavour.

Below we first outline the common features of On Track projects that, in Phase Two at least, appeared to unite them under a common flag. We then note the main variations of structure and practice of which the reader should be aware, and highlight the implications of these for evaluation practice and conclusions.

1.4.1   The selection of areas for On Track

Once On Track was launched, the Home Office invited 80 Local Authority Areas in England and Wales that had been identified as high crime, high deprivation, to bid to deliver the On Track Early Intervention and Prevention Programme. Seventy-six of these areas subsequently submitted bids and by May 2000, 24 local areas were selected by Ministers via a selection process that took account of socio-demographic indicators.   The selected areas then developed delivery plans that were approved by the Home Office during the summer of 1999 and by September 2000, all 24 demonstration sites were up and running. The maximum grant that any one of these pilots received was expected to be £400,000 per year with the idea that funding would peak during year three, and then taper down, and an assumption that successful services would be funded and 'mainstreamed' into the core work of voluntary and statutory agencies. In 2002 it was decided that On Track would not finish in 2003, but would continue for a further three years to 2006, and this was subsequently extended to a further two years to 2008. Projects were expected to deliver core services within specified geographical boundaries, and one criterion for

eligibility – but one that was not always rigorously enforced (see Chapter Six) – was residence within 'the On Track area'.

1.4.2   The content of the On Track programme

At the beginning of the initiative, the Home Office proposed five 'core' interventions plus a sixth category, based upon the research outlined in Graham's 1998 review of 'what works.' These are set in Box 1.3 below. One can see that these overlap to some extent, but not in entirely, with the Fast Track model (see Appendix 1 for further detail on Fast Track).

What was noteworthy here was that though the core interventions were specified in general terms, the exact form that services within each category should take was left to local discretion. In reality, many other services that did not fit into the five core interventions were classified by projects as 'specialist', resulting in a degree of dilution of the original vision for On Track, and putting even more distance between On Track and Fast Track; see Chapter Six and Dinos, Tian and Solanki, with Hauari, 2006). And though some projects drew on established, manualised interventions such as *High/Scope* (in the pre-school category) and Webster-Stratton's *Incredible Years* programme (in the parent support category), the aspiration that **all** On Track services should be evidence-based - implying established, tried, tested and proven effective – was never fully realised. Many projects developed their own bespoke interventions, and no two projects looked alike.

It is also noteworthy that the four of the five intervention categories placed an emphasis on reducing individual risk factors by offering parent training support to improve parenting skills. Not surprisingly then, parenting support became a major focus of On Track's work across the country, plugging in to a massive expansion in parenting education and support activities across the UK. It was also noteworthy that none of the Home Office categories specifically addressed institutional change at the school or community level – despite the fact that school and community based interventions were highlighted in Graham's review. In spite of this, over time, schools enthusiastically took up On Track and one of the striking findings of the evaluation was an improvement in a range of dimensions at school level; see Chapter Ten and Bhabra, Dinos and Ghate, 2006a and 2006b)

Box 1.3   The Home Office categories of intervention specified for On Track

> **Home-school partnerships**
> The entire Fast Track initiative was used as an example of successful family-school or home-school partnerships. This intervention, once again, encouraged On Track projects to train parents to develop positive relationships with their children, although the On Track intervention category placed a greater emphasis on parental involvement in school activities. Home-school partnerships were the largest category of services offered by On Track, constituting 33% of the service offer. Services were delivered in roughly equal proportions as universal (55%) and targeted services (45%).

Parent support and training

On Track projects were encouraged to offer parent support similar to the training provided to parents via the Fast Track initiative. The evidence base used for this intervention came from the success of the Webster-Stratton *Incredible Years* parent training programme in reducing antisocial behaviour in pre-adolescent boys (e.g Tremblay, Viktaro, Bertrand, LeBlanc, Beauchesne, Boileau and David, 1992; Webster-Stratton, 2001).   Video-tapes are a feature of the Webster-Stratton intervention and are used as a way to help parents reflect
on their own limit-setting practices, as well as modelling positive, non-violent ways of discouraging difficult behaviour. Within On Track, parenting support services (only some of which utilised the Webster-Stratton approach) were mostly provided on a universal basis, and made up 9% of all services offered nationally by the programme.

Home visiting

The rationale for home visiting was based on the success of interventions in the US, including those famously reported in the works of David Olds and colleagues (e.g Olds, Eckenrode, Henderson, Kitzman, Powers, Cole, Sidora, Morris and Luckey, 1997), and the Syracuse Family Development Programme in the US where antenatal and postnatal advice and training was offered to teenage mothers as a way of improving their parenting skills. This initiative has been linked to significant reductions in antisocial behaviour 15 years later (Lally, Mangione, and Honig, 1988), although the programme itself is no longer offered in the US. On Track Guidance also encouraged projects to consider the Home-Start and NEWPIN home-visiting models, though the evidence base for these home-grown UK interventions was and remains much less strong than that of the Syracuse FDP (see Moran, Ghate. and Van der Merwe, 2004). Within On Track three quarters of home visiting services were offered on a targeted basis, making up 6% of services overall; see Chapter Six).

Family therapy

On Track projects were also encouraged to offer therapy to families in cases where there were serious problems. One example provided to the projects was the Parent-Child Game developed by the Maudsley Hospital's Family Assessment Unit. Interestingly, the delivery of this service is quite similar to that described as 'parent and support and training' (see above category) as it involves the use of videotapes to prompt discussion and reflection amongst participating parents to help improve their communication and problem solving skills. This intervention also shares similarities with the Fast Track parent training component, as it draws heavily upon the clinical work of Forehand and McMahon (1981). However, family therapy was different from parenting support services in On Track in that it was delivered to a smaller number of families and 80% of services were offered on a targeted basis. Family therapy services constituted 6% of all services offered through On Track.

Pre-school education

The evidence-base for this intervention included findings from the High Scope/Perry pre-school project, where participation in 'child-initiated learning' at age four was significantly linked to a 40% reduction in arrests at age 19 and improved educational and employment outcomes at age 27 (Schweinhart and Weikart, 1993). On Track preschool services were encouraged to develop structured learning environments to promote social skills, good communication and a positive sense of self in children under the age of five. Pre-school education projects tended to be delivered on a universal (open access) basis, and were very much a minority service, constituting only 2% of all services offered in Phase Two.

Specialist

The Home Office also permitted On Track projects to utilise a sixth, '*Specialist,*' intervention category for families with more specific individual needs. 'Specialist' services were envisaged in the early design phases of On Track as those employing specialist practitioners – for example counselling for mothers experiencing post-natal depression, speech and language therapy, and special needs services. However in practice, a whole range of other types of interventions were provided under this label, including those concerned with health, sport, and play, as we describe in detail in Chapter Six. Just over half of all specialist services were delivered as universal interventions. Collectively, specialist services accounted for 45% of all services offered by On Track in Phase Two.

Whilst an explicit 'On Track specific' theory of change for the initiative was not articulated, the implicit theory underlying the selection of the five core intervention

categories suggested that services that encouraged protective factors at the individual and family level would also discourage the development of risk factors at the school and community level. Figure 1.1 shows a basic 'logic model' for the On Track initiative as a way of considering the short and long-term impact of the initiative on the individual, school, peer and community levels. The model illustrates the connections between the inputs (resources) and constraints that frame the programme at the outset, the activities and outputs (things that projects do) that occurred as part of the work of developing and implementing the programme, and the short, medium and longer terms outcomes (changes in the individuals, families and wider world) that could potentially come from the programme if it is successful.

Figure 1.2 presents an example of how On Track services could reduce the propensity for antisocial behaviour in particular. It should be emphasised that these models have been constructed *post hoc* by the research team because the original On Track documentation was not very specific on the theory of change envisaged.

Figure 1.1 – A Logic Model for On Track

MISSION OF ON TRACK: to reduce the propensity for youth crime by reducing risk factors and boosting protective factors

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM OUTCOMES	LONG TERM OUTCOMES
• Effective local organisation • Trained staff • Multi-agency work • Financial input • Info systems CONSTRAINTS • Stigma • Insufficient or inconsistent user engagement • Barriers to partnership working	• Home-school partnerships • Parent support & training • Home visits • Family therapy Pre-school education • Specialist (inc school-based interventions)	• Agencies working together to provide services • Children and families accessing the services	• Improved parenting skills • Improved child behaviour • Improved home/school engagement • More community involvement • Better local agency co-operation	• Reduction in youth crime and other forms of antisocial behaviour • Better educational outcomes • Improved family functioning • Effective models of joint working mainstreamed and sustained

CONTEXT: 24 deprived areas in England and Wales

Figure 1.2 One model of how On Track services could reduce antisocial behaviour

```
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│        Home visiting        │
│                             │
│     Parent training and     │
│           support           │
│                             │
│        Home-school          │
│        partnerships         │
│                             │
│       Family therapy        │
│                             │
│     Pre-school services     │
│                             │
│     Specialist services     │
└─────────────────────────────┘
              ▼

┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Better parenting skills and parental │
│             confidence               │
│                                      │
│  Better child functioning and social │
│                skills                │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
              ▼

┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Improved parent-child relationships │
│                                      │
│       Improved school performance    │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
              ▼

┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Decreased propensity   │
│  for antisocial behaviour │
└─────────────────────────┘
```
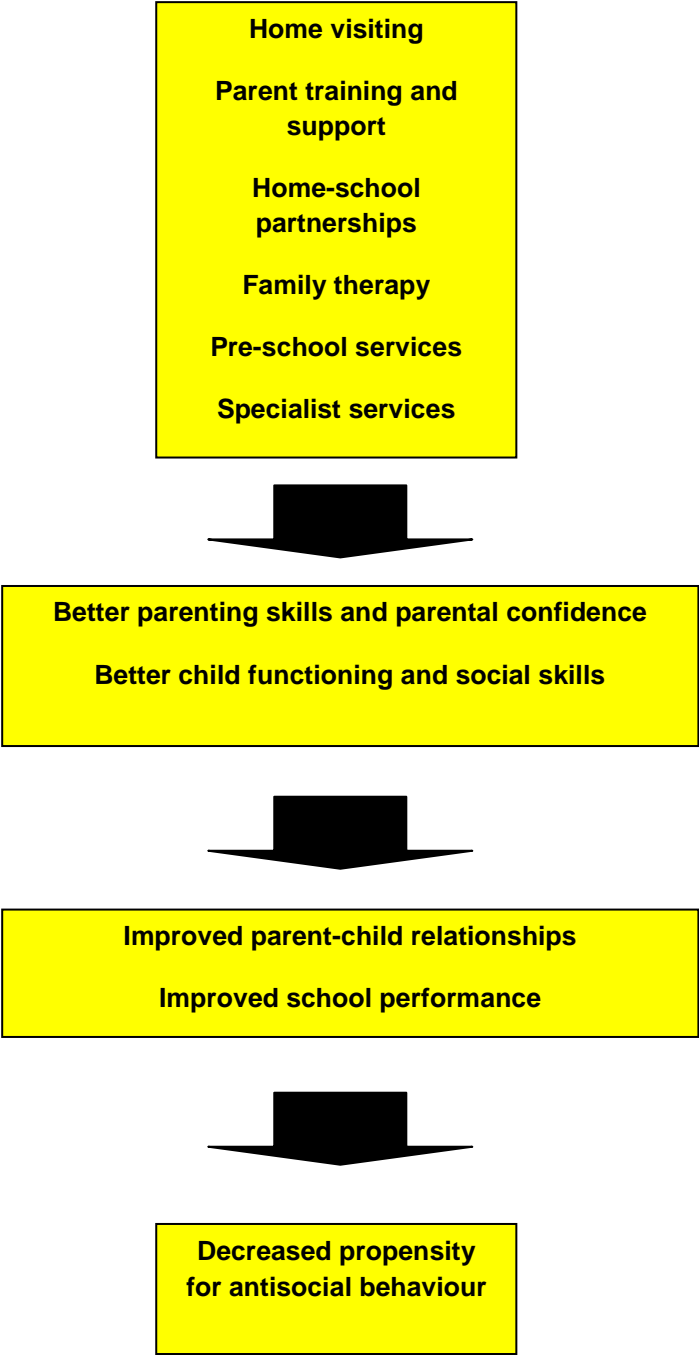
1.4.3   Project management and structure

Early guidance from the Home Office placed a strong emphasis on multi-agency co-operation in the delivery of On Track services. Projects were therefore required to develop strategic, multi-agency partnerships that included members drawn from a range of agencies, including social services, education, health, the police, and youth justice services. In addition, partnerships were asked to ensure that there was

representation from voluntary and community groups. The role of the partnership was to oversee the strategic development of the project and establish effective referral and information-sharing systems. These partnerships would also determine the specific services that would be offered and their mode of delivery.

In practice, though most On Track projects were characterised by a strong degree of cross-agency working, there remained some that were dominated by one agency or another. Where project managers were seconded from 'host' agencies rather than being appointed to a new, freestanding 'On Track Project Manager' role, this was especially likely to be the case.

Another feature of variation was the different structures that projects developed to deliver their work. A threefold model can be discerned, described more fully in Graham et al, (2006) and in this report in Chapter Six. Briefly stated, there were some projects that used an 'in house' model of delivery, with staff working out of a central base and all clearly identifying themselves as On Track workers. Others 'contracted out' service delivery, co-ordinating and buying in services from external agencies who only loosely identified themselves as On Track providers, and a third category operated with a 'mixed economy', part in-house and part contracted out.

1.4.4 Location of delivery

On Track projects varied, too, in the locations adopted for delivering services. Some had central offices, sometimes co-located with Sure Start or Children's Fund services; others operated from community bases or from within external agencies such as schools. Though at the outset, On Track was not described as a schools-based intervention (unlike Fast Track), and indeed schools were hardly mentioned in the initial guidance by the end of Phase Two, a shift towards a heavily school-based set of services was evident; Parsons, Austin, Bryan, Hailes and Stow, (2006).

1.4.5 Methods of identification and referral of users

As mentioned previously, the Home Office encouraged On Track projects to offer a constellation of services to families through a multi-modal approach with the aim of tackling multiple risk factors. However, there was no guidance as to how this should be achieved. Whilst projects were encouraged to target services at 'high risk' children and families, no advice or standardised scales were provided to help them assess individual risk factors. The projects were left on their own to interpret what constituted 'high risk' and develop their own models and care pathways for how multiple services would jointly address this risk. The fact that On Track was only provided in high-risk communities in the first place ensured a certain degree of homogeneity of course, and as Finch, Aye Maung, Jones, Tipping and Blom, with Ghate (2006a) and Chapter Three of this report indicate, the On Track communities appeared to be characterised by a common degree of disadvantage and need. (In fact generally speaking, compared even to other impoverished neighbourhoods, On Track areas were characterised by such a high degree of need that they were in effect 'the poorest

of the poor'). Beyond this, at the individual referral level, many projects developed innovative multi-agency referral and case review panels, but as Chapter Four indicates, the routes into On Track services were various and not always clear. Procedures for assessment for targeted services also varied, with some projects utilising existing tools such as the Common Assessment Framework, but others developed bespoke methods that were not always clearly documented. From an evaluator's viewpoint, what this means is that we cannot be sure of the extent to which users of On Track services shared common degrees of risk or common needs in the first instance.

1.5   Summary of the defining features of On Track as a national programme, and variations at local level

As we have indicated so far, the national On Track programme was characterised by some common features and much local variation. There was not one On Track but many On Tracks. In this it resembles all other area-based initiatives to have been established in the UK in the past ten years, since the British 'way' of providing programmatic intervention has traditionally been to avoid prescription and to privilege local flexibilities and preferences over centralised models of delivery (See for example, reports on the National Evaluation of Sure Start including Anning et al, 2007; reports from the National Evaluation of the Children's Fund including University of Birmingham/Institute of Education 2006). But where On Track was different from other British initiatives was that it attempted, through general guidance documents, to articulate a broad model of early intervention organised around the concept of risk and protective factors and their role in the pathway to poor outcomes for children. This model took firm root amongst the projects that were eventually funded and arguably provided them with a sense of coherence that was not achieved through any other means. It also took a clear line on the need for evidence-based services, though the form that these should take was never stipulated, resulting in considerable variation in practice on the ground. Thus, despite the similarity of names, On Track was inspired by rather than modelled on the US Fast Track programme. It lacked the implementation rigour of Fast Track, and allowed for much more site-by-site variability. Table 1.2 below summarises the core and variable features of On Track at the national and local level, and notes key differences and similarities from Fast Track.

Table 1.2. Key features and local variations in On Track Phase Two, and comparison with Fast Track			
Key features	**On Track projects**	**Local variations**	*Fast Track projects*
Area-based	Defined geographical boundaries in areas of high deprivation	Areas varied in size and population density	*School-based*
Theory base	Risk and protective factor framework	-	*Main emphasis*
	Early intervention for crime prevention	Some projects de-emphasised this	*Main emphasis*
	Family and parenting support	Some projects emphasised this	*Some emphasis*
Identification, referral and assessment of users	Broad focus on high-need families	Variable between projects. No consistent methods	*Standardised method for identifying need and targeting services*
	Multiple referral routes	-	*Standardised assessment for eligibility based on kindergarten scores*
	Multi-agency referral panels	In some areas only	*N/A*
Content	Based around five core interventions plus 6th 'specialist' category	Projects varied in balance of services under each category. 'Specialist' services predominated in some projects	*Standardised package of interventions.*
	Emphasis on 'evidenced' based interventions	Variable use of manualised interventions	*Less flexibility to use non-evidenced based interventions*
Parent support services	Yes		*Yes*
Home-school partnership	Yes		*Yes*
Home visiting	Yes		*Yes*
Family therapy	Yes		*No*
Pre-school services	Yes		*No*
'Specialist' services	Yes		*No*
Management and structure	Multi-agency partnership and leadership	Lead agency varied	*Not a feature of FT*
	Freedom to provide services in house, or contract out, using own budget	Balance of in-house and contracted-out varied	*Support was given to FT sites in terms of training, not money.*

1.6 Structure of the report

Since this overview report synthesises the learning from eight separate studies and reports, it is necessarily long. Below we give a brief guide to the content of each chapter, so that readers can locate the chapters of specific interest.

Chapter One (this chapter) has considered first the origins of On Track, its underpinning theories, and the ways in which these theories informed the development of the initiative and the resources allocated to it. It also provides an account of how Government policy informed practice by describing how individual projects interpreted the guidance as they established their services, and how the initiative evolved over time.

Chapter Two describes the **research methods** used across the various studies that formed the evaluation. It outlines our key research questions for this 'overview' report, and some of the key issues and challenges for evaluation. The strengths and limitations of each study are considered, and the specific datasets used to analyse the impact of On Track (covered in Chapters Seven to Twelve) are discussed.

Chapter Three describes the **community context** of On Track areas. This section includes an overview of area demographics, including families' income, unemployment status, housing, transportation and local crime statistics. This chapter will also consider the extent to which On Track areas co-existed alongside other initiatives, such as Sure Start and the Children's Fund.

The next three chapters address special issues related to the On Track initiative. **Chapter Four** explores how On Track got started as a programme, whether the projects achieved their goals for '**multi-agency'** working, and what factors helped or hindered this process. **Chapter Five** considers **workforce issues** - the human resources required to deliver On Track services. This chapter provides an in-depth account of the personnel required to deliver specific services, the recruitment of staff and their ongoing training needs. It also provides insight into the importance of project managers and how their leadership influenced service outcomes.

Chapter Six is an important chapter that describes the shape of the programme – what is was, and what is was not. It considers the initiative in terms of its 'outputs,' first in terms of it **activities and services** developed by the individual On Track projects and then in terms of the **On Track users** – the families and children who actually participated in these services. In this chapter, we consider the various project models and methods of service delivery adopted, the ways in which services developed and changed over time, and how families were reached and referred. At this point, we will address the issue of programme fidelity and explore whether the services developed by individual projects actually supported the theories and evidence base underpinning the initiative. The final part of Chapter Six considers the success of On Track in terms of its 'reach', by first comparing the characteristics of actual On Track users to the characteristics of the On Track communities described in Chapter Three, and then assessing the extent of risk amongst the sample of users.

In **Chapter Seven and the following five chapters** we consider the evidence for the **impact** of the On Track initiative in terms of any discernable benefits for individual children (**Chapter Eight**), their families (**Chapter Nine**), their schools and peer groups (**Chapter Ten**), and their communities (**Chapter Eleven**). To do this we assess the evidence from the various strands of the evaluation, comparing and contrasting results. We also explore the extent to which service 'reach' was associated with different levels of risk and protective factors. **Chapter Twelve** provides a summary and overview of the evidence of impact and assesses the extent to which On Track successfully achieved its primary goals. Last, **Chapter Thirteen** specifically considers the extent to which 'multi-modal' practice was achieved and if so, the extent to which this approach can be said to have been effective.

Looking to the future, **Chapter Fourteen** focuses on the extent to which On Track services were subsequently mainstreamed into core practice and how mainstreaming practices effected service outcomes, and in **Chapter Fifteen** the report ends with a set of conclusions about the success of the On Track initiative, both in terms of its processes and outcomes. Throughout this discussion, we highlight how the findings inform our current understanding of the potential of preventive initiatives in improving developmental outcomes. We will also consider the lessons learned from the initiative and make recommendations for how these lessons can inform future policy and practice.

Chapter Two: Evaluation methodology

2.1   Evaluating community-based initiatives: the challenges

Community-based or area-based initiatives (ABIs) such as On Track are characterised by their ambitious aspirations. As Connell, Kubisch, Schorr and Weiss (1995) observed, community-based initiatives generally address social issues by promoting positive changes at multiple ecological levels (the individual, family, community), they typically work across multiple sectors and multiple agencies, and they evolve and mutate over time. Though this breadth and flexibility may be exactly what is required to achieve the social change to which these programmes aspire, it also raises many scientific and practical challenges for evaluators (Ghate, 2001).

The goals of modern evaluation research are often expressed as an attempt to identify *what* works, for *whom* it works, *how* it works and *why* it works. To answer these questions requires exploration of both process and implementation factors, as well as measurement of outcomes (things that change over time, thought to be related to the intervention). Evaluators of ABIs usually begin their work by understanding the initiative's '*theory of change*,' ie the theoretical model that sets out why policy makers and programme stakeholders believe that the intervention or programme of interventions will improve participant outcomes. Related to this, evaluators want to understand in concrete terms how the theory relates to practice in terms of the services provided by the programme (the '*mechanisms of change'*, or how the programme will achieve, in practical terms, the changes it seeks). Evaluators will also hope to gain a clear picture of the shape of the initiative in terms of actual services delivered – what is provided, and how. Recognising that most medium-to-long term programmes evolve over time, perhaps in response to changing needs in the local community, changing understandings of 'what works', or changing local or national political priorities and circumstances, evaluators also have to contend with the 'moving target' that is a typical ABI in the real world. Finally, they must identify what will be the most appropriate indicators of the success of the programme, and determine how best to measure these in a way that is both scientifically acceptable but also flexible enough to be practical and to reflect the messiness of the real world in which the work takes place. And of course all of this is without considering the political and institutional constraints within which researchers themselves operate, which also influences the research product.

All of these challenges were very much live ones for the National Evaluation of On Track in Phase Two, as indeed they are reported to have been in numerous other recent large-scale evaluations (e.g Anning et al, 2007; University of Birmingham/Institute of Education 2006). The next sections describe the core features of the design of the evaluation overall, the specific design of each of the composite strands of the research, and outlines the particular challenges that were

encountered and the extent to which the research was or was not able to overcome them.

2.2   Evaluating On Track: design and management features of the Phase Two evaluation

The first phase of the national evaluation of the On Track programme began in 2000 and was conducted by the University of Sheffield (France, Hine, Armstrong and Camina, 2004; Armstrong, Hine, Hacking, Armaos, Jones, Klessinger and France, 2003; Hine, 2005). Phase One was able to describe in detail the communities in which On Track was operating and also attempted to describe the complex and constantly evolving shape of the programme in its first three years of life. The effectiveness of the programme was also investigated, but with mainly qualitative methods. Phase Two of the evaluation (2003-2006), which is the subject of this report, was carried out by a consortium led by the independent Policy Research Bureau, in collaboration with the National Centre for Social Research, and the Jill Dando Institute for Crime Science at the University of London. Responding to a fairly tight brief from the evaluation funder that invited both process and outcome evaluation research proposals but with an emphasis on the outcomes, the consortium was set up to bring together three teams with expertise in child and family policy research, survey and qualitative methods, and crime studies.

As a matter of good practice in evaluation design (Ghate, 2001 amongst others) a multi-method approach was employed. The methods aimed to combine high quality qualitative data (for example, on the experiences of service users and individual case histories) with robust quantitative data on risk factors and outcomes for users drawn from multiple sources. The design also incorporated a 'counterfactual 'element, a core requirement for the robust assessment of outcomes (Granger, 1998). This enabled us to compare the outcomes for children, families and communities who experienced On Track with similar groups who did not, by means of carefully sampled comparison groups. Theoretically speaking, the research design utilised an 'ecological' approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; 1979), with research questions formulated and data collected at each of five nested levels: individual, family, peer group, school and community. Data from services and agencies formed a sixth dimension crosscutting all of these. Overall, though the evaluation design explored both outputs and outcomes, the study did not aim to contribute a detailed analysis of exactly how On Track was implemented in each of the project areas. Rather, it focused on identifying key commonalties and key differences between projects to obtain a broad overview of the programme as a whole. In addition, a considerable proportion of the evaluation resource was devoted to assessing impact and outcomes, albeit in a restricted way, as we discuss below.

The research in Phase Two was organised into discrete but related strands designed to inform and read across to one another. Some of the strands built on (and generally streamlined) research activities that had commenced during the Phase One study,

whereas others were new in Phase Two. These included, most notably, a longitudinal cohort study. Each strand had a different team, though members of the core team at the Policy Research Bureau worked on or contributed to the design, analysis or interpretation of all strands. All strand directors and key staff met together monthly (initially) and then bi-monthly for the duration of the three year project in consortium meetings in which progress, policy and practice context and methodological and analytic issues were discussed by the whole team. In this way, the various strands of the study were held together within the whole, avoiding a fragmented approach that would have proved more difficult to stitch together at the end of the process. In addition, contact with On Track projects and schools was mediated by an evaluation Administrator, whose vital role was to ensure that research demands on the busy On Track projects were kept to a minimum and to keep open communication lines between projects and researchers. An evaluation Director and a Manager at the Policy Research Bureau kept a watching brief on all strands and kept in close contact with a study manager at the Department for Education and Skills, including holding monthly progress meetings throughout the life of the contract. Unlike in Phase One, the national evaluation team had no remit to work with local evaluation teams. Although some projects did have local evaluators, for the purposes of the main evaluation, design, data collection and data analysis were centralised within the national evaluation consortium.

The diagram overleaf shows the schematic design of the Phase Two evaluation, with fuller details discussed later in this chapter.

Figure 2.1 National Evaluation of On Track, Phase Two: Structure of research design
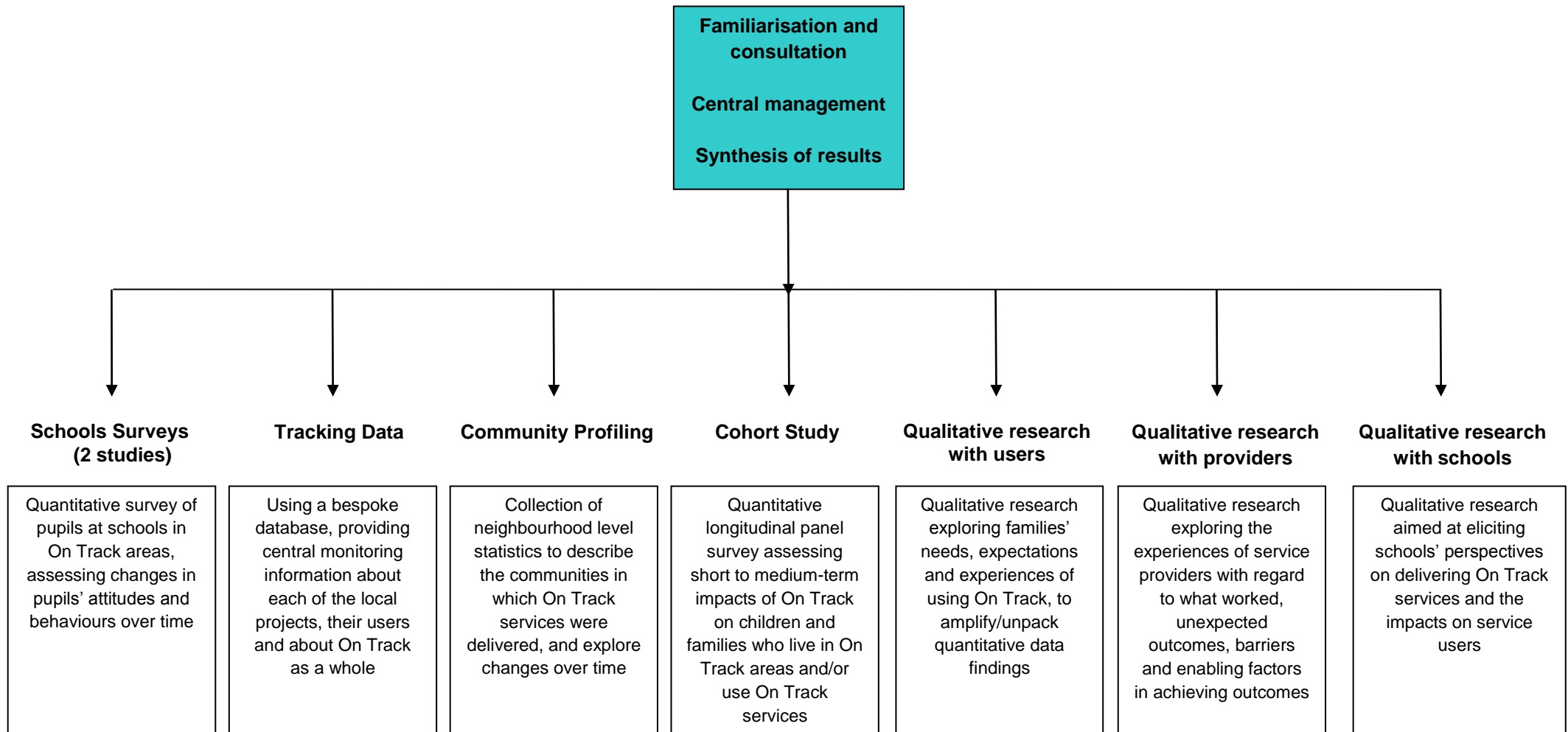
2.3   Research questions, aims and objectives, and methodological challenges

2.3.1 Overview

The research questions for the second Phase evaluation were complex and ambitious. Individual strands of the study were intended to address specific issues in a 'triangulated' model as detailed above, but we also intended that the various strands should 'speak to' one another, so that a series of broader questions about the implementation and effectiveness of the whole initiative could be answered by piecing together the data from the separate components of the design. In this respect, each individual strand was able to stand on its own by addressing specific 'micro-level' questions, but also informed our understanding of trends and patterns *across* all of the strands that cumulatively provide insight into the 'macro' bigger picture.

The evolution, aims and objectives of On Track as a programme have already been discussed in detail in Chapter One. The broad aims of the evaluation were firstly to explore the process of implementing and delivering On Track, and secondly to judge the effectiveness of the programme at reducing risk and increasing protective factors in the lives of children and families in the On Track areas. In addition to measuring the *overall* impact of On Track the evaluation was asked to consider *which particular elements* of the On Track 'portfolio' of services had an impact – or the most impact - on the risk and protective factors connected with offending and antisocial behaviour: in other words, what were the 'active ingredients'? (Ludwig and Phillips, 2007). There is also the question *why* those services were particularly effective: was it the 'dosage' of an individual intervention (ie, frequency and intensity of service use), the content of the intervention (ie, what was actually done with users), or some combination of the two? Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) state that while there is a growing body of evidence that supports the effectiveness of multi-dimensional initiatives (such as On Track), there is still a great degree of lack of specificity as to how precisely such initiatives promote positive youth development. Although some authors have suggested that the efficacy of these programmes may lie in the 'unevaluable' interaction between the elements, (see Moran et al, 2004) others contend that this vagueness hampers endeavours to evaluate the benefits of such initiatives, which in turn affects the ability to improve the range of services and interventions available. However, though it is easy to make statements about the importance of understanding what it was about a particular approach that worked (e.g. Merrington and Hine, 2001, along with just about every other author on the evaluation of community-based interventions), this is all the more problematic in cases like On Track since the myriad of interventions administered within individual On Track project areas was likely to interact with their different communities in complex ways.

Bearing this in mind, in formulating specific research objectives we needed to have regard to what would be theoretically justified, and also what would be practically

feasible. Below we discuss some of the general methodological and theoretical constraints and challenges for the research before returning to outline the research objectives that were, in the end, feasible for us to address.

2.3.2 Specific theoretical and methodological challenges encountered by the research team

Establishing the content of delivery ('programme fidelity')

In a large initiative with many local projects, one of the greatest challenges to evaluators is the difficulty of establishing what exactly individual local projects are doing. Unless individual projects are formally required to deliver a particular brand of intervention and follow a set curriculum of activities, the general situation that evaluators encounter is great difficulty in obtaining hard information on the content of the service being delivered. A general lack of documentation is common, with the use of written manuals rare and practitioners frequently describing their approach as 'based on' some variant or other of a well-known intervention model but with modifications reflecting personal or local preferences, and individual tailoring to particular users' needs. In addition, it is natural for community-based interventions to evolve in response to local practical demands and local and national political changes. This was certainly the case with On Track, because as we noted in Chapter One, although there was a relatively well-articulated theory of change underpinning On Track, the expectations regarding more concrete mechanisms of change were not spelled out in central guidance. In addition, a series of budget cuts at various points necessitated reconfiguring and rationalising services in some areas, and changes of political master gave the initiative a different set of emphases at different points in time. So even had the researchers been able to maintain a physical presence in all projects at all times watching and documenting what was happening (clearly not practical), it is doubtful the research team could have completely established what degree of '*programme fidelity*' was operating at the national level. The result is that we cannot be sure of the extent that are we comparing 'like with like' when we compare two different projects. Indeed, as we have already noted and will illustrate in further detail in Chapter Six, there was not in fact one On Track but rather, 'many On Tracks'. As the research revealed in the fullness of time, each project interpreted its brief in a locally unique way, and within this, individual users will have received different On Track services in different ways. This raises challenges for evaluation science, which depends on a degree of homogeneity and standardisation as fundamental to robust measurement and for our purposes bears on both the exploration of process issues and the interpretation of outcome data.

Defining the beneficiaries of On Track

A related challenge concerns how we identify and set boundaries around the 'community of beneficiaries' for On Track so that we can measure impact appropriately and for the correct population. At one level this seems a simple issue: those people who have been directly in contact with On Track services and received some form of

intervention (mainly referred to as On Track 'users' in the remainder of this report) can be said to be the direct beneficiaries. However, the reality is more complex. On Track worked within communities, and within those, provided universal services to wide groups of families and children as well as targeted services reserved for families or children with specific needs. Within those communities, though not every single family and child would be directly in contact with On Track services, all were eligible and all were theoretically included in the population that the programme intended to serve. Moreover, given the social implications of the objectives of On Track, if it were a successful, efficacious intervention, the good outcomes for individual users (for example, a reduction in bad behaviour for certain young people) should have positive effects for other children and families in their local neighbourhoods. Thus, we would expect that the benefits of On Track would be detectable outside the population of direct users. For example, we might expect to see benefits for whole schools contained within On Track catchment areas, and even for whole communities, provided the services had penetrated sufficiently for the effects to be detectable (see below). In these circumstances evaluators often speak of an 'intention to treat' model of analysis, which implies that in addition to measuring impact for identified direct users of a programme ('the effect of treatment on the treated'), it is also valid to look for effects on wider local populations ('intent to treat' effects; Ludwig and Phillips, 2007; Bloom, 1984). These may include people not directly using the programme's services, but indirectly exposed to them by virtue of their proximity to direct users, and people who are offered but do not take up the services for whatever reason. However, such an approach raises further challenges, especially in relation to the interpretation of results. If we find no clear effects in wider populations, it is hard to know if this means the services were ineffective and there were no good effects, or rather that the penetration or 'reach' of the service, or its 'dosage' or intensity was weak (in other words, too few people used the services, or those who used them did not do so with a sufficient degree of frequency or intensity) so that good effects were 'washed out' or diluted in the analysis process.

Establishing the intensity ('dosage') of service receipt

Establishing the specifics of process and delivery is further complicated by the fact that identifying service 'dosage' (a term borrowed from clinical research and used here as shorthand for a measure of the frequency and intensity of service use: that is, 'how much' of a service a user has received) can be problematic in community-based initiatives. Dosage is clearly an important construct, since we would expect outcomes to be different for someone who visited a service on a one-off basis for 20 minutes compared to someone who used a service twice a week for several hours over a six month period.

In the UK, outside medical research, service providers are generally reluctant (for data protection reasons) or unable (for practical and/or resource reasons) to supply researchers with accurate records of service use attributable to identified users. Moreover, though theoretically data on dosage could be collected directly from users

themselves, in practice, service users are frequently unable to identify the services they have used in sufficient detail for accurate assignment. Development work for the cohort study (for example) revealed that many users could not identify On Track services as distinct from other services, even when substantial detail about the location and even the names of staff running the services were provided as prompts (see Finch et al, 2006b). It was clear that the lack of 'branding' of some On Track services to users was a problem for the research (see also Chapter Four), and this raised the possibility that some users of On Track services did not identify themselves as such. Our partial solution, described in Chapter Six, was to assign values to each On Track project regarding the percentage of the child population in each On Track area reached by the project within specific Home Office intervention categories, using data from the Tracking study and from the Census 2001. We then (in Chapter Thirteen) considered the extent to which higher levels of reach were associated with positive changes in terms of risk and protective factors. This measure of *reach* or *throughput* is different from the concept of dosage: it measures the proportion of people in an area exposed to any On Track service rather than the degree of exposure amongst individual users. It is a relatively crude indicator, since each individual reached by On Track services in their local area counts as one unit of throughput, irrespective of whether their contact with On Track services was substantial, multiple and/or prolonged, or slight, one off and brief. However, this measure was the closest possible proxy to measure of dosage that would enable us to analyse whether 'more On Track' equated to better outcomes, and as far as it goes, yielded interesting and important findings that are discussed in detail in Chapter Thirteen.

Things were further complicated by the issue of multiple versus single intervention use. Since a fundamental aspect of On Track's design was 'multimodality' - the provision of multiple interventions to individual users to tackle multiple needs and difficulties - an important research question related to the possibly enhanced effectiveness of this approach. We were able to measure single and multiple service use to a degree, so that for example in Chapter Six, using data from the Tracking study, we were able to explore the characteristics of multiple as opposed to single service users and assess the degree to which On Track as a programme achieved its objective of being a multi-modal programme. However, we were not able to relate the number of services used to outcomes at the level of the individual, because for data protection reasons, data from the Tracking study could not be linked to data on individuals in other strands that explored outcomes (e.g the cohort study). Furthermore, insufficient numbers of cases in the cohort study itself precluded analysis at this level of detail. Thus, though the research was able to go some way down the road to understanding whether higher levels of On Track service activity meant better results for the On Track communities, the difficulty of establishing the degree and intensity of service usage created limitations both for understanding process factors, and for the measurement of outcomes and the attribution of specific outcome results to specific aspects of On Track service history.

On Track's diffuse objectives, and the timeframe for evaluation of outcomes

The nature of On Track means that it was always more than a uni-focal 'crime prevention' programme, and its trajectory over time across policy domains and government departments at times both either strengthened or diluted this focus. Thus, over time, On Track's aims were variously described as being to impact on a host of factors connected with child and family welfare as well as crime (ie, criminogenic factors as well as crime itself). To do justice to On Track, these too had to be measured. Second, the programme was a prevention programme targeted at early intervention in the precursors to antisocial behaviour, and was thus not expected to achieve significant outcomes in crime reduction per se in the short term. Measurement over the longer term is not an option currently open to us, and in any case given the age of the children involved in On Track (four to twelve year olds), and given that the peak age for youth offending in the UK is in the later teens, we would have to wait a long time to measure this aspect of On Track's impact.

Theoretically then, only short term and mid-range outcomes can be identified from changes in the incidence of risk and protective factors within the population of On Track users. It is a reasonable hypothesis that if On Track were efficacious in reducing the likelihood of youth antisocial behaviour, we would be able to see changes in whole community trends beginning a few years after On Track had begun to deliver services, because we assume that given the peer-element of youth offending (most young people offend in groups, not alone), some of the positive effect of On Track on children using the services should be rubbing off on their friends and peers. However, within the time frame of the programme and the evaluation, it would be surprising if we picked up these kinds of changes. Though a 'logic model' for On Track (See Chapter One suggests that positive outcomes were possible at all levels, in terms of research questions for this report, we assumed that outcomes were more likely to be detectable in the short term at the individual, family and school level and less likely to show up at the community level within the lifespan of the evaluation study.

Selecting appropriate outcome measures

Another key challenge relates to the selection of appropriate outcome measures. The decision needs to be both theory-driven, and feasibility driven. It is probably true to say that many evaluations waste considerable effort trying to measure outcomes that are not, in fact, ever likely to be detected (at least as far as quantitative research goes), sometimes at the behest of funders whose expectations may be enthusiastic but unrealistic; sometimes because insufficient thought has been given to the extent to which individual measures are likely to be related to the intervention provided (that is, the 'mechanism of change' has not been adequately specified). In addition, evaluation science still has much to learn about how to calibrate measures so that they are fine-grained and accurate enough to pick up small degrees of change. The literature clearly shows that the impacts on behaviour (as opposed to attitudes) of even the most promising initiatives tend to be very modest: the most successful programmes aimed at reducing re-offending for example, have typically achieved

only a twelve percent reduction at best, and often much less than this (Rutter et al, 1998), and social care interventions often show even smaller effects (Barlow, Brocklehurst, Stewart-Brown, Davis, Burns, Callaghan and Tucker, 2003). In addition, a further measurement problem is created by the reality of evaluation in the community setting, where we are often dealing with small numbers of service users and hence sample sizes that are insufficient for statistical analysis. Measures used therefore have to be sensitive enough, and sample sizes substantial enough, to detect even small changes if the exercise is to be worthwhile.

Thus, the decision about what measures to use needs to have regard to the following questions, amongst others:
- How reasonable is it to expect outcome 'X' from intervention 'Y'?
- How reasonable is it to expect to see this outcome change over the time period of the evaluation?
- What kind of tools are available for measuring this outcome – are they valid, reliable, easy to use and interpret?
- Is the sample size likely to lend itself to meaningful analysis?

In our case, the evaluation design considered very carefully what outcomes should be measured; even so, some measures were included that were theoretically unlikely to show change (e.g changes in adult crime rates in On Track communities) because policy priorities required it, and some measures were probably inadequately sensitive or (more often) the sample sizes too small to detect statistically significant changes. This was particularly the case in the cohort study, where the eventual number of self-identified users of On Track services was far smaller than estimated at the outset. In this respect, the design probably suffer more from 'Type II' errors (false negatives – not finding positive change when in fact there was some) than 'Type I' errors (false positives, finding more positive change than was actually the case; (Rossi, Freeman and Lipsey, 1999), in that overall relatively few notable changes stand out. However, one could argue that this makes the changes we did find, especially when triangulated (ie, found in different measures of a similar construct and/or found in more than one strand of the research), more noteworthy.

Disaggregating the effect of On Track from that of other initiatives

A final but very critical key challenge for the evaluation concerns the wider service provision environment. The last ten years or so have been busy ones in the world of community and area based initiatives. Indeed, in some areas of high deprivation there are so many different initiatives running that it becomes very difficult for evaluation to establish whether any positive changes measured are due to one or other of the interventions, or indeed to the happy co-incidence of all of them. The evaluation of On Track was no exception, here, and as the community profiling research showed (Bowers, Johnson and Hollingworth, 2008) using a list of just 25 of the most high-profile local initiatives running at the same time as On Track, the co-occurrence of other initiatives in the local areas ranged from three to nineteen co-located initiatives in addition to On Track. Thus, we must be cautious in attributing

positive change, where we find it, to On Track as a uni-causal agent. There always remains the possibility that changes identified were in fact due to other kinds of initiatives, or indeed to other mainstream services being used, about which we may know little or nothing.

2.3.3 Research objectives

With the constraints outlined above in mind, the objectives of the study are perhaps best rendered as key 'research questions', shown in Box 2.1 below, along with a summary of the main sources of data and the report Chapter(s) dealing with each question. It should be remembered that the research questions that can be addressed are constrained not just by the methods chosen and the success with which they are implemented, but also by the time frame for the evaluation and for the programme itself. In a period a little over three years from set-up to reporting, we are mostly confined to exploring the short-term impacts and effects of the programme. Longer term impacts would be feasible to measure, but would require further research activity.

Box 2.1 Research questions for the National Evaluation and Chapters in which addressed

Theme	Research question	Strand(s) providing main data	Chapter
Process and implementation	**What form(s) did On Track take, and how did this evolve over time?** (services delivered, project structures and set-up, partnerships and delivery models)	Tracking study Qual research with service providers Qual research with schools	6
	How did theory, policy, practice, and governance of the programme evolve over time?	Familiarisation Phase One evaluation Desk research Qual research with service providers Qual research with schools	1
	How many users were reached?	Tracking study	6
	What were the needs and characteristics of On Track communities and users?	Tracking study Community profiling Schools surveys Cohort study	3
	What were the main barriers and enabling factors to delivery?	Qual research with service providers Qual research with schools Qual research with service users	4,5,6
	Did On Track achieve its aspiration to deliver multiple as well as single interventions?	Tracking study Cohort study	6,13
	Did On Track achieve its aspiration to offer integrated multi-agency services?	Tracking study Qual research with service providers Qual research with schools Cohort study	4,6
	What were the staffing and workforce issues in delivering On Track?	Tracking study Qual research with service providers Qual research with schools Cohort study	5
	To what extent did On Track become 'mainstreamed' (incorporated into broader health, education and social care services) over the life of the programme?	Tracking study Qual research with service providers Qual research with schools	14
	What has been the lasting legacy of On Track in local areas?	All	4,5,6,14
Impact and outcomes	**What risk factors did On Track influence on the individual, family, peer, school and community levels?**	Tracking study Community profiling Schools surveys Cohort study Qual research with service users	7-12
	What protective factors did On Track influence at the individual, family, peer, school and community levels?	Tracking study Community profiling Schools surveys Cohort study Qual research with service users	7-12
	What other positive benefits did On Track bring?	Tracking study Community profiling Schools surveys Cohort study Qual research with service users	4,5,6,13,14

Theme	Research question	Strand(s) providing main data	Chapter
	Did some types of users or local residents benefit differently to others?	Schools surveys Cohort study Qual research with service users	13
	What was the impact of On Track on the functioning of local services and agencies, including schools?	Schools surveys Qual research with schools Qual research with service providers	4,14
	What are the questions that cannot be answered by the methods/within the timeframe of the evaluation (what still remains unknown?)	All	15
	Overall, what are the key lessons for policy and practice from the On Track 'experiment'?	All	15

2.4   Design features of the eight research strands

Each of the eight strands of the evaluation were designed to stand alone as well as to form part of an integrated design, and all but one generated a stand-alone report which was published separately. Full details of the methods and findings of each strand are provided in these reports, referenced at the end of each paragraph below and available on line at www.prb.org.uk. Below we discuss the main features of the design for each strand, as well as strengths and limitations that emerged in design or execution. Table 2.1 at the end of this section also summarises these features for easy reference.

2.4.1   Tracking study

This strand was led by a team at PRB to provide central monitoring information about each of the 24 On Track projects individually, and about the initiative as a whole. For this strand, data on the nature of interventions that existed within each On Track project, (that is, what services are actually being delivered), and on the child and adult users of each intervention (e.g. demographic characteristics, referral routes, and service history) were collected by local On Track projects and inputted locally into a bespoke database designed by the research team and known as NERO. Data were collected on over 1,100 different services offered by On Track projects, and on over 16,000 individual users, so that analysis of the aggregated data for the programme as whole was possible. The full report on findings and methods *Tracking services and users: On Track in practice* was published in June 2006 (Dinos, Tian and Solanki, with Hauari, 2006), and selected findings are discussed in Chapter Six.

Tracking study strengths and limitations

The tracking study data had the great merit of a large sample, drawn (for most variables) from the full set of 23 projects, using data provided directly by services about user characteristics and the nature of services provided. The implementation of the NERO database system was rated as a major achievement of the evaluation, and even after the research finished many On Track projects opted to continue using it for their own data collection and analysis purposes. Limitations, on the other hand, include that the data were collected and provided by projects, and therefore inevitably subject to a degree of missing data and variation in 'construct validity' (i.e, how individual service workers interpreted the questions). There were also a number of technical limitations, described in full in the strand report, including that although it was possible to collect detailed information about users of targeted services (that is, services provided on the basis of identified need), only partial data could be collected about users of universal (open-access) services. There was also a degree of undercounting of users of universal services, resulting in some underestimation of the total numbers of people using On Track over time, and some degree of inconsistency in how services were categorised into the six Home Office categories described in Chapter One.

2.4.2 Community profiling

This strand of the evaluation was led by the Jill Dando Institute for Crime Science at University College London and was intended to provide detailed descriptive and contextual data about the 24 areas in which On Track was initially implemented, and to address the question of whether On Track interventions had any impact on area-level characteristics over time. Area level data on youth offending and crime rates, health, education, and service availability were collated, in addition to census data, for the period of the initiative and where possible previous years. These data were used to both describe the communities in which On Track was operating and assess the extent to which outcomes achieved over time in On Track areas differed from outcomes in other demographically similar comparison areas where On Track was not operational. The full report on findings and methods was published in 2008 (Bowers, Johnson and Hollingworth, 2008) and selected findings are discussed in Chapter Three and Eleven.

Community profiling study strengths and limitations

The community profiling data, though drawn from datasets of official statistics held at national and local area level, also suffered from limitations. The first was a general lack of readily available high quality pre-existing data on some key variables (most notably for the very important set of data connected with youth crime). There were also incomplete time series for some variables (data were available for some years but not for others); and a lack of data for some On Track areas on certain key variables (youth crime again, for example, where we were only able to collect data on 14 out of 23 areas). A strength of this strand, on the other hand, was that local On Track area level data was compared against robustly selected comparison areas. These were identified as the wider geographic area within which On Track project

areas were contained, generally the local authority area or other administratively relevant area.

2.4.3 Cohort study of On Track service users

The cohort study was led by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) and comprised a quantitative longitudinal survey of families in On Track and Comparison areas. The survey included two waves of data collection per family, one year apart, with trained interviewers visiting households to conduct separate one-to-one survey interviews with one parent per family (the main carer) and one randomly selected child aged seven to thirteen years old. The survey questionnaires for children and for parents were designed by the evaluation team and incorporated a number of validated measures used widely by researchers working in this field. They also included a range of specially designed questions. Questions covered various sets of risk and protective factors in children's and families' lives, including child behaviour, mental health and social relationships; experiences of school; parenting attitudes and practices; parent-child relationships; and experiences of service use. The counterfactual element of the survey was an important design feature, with comparison areas selected using a statistical technique known as propensity score matching to identify areas of similar demographic make-up to On Track communities. The counterfactual was included to enable more confident attribution of measured changes amongst users in the On Track areas to the presence of On Track, rather than to the particular characteristics of the On Track users or of their communities.

In addition, in order to collect sufficient data about users of high intensity but low throughput services (for example, services such as family therapy where relatively few families are treated in each area, but the input by the services is intensive), a separate group of respondents referred to as the 'booster' sample of On Track service users was also interviewed, using the same longitudinal methodology. These people were contacted with the help of On Track projects, whereas other respondents were contacted by means of door-to-door calls by interviewing field staff in On Track areas.

Further technical information about the study and the sample design (including information on the selection of the comparison areas) can be found in Appendix 3 and full details are provided in the cohort study strand reports (Finch, Aye Maung, Jones, Tipping and Blom, with Ghate 2006a; Finch, Aye Maung, Jones, Tipping and Blom, with Ghate 2006b; Aye Maung, Parfrement and Tipping 2008a; Aye Maung, Parfrement and Tipping 2008b). In brief, in On Track areas, a randomly selected sample of over 1,300 households in 2004 yielded, by the second wave of data collection in 2005, a sample of just below 500 families. In the comparison areas (selected from the same local authority based on how well they 'matched' the On Track areas in terms of social and demographic characteristics), the equivalent figures were 1,100 households in Wave 1 and 400 households at Wave 2. Amongst the booster sample, an initial sample of 500 households was selected at Wave 1, with 200 of these completing interviews at Wave 2.

Cohort study strengths and limitations

The design of the cohort study can generally be considered extremely robust, incorporating as it did a well-designed counterfactual element and data collection at two time points. The study allowed us to compare findings for two 'On Track' samples:

(1) a sample of residents in On Track areas -'the *On Track area* sample'- who included both users and non-users of On Track services; and (2) a sample of self-identified *On Track service users*; with (3) a rigorously selected sample of residents in matched 'comparison' areas, the *'comparison'* sample, selected to be similar to On Track areas in all respects except that they had no access to On Track services. The fourth *'booster'* sample of service users added a further dimension to the study. These families and children had generally higher levels of need than other groups in the study, and represent the families who had, arguably, the most to gain from participating in a programme like On Track.

 Two Waves of data were collected from a cohort (or panel) of respondents: Wave One (collected in 2004) and Wave Two (collected in 2005). Because both Waves took place in the middle of Phase Two of the programme, these waves do <u>not</u> represent pre- and post-test periods, or the 'before' and 'after' period of intervention. Rather, they give an indication of 'earlier' and 'later' impacts of On Track, albeit over a rather short follow-up period.   Because of the considerably detailed data collected (from one parent and from one randomly selected child in the On Track age range per household), the analysis of the cohort study allowed us to control (hold constant) certain intervening variables such as age, sex, socio-economic status, ethnicity etc, so that when comparing groups it was easier to be sure that any differences observed were due to the presence or absence of On Track, rather than to some other factor(s). It also allowed us to estimate the exact degree of change between Waves, over time, at the individual and family level, so that all analyses using cohort study data are about change over time and thus give a relatively direct picture of the impact of On Track. Results from the cohort study shown later in this report in Chapters Seven to Twelve include tables that show 'difference' scores between two Waves of data collection, which give an indication of the relative direction and magnitude of change over time in the different groups. Further technical detail on analytic procedures is also appended (Appendix 3) to assist in the interpretation of tables that appear later in this report.

However, despite careful planning, the cohort study suffered from the common ailment of being analytically 'underpowered' in statistical terms (ie, numbers in some sub groups were too small to detect any except the largest differences between groups; see Aye Maung et al, 2008b). This was the result of difficulties on two fronts. First, the estimates derived from Phase One evaluation data on the proportion of On Track users likely to be found in the wider population of On Track area residents proved to be considerable overestimates. Whereas the available data at Phase One appeared to indicate On Track 'penetration rates' could be as high as 70%, in the final

event, only around 14% of residents in On Track areas identified themselves to the cohort study as On Track users. This led to smaller than predicted numbers of families in the On Track users group generally and amongst secondary school-aged children in particular, and means that differences between groups have to be relatively large to reach statistical significance. This also heightened the risk of what statisticians refer to as 'Type II' errors in the analysis – ie, overlooking genuine positive results because numbers are too small to reveal them mathematically. In addition, the relatively short follow-up period of one year will have reduced the likelihood of finding substantial changes between Waves of data collection. A final limitation of this strand was that the 'booster' sample was of unknown representativeness, since it was sampled not by probability methods but from On Track project records. For data protection reasons, the records made available to us had first been sifted by whether users had given consent to be approached by the research team – a process that was variably administered and in some projects yielded no consenting users whatever – making the sample something of an unknown quantity in terms of how well it reflected the overall characteristics of users in each project; see Finch et al, 2006 and Finch et al, 2006 for further discussion. The main analytic consequence of this is that the booster sample results are not generally tested for statistical significance since these tests require randomly-distributed samples.

2.4.4 Schools surveys – two studies

These strands of the evaluation were led by the Policy Research Bureau and replicated two schools surveys conducted during Phase One (fieldwork in 2001). In Phase Two (fieldwork in 2004), it involved a representative survey of around 7,500 primary school children and around 12,500 secondary school pupils attending schools in On Track areas. Children self-completed questionnaires in schools in supervised sessions under 'exam conditions' (ie, no conferring), with the same questionnaires used in Phase One repeated in Phase Two. For primary school aged children the questionnaire was one designed by the University of Sheffield in Phase One; for secondary school pupils a questionnaire designed by Communities that Care was used; see Armstrong et al, (2005) for more details. The aim of the strand was to investigate the characteristics of the child population in On Track areas, in terms of a constellation of risk and protective factors. Thus the surveys asked children to self-report on truancy, involvement in antisocial behaviour of various kinds, exposure to drugs, tobacco and alcohol, and victimisation experiences (bullying etc); and on enjoyment of and attachment to school, home relationships, out of school activities and perception of the local neighbourhood. By comparing the results from the Phase One survey with the 2004 data, it was possible to investigate the degree to which risk and protective factors had improved or worsened in the schools in On Track areas. The full reports on findings and methods were published in April 2006 (Bhabra, Dinos and Ghate 2006a, 2006b), and data are used throughout this report and especially in Chapters Seven to Thirteen, below.

Schools surveys strengths and limitations

Key strengths of the schools surveys included the large numbers (20,000 children in all at Wave 2, 31,000 at Wave 1), which meant that even substantively small differences between groups and over time would show up as statistically significant. In addition (and more important even than size of sample) was the fact that comparisons with data on the wider school population in On Track areas showed that the sampled schools were robustly representative. Thus, the estimates generated by the children taking part in the schools survey can generally be considered to be good approximations of the results that would have been obtained if we had surveyed every child in every school in the local area and not just the sample in our selected schools (see Bhabra et al, 2006a p14, and 2006b p13 for further details). Also, the data were collected at two time points, relatively far apart (2001, 2004), allowing much more time than the cohort study design to measure changes in the populations in parallel with the development of the On Track programme.

Limitations of the school surveys include that the two samples were not a single cohort of children but two separate or 'cross sectional' samples; that we had no control or comparison group of schools from non-On Track areas; and that due to the absence of certain key markers in the Wave 1 dataset (most critically, no marker to identify the school or project area to which children were attached), we were unable to carry out any analysis of change over time by On Track project area – a factor which becomes particularly limiting in analyses where we explore the relationship between project 'reach' and various outcome measures in Chapter Thirteen. Large samples, though more powerful, are also prone to so-called 'Type I' errors, where false positive results are more likely. In addition, the survey questionnaires used to collect self-report data from young people at both Waves contained scales (for example, a scale measuring the degree of antisocial and offending behaviour) in which different questions believed to measure the same construct were combined. Whilst this is good practice insofar as it represents an efficient strategy for collecting and analysing data about complex constructs, and the composition of the scales was theory-driven, the scales were of unknown psychometric properties and were not as far as we know subject to full validation (see Bhabra et al, 2006a, 2006b). Finally, and perhaps more importantly, because project user details and schools survey data could not be matched on a case-by-case basis due to data protection restrictions, we do not know to what degree the sample of young people were themselves On Track service users, in direct contact with On Track projects. All we can say with confidence is that the children taking part were at schools located in On Track project areas (in other words, the schools survey samples are an 'intent to treat' population).

2.4.5 Qualitative research among On Track service users

Also led by NatCen, forty families in six areas who had already participated in the cohort study also partook in a qualitative follow-up study in early 2006. This study explored a range of factors that included the reasons why families and children engaged

with On Track services in the first place, their background circumstances and the extent to which services actually met their needs. The qualitative study used one to one depth interviewing and also explored user perceptions of which services received were most or least useful, what impact parents and children felt the services had upon them, and how different interventions could be improved and tailored more precisely to families' needs. The full report on findings and methods *Families' views and experiences of On Track – Qualitative research with services users* was published in January 2008 (Grewal, White, and Corlyon, with Graham, Woodfield, Hauari and Ghate 2008).

2.4.6 Qualitative research among On Track service providers and stakeholders

This strand of the research was led by Natcen and was intended to throw light on the process and implementation aspects of On Track: how the projects developed, were staffed, delivered and managed. Using qualitative depth interviews and focus group methods, it explored the perspectives of 46 service workers, mangers and external 'stakeholders' in a sample of six projects, selected as exemplars of different project types and models, to reflect a cross-section of the different variants of On Track structure and delivery. Aspects of practice development and service staff perspectives on what worked well and what proved less effective were explored. The full reports on findings and methods were published in June 2006 (Graham, Corlyon, Bhabra, Woodfield, Hauari and Ghate 2006).

2.4.7 Qualitative research on schools' perspectives

This strand of the research was led by PRB and revolved around a single carefully planned and co-ordinated event held in early 2006, run much like a day conference, to which all primary schools in On Track areas were invited. Overall, 21 schools sent thirty four personnel (including 20 head teachers), who participated in a series of moderated group discussions, interactive, themed 'workshop' sessions and a plenary session. The data collected provided insights into how On Track was operating in different schools, schools' perspectives on enabling factors and barriers to implementation, and school views on the impact of On Track. There is no separate report on this strand, but findings have been integrated into this report.

Qualitative study strands strengths and limitations

The qualitative strands of the research were important contributors of user and service provider perspectives and enabled us to understand in more detail how On Track services were managed, delivered and experienced. Their strengths are contained in the 'first hand' accounts provided and the way in which they elaborated and expanded upon as well as contextualised data collected through the various quantitative strands of the evaluation.

The six areas chosen for the research amongst users and service providers were selected carefully to provide a range of different types of On Track area and project structures. However, in only being able to include six out of 24 areas it is almost inevitable that some of the diversity inherent in the programme was missed or glossed over. It may also be that the respondents who participated in the qualitative studies were not comprehensively reflective of the full diversity of On Track users, workers and schools,

and it is possible that those who felt more positive about On Track were more likely to agree to take part in demanding and time consuming qualitative interviews and discussion groups than those who felt negative or indifferent. We have no reason to think that that was the case, but it is a possibility that cannot be discounted. On the other hand, in addition to the formal research activities, the research team also had many other 'qualitative' contacts with all On Track projects over the course of the four years of researching Phase Two of the programme. These were accomplished through consultation meetings, site visits, day to day contacts for administration of the evaluation, whilst installing and trouble shooting the tracking strand database, and through validation meetings and telephone calls and conferences when projects were asked to assess the extent to which emergent findings of the research were plausible. Our sense, confirmed by a validation panel of On Track managers who read and commented on the draft report, is that though some of the fine detail and sophistication of the programme's operation may have eluded us, the big picture has been captured with fair accuracy.

Table 2.1 overleaf provides a summary of the key design features, strengths and limitations of the various strands of the evaluation.

Table 2.1	Summary of key features of the research strands, and their strengths and limitations			
Strand	*Type of data*	*Data source and sample*	*Strengths*	*Limitations*
Schools surveys	• **Quantitative** • Longitudinal - 2 waves: 2001 & 2004 • All On Track areas	• Self report **by school aged children** (n20,000) **in schools in On Track areas** (n12,682 in secondary school; n7,433 in primary school) • Collected by supervised self-completed survey in schools	• Robust representative sample of child population in On Track areas • Large sample - high statistical power • Longitudinal – shows change over time • Child perspectives	• No counterfactual element (comparison or control group) • Cross sectional samples (not same children) • Large sample increases chances of 'Type I' statistical errors (false positives) • Indirect measure of impact: schools were in On Track areas, but individual children not necessarily On Track users • Degree of missing information at Wave 1 • Self-report data (not independently verified)
Tracking study	• **Quantitative** • Continuous - late 2003-mid 2005 • All On Track projects	• Local project records on **users** (n16,761) **of local services** (n1,103), inputted into NERO Tracking system • Quarterly returns	• Records data direct from projects • Good demographic and risk profile data • Detailed data on users of targeted services • Large sample - high statistical power	• Less detail on users of universal services • No details on 'dosage' for universal services • Degree of missing data • Degree of data validity issues (e.g variable interpretation of Home Office categories)
Cohort study	• **Quantitative** • Longitudinal - 2 waves: 2004 & 2005 • All On Track areas	• Self report by parents and children **resident in On Track areas** (n468 by Wave 2, of which n133 were **On Track users**) plus n215 **High intensity** ('booster sample') **users** and **Comparison matched area residents** (n426) • Community sample, boosted by sample drawn from (some) project records • Face-to-face computer-assisted personal and self interviews (CAPI, CASI)	• Representative sample (but see right) of residents of On Track areas, and OT users • Booster sample gives info on users of high intensity services • Robust counterfactual element (comparison areas rigorously selected using propensity score matching) • Longitudinal - shows change over time • Cohort design - shows impact at individual users level • Analysis of change between waves controlled for range of independent variables, so specific impact of living in On Track area or being a service user could be identified • User perspectives (parent and child)	• Smaller than anticipated proportion of users and lower response rates led to small overall sample of On Track users and lowered statistical power to detect difference between groups • Booster sample of unknown representativeness – selected from sub-set of projects' records. Results for this group therefore subject to unknown degree of response bias. • Likely to underestimate degree of On Track usage due to difficulties for user identifying service providers • Self-report data (not independently verified)

Table 2.1 continued				
Strand	*Type of data*	*Data source and sample*	*Strengths*	*Limitations*
Community Profiling study	• **Quantitative** • Continuous, time series data • All On Track areas	• **Official statistics** from national and local data sources • Collated by researchers	• Robust counterfactual element (comparison areas rigorously selected) • Robust data sources (LEA, census etc)	• Limited standardised data across full period of evaluation (some time series curtailed or incomplete) • Some data sources more reliable than others – in particular, data on youth offending not ideal quality • Limited data on some On Track areas and for some variables
Qualitative study of users	• **Qualitative** • Followed up surveyed families in 6 On Track areas	• Face to face depth interviews with **parents** (n36) **and children** (n20) **using On Track**	• Exploration of impact w/individual examples • User perspectives	• Users unable to clearly identify On Track services • Limited sample size may not capture full range of user views
Qualitative study of service providers	• **Qualitative** • Sample of 6 On Track projects	• Depth interviews and group discussions with **On Track managers** (n6), **frontline** workers (n40) and **stakeholders** (n35)	• Exploration of impact w/'case study' examples • Service providers' perspectives • External agencies' perspectives	• Limited range of projects covered (n6/23) – may not capture full local diversity • Worker perspectives (may not be impartial)
Study of schools' perspectives	• **Qualitative** • Sample of 21 primary schools in 11 On Track areas	• Interactive workshops and qualitative group discussions with **Head Teachers** (n20) and **other school personnel** (n14)	• School personnel perspectives • Concrete examples of benefits and challenges of On Track for schools	• Sample of 11/23 areas may not have captured full local diversity • Secondary schools not included

2.4.8 Analysis issues and how the strand datasets are used to explore impact on users and communities in this report

Later in this report, we discuss the evidence of impact of On Track on users and communities by weaving together and synthesising the findings from the various strands of research that made up the National Evaluation study in Phase Two. To do this we use a combination of descriptive and interpretive analysis including the use of multivariate statistical techniques as well as qualitative data. Evidence in relation to risk and protective factors is examined across all the published strand reports and findings are compared and contrasted to isolate main messages and areas of agreement or disagreement between strands. We also carry out further new analyses combining data from the tracking strand, the schools surveys strand and community profiling study in order to explore impact from new angles and to expand our understanding of the ways in which On Track worked.

This is a relatively challenging and ambitious undertaking, involving as it does weighing evidence from eight separate strands – five quantitative and three qualitative studies – each of which explored On Track from a different perspective. The task is akin to completing a complex jigsaw, where the key pieces are scattered throughout the different strands, and where different configurations of pieces produce different pictures of how On Track was working. In addition, as discussed above, because of a range of methodological challenges for the study including limitations in our ability to capture the complex reality of the intervention and the timescale for the evaluation, some of the key pieces of the jigsaw are missing and must be inferred from the patterns of the closest neighbouring pieces. And as any experienced researcher knows, though 'triangulation' (used here in the sense of collating data about the same things from different sources) is a highly desirable model for research, triangulated data do not always behave themselves as the researcher might wish! Indeed, they can be quite recalcitrant, with the findings not only not clearly supporting one another, but sometimes seeming to be in direct contradiction. Under these circumstances, it may be as much a matter of judgement as science how we weigh the evidence, and how we reconcile (or not, as the case may be) conflicting messages in the data.

One way of dealing with this issue is to privilege certain types of data over others in terms of 'robustness', and in the measurement of impact in particular, scientists generally agree that some research designs count for more in this respect. The Scientific Maryland Scale (SMS) for example, ranks study designs in terms of five levels, of which the most robust level five is the (quantitative) randomised controlled trial (RCT; see Farrington, Gottfredson, Sherman and Welsh 2002). Studies at level five typically involve a counterfactual (comparison or control group, against which results for a 'treated' group can be compared); collection of data at multiple time points (e.g before and after an intervention, and at a later follow-up point); and critically, random assignment to the 'treatment' or 'comparison' group so that results

can be more confidently attributed to the presence or absence of treatment rather than to other differences between the groups. However, quantitative studies at level four (the next level down) which involve so-called quasi-experimental designs (involving the use of comparison groups and multiple time points for data collection, but not random allocation to groups) are often taken as the next best thing, especially in studies of community-based interventions where RCTs are relatively uncommon.

In the case of the National Evaluation of On Track, the longitudinal cohort study occupies this level four 'top spot', and the community profiling strand also utilised a robust quasi- experimental methodology comparing results in On Track areas with those in similar comparison areas. Accordingly, we have focused particularly strongly on the findings from these studies when exploring impact, though as noted earlier we frequently encountered analytic limitations arising from the small number of cases in the cohort study and from incomplete data in the community profiling study. On the other hand, the schools study did not have a counterfactual element, but it did involve data collection at two time points, from two robustly representative and large samples of local school children, and was blessed with high statistical power. Similarly though the data from the tracking study is imperfect on a number of fronts, it did have the merit of giving a fairly comprehensive picture of a large number of On Track users and the services they utilised. These two studies have also been used, therefore, to contribute to the analysis of impact where appropriate.

In addition to using quantitative data on impact we have also drawn liberally from evidence from other qualitative strands of the research. This is partly because quantitative data by definition misses much of the detail we need to really 'make sense' of findings. For this, we need to look at qualitative data and to other contextual and background sources of information. So, we have considered evidence (pieces of the jigsaw) from all eight strands of the research, and weighed the extent to which they confirmed or disconfirmed each other. Some strands have contributed relatively more to the overall picture of impact, but all have been mined as thoroughly as possible to help elucidate what turns out to be a very complex picture. In this respect, data from the quantitative strands generally provides the framework or 'skeleton' for considering impact and findings from the qualitative studies are mostly used to fill in the details and 'add flesh' to their meaning.

Thus, in this report we have drawn on data from all strands to illuminate the workings of On Track, though we have tried to remain cautious in our interpretations and conclusions regarding the likely impact of the programme, bearing in mind the limitations in the quality of the data available. Scientifically, we share a number of limitations in common with other large scale evaluations of community-based interventions in recent years, and have no doubt added some of our own unique limitations too. However, at the same time the multi-strand design

has yielded a very rich and multi-faceted picture of On Track as a programme. In choosing not to shy away from exploration of impact despite the weaknesses of our data relative to scientific ideals, we were able to travel a satisfying distance along the path to understanding the effectiveness of On Track, in addition to the more usual discussions of implementation issues that characterise evaluation reports. An earlier draft of this report was extensively peer-reviewed by scientific and practice experts, and we are most grateful for their insightful critiques, which have informed this final draft and hopefully improved it. Most encouragingly, a validation panel of On Track project managers confirmed that the overall picture of On Track presented in this 'synthetic' report was recognisable and accurate, which gives us confidence that the conclusions presented are valid, even granted that much still remains unknown about how On Track and other similar programmes can be made to work even better.

Chapter Three: The community context of On Track

3.1   Introduction

The primary purpose of this chapter is to 'set the stage' for the On Track initiative, by describing the community context of all 24 On Track project areas in the year 2000 when the initiative was originally introduced. The characteristics of the On Track communities are examined in terms of population structures, the extent of deprivation, local rates of crime and antisocial behaviour, and the degree to which other community initiatives (such as Sure Start, Building Safer Communities, etc.) operated within their areas, and comparisons with national data are made. As will become clear, the baseline profile of the On Track communities in aggregate reveals a consistent picture of substantial deprivation and disadvantage relative both to national and more local averages. However, there was also substantial diversity *between* the On Track areas. In the interests of economy, the chapter mostly presents summary data, but detailed data tables that relate to this chapter can be found in Appendix 2. The data are drawn from several sources, including: data collected at the local level for the community profiling study; national datasets including Census 2001 and the General Household Survey (GHS) 2003; and data from the schools surveys and the cohort study.

3.2   Geographic location of On Track projects

In December 1999, the Home Office invited 80 Local Authority Areas in England and Wales to bid to deliver the On Track programme on the basis of their ranking in the Index of Local Deprivation (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004). Funding was made available to aid the bidding process, so that local authorities with greater resources for writing and producing the application were not unfairly biased, and seventy-six local authorities subsequently submitted bids. By May 2000, the Family Policy Unit of the Home Office had selected 24 local areas via a process that considered the quality of the submission, the location of the bid (to ensure geographical representation), and local area demographics including crime rates. In addition, the Home Office looked for evidence that project areas had the potential to develop strong multi-agency partnerships, as well as successfully engage their local communities. Twenty four areas that became 'On Track projects' were then awarded funding to provide services targeted at smaller catchment areas within their respective Local Authority boundaries, each intended to contain approximately 2,000 children aged between four and twelve years old. Figure 3.1 provides an example of how a project could define its area within its greater local authority boundary (in this case, the Wirral, in the Merseyside region). It should be noted that On Track project catchment areas were not necessarily designed to map onto existing administrative boundaries, and indeed were subject to a degree of ongoing re-definition by projects as time went on, reflecting projects' own experiences of what constituted practical geographic units for their work. Although in fact the boundaries of On Track project areas in Phase Two of the initiative were discovered to map fairly well onto the new

Super Output Areas (SOAs) defined for the Census 2001 it was not ever the intention that On Track areas should map onto existing administrative boundaries relevant to education, health or other public services.

Figure 3.1 Wirral On Track area and Wirral Local Authority District (Source: Bowers et al, 2008)
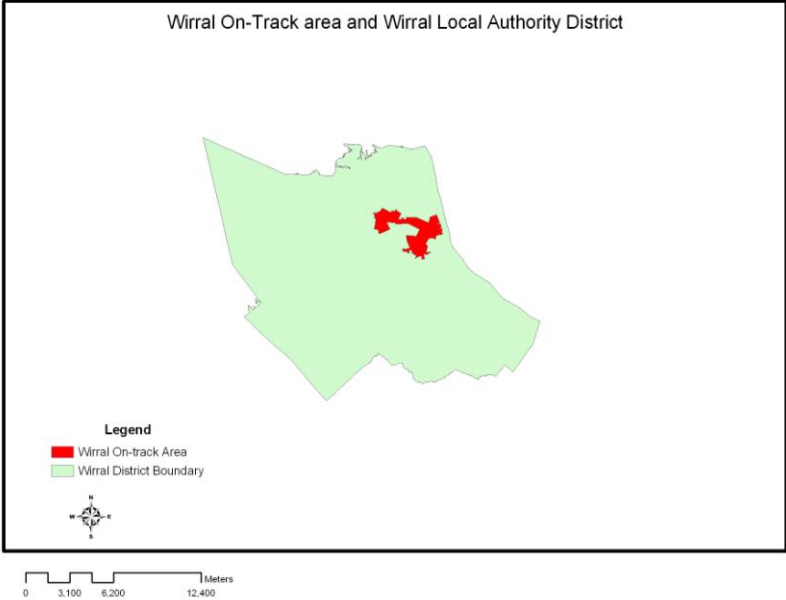
Figure 3.2 shows the location of the On Track projects across England and Wales. It shows that there was fair representation of projects in the north, south and middle of the UK, with a clustering of multiple projects in Greater London and Greater Manchester. Both of the On Track projects in Wales were located in the southern part of the region. It is important to note that the projects varied considerably in terms of their geographic coverage. For instance, the Bridgend project covered a 42.4 km area, as opposed to the Brent and Bradford projects, which covered only 2.3 km each. These variations represent substantial differences in terms of population density, reflecting whether the project was located in an urban or rural location.

Figure 3.2 Distribution of On Track project areas across England and Wales

Sunderland
(pop: 18,627)

Easington
(pop: 17,428)

Scarborough
(pop: 6,692)

Rochdale
(pop: 8,496)

Bradford
(pop: 17,060)

Wirral
(pop: 26,380)

Oldham
(pop: 6,984)

Manchester
(pop: 9,440)

Sheffield
(pop: 17,314)

Sandwell
(pop: 7,320)

Solihull
(pop: 19,006)

Northampton
(pop: 21,535)

Haverhill
(pop: 28,512)

Rhondda
(pop: 12,566)

Luton
(pop: 18,793)

Bridgend
(pop: 20,995)

Brent
(pop: 19,225)

Bristol
(pop: 11,005)

Haringey
(pop: 32,403)

Portsmouth
(pop: 17,534)

Greenwich
(pop: 11,299)

Southwark
(pop: 14,447)

Kerrier
(pop: 14,325)

Brighton
(pop: 20,706)

3.3   Population structures

In order to understand the communities that On Track projects served, demographic statistics on each project's catchment area were gathered from the 2001 Census. The following sections provide a collective overview of the characteristics of the On Track areas in terms of age, ethnicity and family structure, achieved by identifying the SOA(s) that most closely approximated the project catchment area and using these figures as an approximate guide to the On Track area population.

3.3.1 Age

Table 3.1 provides an overview of the number of residents living within each of the twenty four On Track areas, as well as a breakdown of their age using the 2001 Census data.

Table 3.1 Age of population in On Track areas (Source: Census 2001)														
On Track area	Population	0-4 years		5-9 years		10-14 years		15-17 years		18-19 years		20 & above	
		%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Bradford	17,060	11	1876	11	1876	10	1706	6	1023	3	512	59	10,065
Brent	19,225	8	1538	9	1730	9	1730	5	961	3	577	66	12,688
Bridgend	20,995	6	1260	6	1260	7	1470	4	840	2	420	70	15,746
Brighton	20,706	7	1449	8	1656	7	1449	4	828	2	414	72	14,908
Bristol	11,005	8	880	8	880	8	880	5	550	2	220	69	7,593
Easington	17,428	6	1046	7	1212	8	1394	4	697	2	349	72	12,548
Greenwich	11,299	9	1017	7	791	7	792	4	452	2	226	71	8,022
Haringey	32,403	8	2592	8	2592	7	2268	4	1296	3	972	69	22,358
Haverhill	28,512	7	1996	7	1996	7	1996	3	855	2	570	75	21,384
Kerrier	14,325	6	860	6	860	7	1003	4	573	2	287	76	10,887
Luton	18,793	10	1879	9	1691	9	1691	6	1127	4	752	63	11,840
Manchester	9,440	7	661	8	755	8	755	4	378	2	189	70	6,608
Northampton	21,535	8	1723	9	1937	9	1937	5	1,077	3	646	66	14,213
Oldham	6,984	8	559	8	559	7	489	5	349	2	140	70	4,889
Portsmouth	17,534	7	1227	6	1402	9	1578	5	877	2	351	68	11,923
Rhondda	12,566	6	754	6	754	8	1005	4	503	3	377	73	9,173
Rochdale	8,496	6	510	8	680	8	680	5	425	3	255	70	5,947
Sandwell	7,320	7	512	7	512	7	512	4	293	3	220	72	5,270
Scarborough	6,692	8	535	9	602	9	602	5	335	2	134	67	4,484
Sheffield	17,314	8	1385	8	1385	7	1212	4	693	2	346	71	12,293
Solihull	19,006	7	1339	9	1711	9	1711	5	950	2	380	68	12,924
Southwark	14,447	8	1156	7	1011	7	1011	4	578	2	289	72	10,402
Sunderland	18,627	6	1118	6	1117	7	1304	4	745	3	559	74	13,784
Wirral	26,380	7	1846	7	1846	8	2119	5	1319	3	791	70	18,466
On Track average	**16,586**	**8**	**1327**	**8**	**1327**	**8**	**1327**	**4**	**663**	**3**	**498**	**70**	**12,926**

These findings suggest that On Track projects differed widely in terms of the number of people living within their boundaries – from as few as 6,692 in Scarborough and as many as 32,403 in Haringey. There was also wide variation between the programmes in terms of the children living within their areas who were in the target age group. Although it was not possible to get precise Census statistics within the specified 4 – 12 year old age range at which the On Track initiative was targeted, we can see from the table that the number of children aged 5-14 ranged from as few as 1,024 in Sandwell to 4,860 in Haringey. However, although absolute numbers varied from one area to the next, overall proportions of children in the different age groups were more or less similar across the 24 areas, with the exception of the two areas with the highest Asian populations (Bradford and Luton) where proportions of younger children were notably higher.

3.3.2 Ethnicity

Table 3.2 provides an overview of the ethnic make-up of the 24 On Track areas using the 2001 Census data. The 16 Census ethnicity categories were collapsed into the five broad categories of White, Asian, Black, Mixed Race and Chinese. The last two rows

of Table 3.2 also show the average ethnic make-up of all On Track areas and the national average as found in the Census 2001.

Table 3.2 Ethnicity of population in On Track areas (Source: Census 2001)						
		Ethnic Profile				
On Track Area	Population	White %	Asian %	Black %	Mixed Race %	Chinese %
Bradford	17,060	29	68	1	2	0
Brent	19,225	34	13	45	5	3
Bridgend	20,995	99	0	0	0	0
Brighton	20,706	97	1	1	1	1
Bristol	11,005	94	2	2	2	1
Easington	17,428	99	0	0	0	0
Greenwich	11,299	66	6	21	3	4
Haringey	32,403	48	7	36	5	3
Haverhill	28,512	98	0	1	1	0
Kerrier	14,325	99	0	0	0	0
Luton	18,793	30	59	8	2	1
Manchester	9,440	92	2	2	2	1
Northampton	21,535	88	4	4	3	2
Oldham	6,984	82	2	15	1	0.35
Portsmouth	17,534	98	1	0	1	1
Rhondda	12,566	99	0	0	0	0
Rochdale	8,496	96	1	1	1	0
Sandwell	7,320	82	11	4	3	0
Scarborough	6,692	99	0	0	0	0
Sheffield	17,314	68	26	2	2	1
Solihull	19,006	94	0	2	3	0
Southwark	14,447	44	3	46	4	3
Sunderland	18,627	99	1	0	0	0
Wirral	26,380	97	1	0	1	1
On Track average	**16,586**	**80**	**9**	**7**	**2**	**1**
National average#	**52,041,916**	**91**	**4**	**2**	**1**	*****

Base: Residents in On Track areas
\# Figures taken from the Census 2001

Across all On Track areas, 80% of the population was of White background, 9% Asian background and 7% Black background. Compared to the figures from the GHS 2003, the data show that as an initiative, On Track was located in areas with relatively fewer residents from White backgrounds and relatively more from other groups. However, the 'On Track average' figures clearly disguise the wide variation in ethnic makeup of the different project areas. For example, in Easington, 99% of the population was White; in Bradford and Luton, the majority of the population was Asian (68% and 59% respectively); a large proportion of the Brent (45%), Greenwich (21%), Haringey (36%) and Southwark (46%) populations were of Black background. These differences underscore the wide variation between On Track projects, as well as the extent to which their populations differ from the national profile.

3.3.3 Family structure

Data from the 2001 Census suggested that on average, 16% of all households in On Track areas were headed by lone parents, which is considerably higher than the national average of 10% (see Table A2.1 in Appendix 2 for details).

3.4   Extent of deprivation and need – various indicators

In order to understand the extent of need or deprivation within each On Track area, various indicators, such as IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation) ranking, employment, income, car ownership, housing, adult educational attainment and number of vulnerable children were investigated. As has been noted earlier, the On Track areas did not map precisely onto other administrative area units. The most appropriate approximate comparator was therefore selected to be district level (Local Authority level). Where appropriate, we also draw for illustrative purposes on data from the cohort study at Wave 1 (Finch et al, 2006a), which surveyed a representative sample of families with young children in On Track areas.

3.4.1   Overall deprivation and child poverty indicators

Table 3.3 shows the ranking by the English Indices of Deprivation in 2000 and 2004 for each On Track area, as well as their Child Poverty Score ranking in 2000. For both indices a score of one indicates the highest level of deprivation and a score of 500 the lowest.

It can be seen that the majority of On Track areas (n20) fell within the top 100 most deprived local authorities at both points in time, and all On Track areas fell within the top 200 in the year 2000, when the original On Track areas were selected. The median District Deprivation Rankings for all On Track areas is 48.5 (63.5 for the Child Poverty Index) for year 2000 and 50 for year 2004, illustrating that the On Track areas were indeed highly deprived.

Table 3.3 District Deprivation ranking and Child poverty ranking (Source: The English Indices of Deprivation 2000 and 2004)			
Local authority area in which On Track area located	District Deprivation Ranking (2004)	District Deprivation Ranking (2000)	Child Poverty Score Ranking (2000)
Bradford	31	42	16
Brent	92	78	74
Bridgend*	-	-	-
Brighton	87	110	111
Bristol	71	83	97
Easington	7	6	25
Greenwich	41	47	39
Haringey	10	28	12
Haverhill (St Edmundsbury)	293	158	254
Kerrier	119	49	73
Luton	95	88	89
Manchester	4	4	5
Northampton	115	158	139
Oldham	36	39	19
Portsmouth	90	117	85
Rhondda*	-	-	-
Rochdale	29	31	22
Sandwell	16	19	26
Scarborough	89	94	91
Sheffield	51	48	82
Solihull	124	69	206
Southwark	13	12	24
Sunderland	23	26	36
Wirral	49	57	54
Median	50	48.5	63.5

* Areas in Wales

3.4.2 Unemployment

Employment data from Census 2001 suggests that on average, 10% of the population in On Track areas were unemployed - twice the national rate of 5%. It also reveals large differences between the On Track areas in terms of unemployment, with Bradford reporting a very high rate of 18% and Brighton reporting below the national average at 4% (see Table A2. 2 in Appendix 2 for details).

In order to understand the kinds of employment heads of households in On Track area engaged in, those participating in the cohort study that surveyed residents of On Track areas (Finch et al, 2006a) were asked to state their current occupation, or their previous occupation if they were unemployed. The National Statistics of Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) system was then used to compare of the kinds of employment held by residents in On Track areas with what is reported in the 2003 General Household Survey.

The findings (see Table A2.3 in Appendix 2 for details) suggest that On Track areas differ sharply from those reported for the country in the GHS, with the majority of heads of households in On Track reporting that they were in supervisory, semi-routine and routine occupations, as well as never having been employed. Conversely, On Track families were less likely (only 20%) to report having a professional or managerial position compared to the national average of 32%.

3.4.3 Household income

Residents in On Track areas participating in the cohort study (Finch et al, 2006a) were also asked to estimate their family's gross total income in terms of weekly, monthly and annual amounts. Eighty-nine per cent of parents gave an answer to this question. The findings provide further evidence of the high degree of deprivation experienced by families in On Track areas. Although the proportion of very low income families (less than £5,000 a year) was similar to what was reported nationally in the 2003 General Household Survey, only just over quarter of families in the On Track areas (27%) had incomes over £20,000 compared with 65% of all families in the General Household Survey. Conversely, the proportion of families earning less than £15,000 was almost twice the national average, with 51% of all On Track families reporting that they earned £15,000 or less compared to the 26% reported by the general population. (See Table A2.4 in Appendix 2 for details).

3.4.4 Car ownership

Car ownership is another way of understanding relative levels of deprivation and affluence, although this measure is also linked to geographic area of residence, with urban areas generally reporting less car ownership. Data from the Census 2001 show that households located in On Track areas are much less likely to own one car, let alone two or more cars, than the national average. By and large, however, car ownership was higher in rural areas and lower in urban levels, as might be expected (see Table A2.5 in Appendix 2 for details).

3.4.5 Housing

The cohort survey of residents of On Track areas asked participants to indicate whether they rented from their council, a housing association or privately, or if they owned their home through a mortgage. The figures (see Table A2.7 in Appendix 2 for details) suggest that the tenure profile of families in On Track areas differed notably from that for the total population (as indicated by recent data for families with children, taken from the General Household Survey). Compared to families in the population as a whole, On Track areas contained far fewer families that owned their homes, with over twice as many as the national average renting from social landlords. Table A2.7 in Appendix 2 shows these data, and Table A2.6 shows further data about housing type).

3.4.6   Adult educational attainment

Data from the 2001 Census was used to consider the percentage of those over the age of 16 living in On Track areas that did not have GCSE or higher educational qualifications.   On average, 41% of the population aged 16 or above in On Track areas are without any qualifications. This is much higher than the 2001 national average of 30%. The percentage were particularly high in Rochdale (56%), Manchester (55%) and Bradford (52%) (see Table A2.8 in Appendix 2 for details).

3.4.7   Vulnerable children: child protection registration rates and looked after children

Data relating to the number of children placed on the child protection register (CPR) and the rates of children 'looked after' by the local authority as a result of family breakdown were also explored. These data can be used as proxy indicators for rates of child vulnerability, though we should bear in mind that differences may reflect local practice variations as much as 'true' variation at the area level.

In the community profiling study (Bowers et al, 2008) data for the local authority area in which each On Track project was located was collected to consider the number of vulnerable children living within or adjacent to On Track areas. The rates of children under 18 (per 1000) on the child protection register and the number of continuously looked after children for each On Track district level (the project area level was not available) for the year 2000 are summarised in Table A2.9 in Appendix 2.

The data suggest that On Track areas collectively experienced higher than average rates of registration on the CPR during the year 2000, with an On Track area average of 3 children per 1,000, slightly higher than the national rate of 2.7 children per 1,000. However, it is also apparent that the On Track average was driven by seven project areas that experienced a particularly high registration rate of 4 children per 1,000.

The data also suggest that there were typically many more looked after children living within On Track areas, with a mean rate of 9 per 1,000, which is almost twice as high as the national average. However, once again there was a high degree of variation between the On Track areas.

3.5   Crime and antisocial behaviour

As described in Chapter One, the Home Office envisaged On Track as a way of tackling the propensity for youth offending. To this end, the Home Office required projects to provide details of their local crime and offending rates as part of their delivery plans, as well as set targets for reducing youth offending rates. This section provides an overview of the data collected from the community profiling strand of

the evaluation that considers crime rates, youth offending, and antisocial behaviour in all On Track areas during the year 2000 (Bowers et al, 2008). Children's self-reported antisocial behaviour (as collected through the schools surveys (Bhabra et al, 2006a and 2006b) and the cohort study (Finch et al, 2006a) is also included where relevant.

3.5.1 Crime in general

On Track area crime rates for recorded crime at the Basic Command Unit level, which includes annual statistics regarding property crime (theft of car; theft from car; residential burglary) and violent crime (sexual offences; robbery; violence against the person) showed that compared to the national average, On Track areas had much higher rates in all categories, especially with regard to vehicle-related theft. A high degree of diversity between the On Track areas in terms of their overall crime rates is also evident. For example, the Manchester On Track area experienced relatively high crime rates across all the crime categories, whereas Haverhill, Kerrier and Scarborough experienced relatively little crime, even when compared with the national average. In addition, the projects differed in terms of the kinds of crimes that were problematic. For example, Southwark appeared to have particularly high rates of violent crime, but not property crime. In contrast, Rochdale appeared to have high rates of property crime, but not violent crime. The actual numbers of crimes committed per 1,000 residents for the year 2000 are presented in Table A2.10 in Appendix 2.

3.5.2 Youth offending

The community profiling strand of the evaluation also considered district level youth offence rates collected from the On Track areas' Youth Offending Team data (Youth Justice Board, 2000). Table A2.11 in Appendix 2 lists the number of offences committed by young people between the ages of 10 and 17 per 1,000 people for the wider area in which each On Track area was located. The wider area, in which the OT areas were located, was used in this case as there were insufficient data to show trends at the On Track area level. Note that even for the wider area, information is missing for Portsmouth and Bristol.

The data suggest that the On Track average of 52.5 crimes per thousand youth is substantially higher than the national average (at 44.5/1000). However, it also illustrates that there was considerable variation across the wider local authority areas within which the projects were located. Rochdale, Sunderland and Manchester had notably higher rates of youth crime, with each area reporting over 80 crimes per 1,000 young people per year. In contrast, nine areas had rates of youth crime below the national average.

3.5.3 Self-reported antisocial behaviour

The secondary schools survey also investigated students' own reports of involvement in antisocial behaviour, in large representative samples of young people in On Track areas. Table A2.13 in Appendix 2 provides an overview of their response rate to all questions related to crime and antisocial behaviour collected

during the first Wave of the schools surveys in 2001 (Armstrong et al, 2005). The data corroborate the YOT data above, suggesting a relatively high level of minor offending was present in the On Track areas. For example, during the first year of the On Track initiative (2001), 30% of the participants reported having shoplifted or stolen something and 7% said that they had done this six or more times in the past year. The rates for vandalism and theft in general were similarly high.

3.6   Education and behaviour at school

In order to understand the educational needs of children and young people living within On Track areas, school level and local authority district level statistics regarding truancy rates, exclusions, and the percentage of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) was collected from the Department of Education and Skills. In most instances, the statistics summarised come from the 1999-2000 school year, when the On Track project areas were selected. However, the truancy rates reported here come from the year 2000-2001, since the rates were not collected for primary schools prior to this point (see Table A2.14 – Table A2.16 in Appendix 2 for details).

3.6.1   Truancy

Truancy is measured through rates of unauthorised absence, which are calculated by comparing the total number of half days that should have been completed across all the students in the school to the number of half days actually missed without an acceptable reason for absence. An average percentage is then calculated across all schools in the relevant OT area, as well as for the local education authorities (LEA) in which On Track projects were located. Table A2.14 in Appendix 2 lists unauthorised absences in terms of On Track project areas and their adjacent district levels. (Data for primary pupils was not available for Welsh schools).

In 2001 the national average for unauthorised half day absences was 0.5% for all primary schools and 1.1% for all secondary schools. The average for the local education areas (LEAs) containing On Track projects (which includes both schools within On Track areas and schools outside the boundaries of the On Track areas) was somewhat higher than the national average, with 0.63% for primary schools and 1.4% for secondary schools. However, the average for those schools specifically contained within On Track area boundaries was considerably higher than the national or local LEA averages, with a rate of 1.13% for primary schools and 2.35% for secondary schools. Furthermore, there was once again a considerable degree of variation between the projects. Bradford, Bristol and Haringey reported particularly high truancy rates for their secondary schools at 9%, 7.1% and 4.2% respectively. On Track areas with relatively low truancy rates included Kerrier, Luton and Brent, which were all well below the national average.

3.6.2   School exclusions

The aggregate (On Track average) permanent school exclusion rate was also much higher than the national average, especially for primary school exclusions. Furthermore, On Track area schools had consistently higher exclusion rates than their wider local education authorities. Again, there was a fair degree of variation between the projects, however. For primary school exclusions, Scarborough, Sunderland and Easington had particularly high rates, whereas Brighton, Luton and Manchester had relatively lower rates – although no On Track school was below the national average. With regard to secondary school exclusions, Northampton and Southwark had relatively high rates, although several schools were well below the national average, including Kerrier, Greenwich and Oldham (see Table A2.15 in Appendix 2).

3.6.3   Statemented Pupils

This measure refers to the number of students that have received a formal Statement of having 'Special Educational Needs' (SEN). The interpretation of the type of behaviour that leads to SEN statementing varies by school and by LEA, and as with data on vulnerable children, may reflect local practice as much as any consistent measure of need. Once again, data showed there was a wide variation between the project areas. For example, a high percentage of statemented pupils in the Sunderland On Track project likely reflected the fact that there were eight special schools well-resourced to deal with pupils with special needs in this area. Bearing this caveat in mind, for each school, the proportion of students that were statemented in a one year period was calculated and an average across all the schools in that On Track area was then calculated. This average percentage was also calculated for each school in the local authority district in which the On Track area was located. The relevant detailed data can be found in Table A2.16 in Appendix 2.

As the Table shows, the collective average of statemented pupils for On Track area schools was higher than the national average for both primary schools (1.72% compared to 1.60% nationally) and secondary schools (2.85% compared to 2.50% nationally).

3.7   Educational attainment

In order to understand the education attainment of children and young people living within On Track areas, school level and local authority district level statistics regarding SAT (Standard Assessment Test) scores and GCSE (General Certificate in Secondary Education) attainment are collected from the Department of Education and Skills. All the statistics summarised come from the 1999/2000 school year, when the On Track project areas were selected. The data are presented in Table A2.17 – Table A2.19 in Appendix 2.

3.7.1 Standard Assessment Test (SAT) scores

In order to understand the attainment of primary and secondary school students living within On Track project areas, SAT scores for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 were collected from the DfES both at the On Track local educational authority district level and for On Track area schools.

The findings suggest that the average for all On Track areas was considerably lower when compared to both the LEA average and the national average for all three Key Stages. Individual projects varied considerably in terms of SAT scores, and there were few discernable patterns. For example, in some cases, a project area had an exceptionally low average for the first Key Stage, but then scores increased substantially for subsequent key stages (see Oldham as a case in point). In other instances, a noticeable decrease in scores relative to the national average was discernable, as was the case with Bridgend. See Tables A2.17 and A2.18, Appendix 2.

3.7.2 GCSE attainment

For secondary school students, the percentage of students sitting for and receiving a score between A and C for five or more GCSEs, as well as all those receiving a score between A and G was compared for all project areas for the year 2000 and summarised in Table A2.19 in Appendix 2.

Once again it was apparent that On Track project areas were behind both the national average and the local educational authority district average. In particular, the collective On Track area average for pupils receiving a score of A – C for five or more GCSEs was 31.5%, which is about twenty percentage points below the national average. On Track area schools also lagged behind the rest of the country when it came to the percentage of pupils receiving a score of A – G for five or more GCSEs, with On Track area schools reporting a collective average of 84.4% as compared to the national average of 88.9%. Once again, however, there was wide variation between projects. In general the higher achieving areas were also more rural, whereas the lowest achieving areas were in densely populated urban areas.

3.8 Other community based initiatives operating in the On Track areas

As mentioned in Chapter One, On Track was one of several large-scale UK government initiatives targeted at improving outcomes for children and their families through community and area-based interventions (ABIs). Around the time of On Track's implementation, *Sure Start* was also being introduced to deprived wards across England as a way of addressing the needs of vulnerable children under the age of four. Shortly thereafter, the Children's Fund was introduced as a way of meeting the needs of older children (aged 5 to 13) who were also at risk of social exclusion and in most cases, and On Track projects became part of their local

Children's Fund at this time. Thus, Sure Start and the Children's Fund were operating simultaneously within the same local authority boundaries of all On Track areas, with the exception of the two Welsh projects (Bridgend and Rhondda). For this reason, it is highly likely that many of the outcomes achieved by On Track projects were also influenced by the presence of additional services sponsored by both the Children's Fund and Sure Start initiatives.

In order to better understand the extent to which Sure Start, the Children's Fund and other community-based initiatives were active in On Track areas, the community profiling strand of the evaluation utilised Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to map On Track boundaries against the geographic borders of the other government ABIs. For illustration purposes, Figure 3.3 provides an example of how two Sure Start local programmes overlapped within a single On Track area.

Figure 3.3 Overlap between On Track (pale) and two Sure Start (dark) local programmes (Source: Bowers et al, 2008)
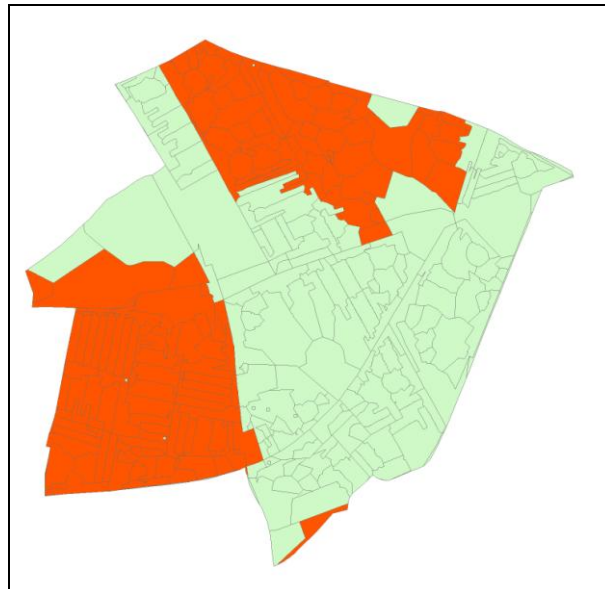
In addition to Sure Start and the Children's Fund, a variety of other initiatives, such as Building Safer Communities, the Youth Inclusion Programme and Drug Action Teams were also often active in On Track areas. While it was not possible to obtain detailed information on the exact geographical coverage of all of these projects, information was available regarding whether or not they were present within each On Track project's local authority area. Figure 3.4 provides an overview of the extent to which 25 other similar initiatives were active across 22 UK On Track areas (information on Wales was not available). So for example, among the 22 On Track areas included in the analysis, 20 had Extended Schools present in the area or nearby, and eight had projects funded through the Parenting Fund.

Figure 3.4 Presence of other initiatives co-located in On Track projects' Local Authority areas
(Source: Bowers et al, 2008)

Number of initiatives co-located in On Track projects' Local Authority areas
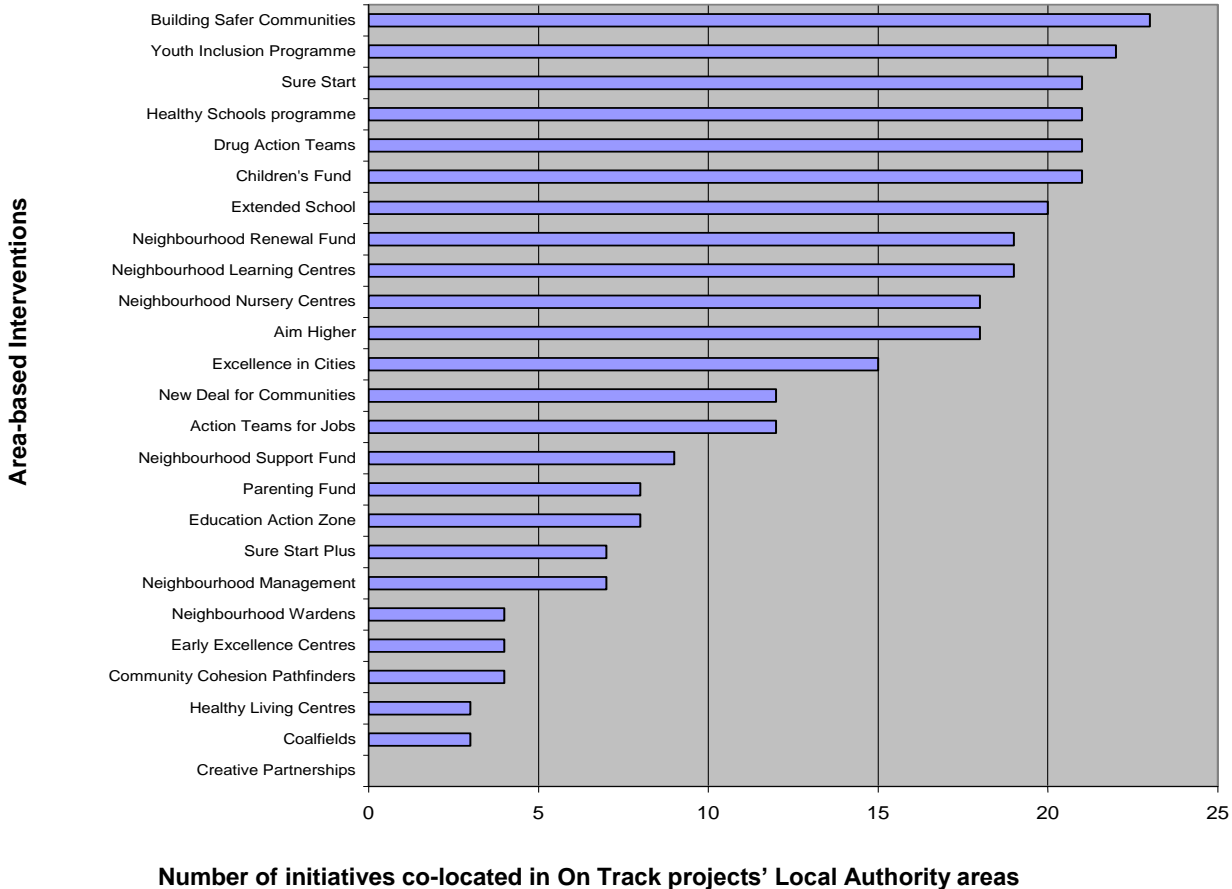
Figure 3.4 demonstrates that some initiatives were more prevalent across On Track areas than others. In addition to Sure Start and the Children's Fund, Building Safer Communities and the Youth Inclusion Project, were commonly present. In contrast Community Cohesion Pathfinders, Healthy Living Centres and Neighbourhood Wardens were active in relatively few areas.

A related question is the total number of other initiatives that were operating within or near the boundaries of each On Track project. Figure 3.5 shows these data.

Figure 3.5 Number of other initiatives co-located in On Track projects' Local Authority areas
(Source: Bowers et al, 2008)

On Track projects' Local authority areas
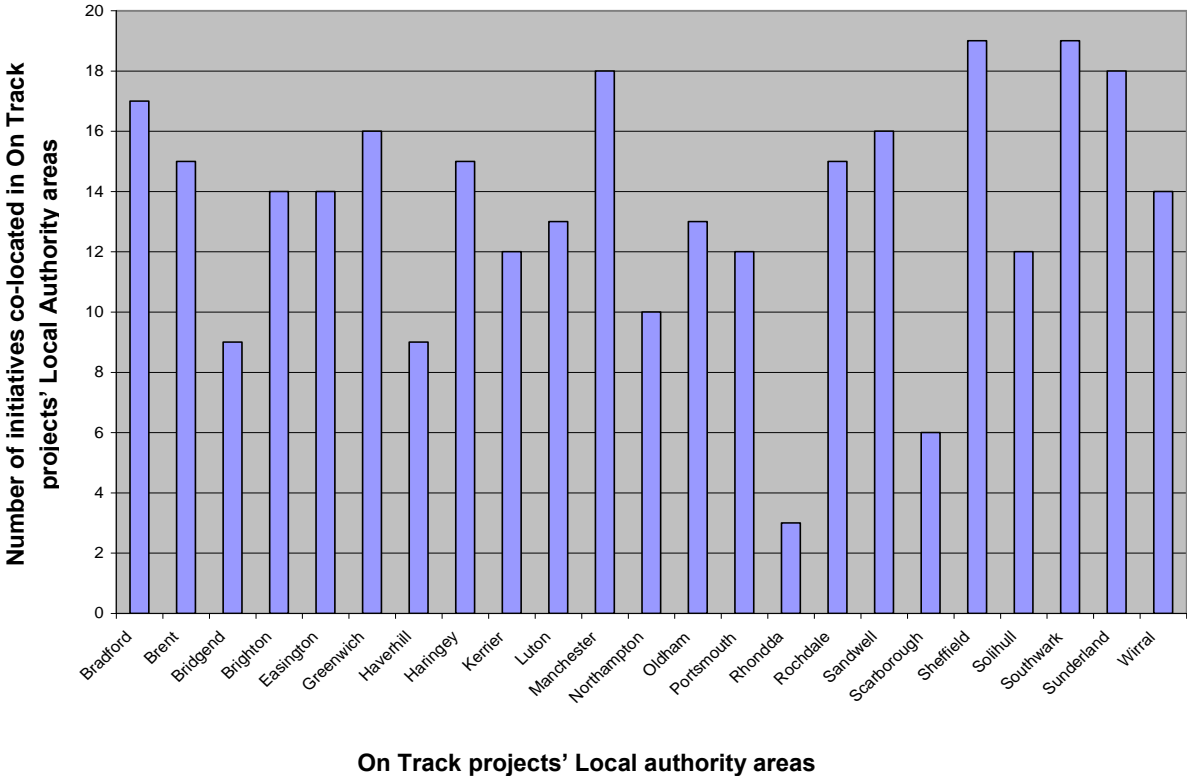
It is important to note that the reason why there were fewer initiatives recorded as present in the Welsh On Track areas is that many of the interventions were limited to England in their original remit. However, as Figure 3.5 suggests, even the English project areas differed considerably in terms of the number of other initiatives delivering services locally. For instance, whilst five projects had 17 or more programmes operating nearby or within the On Track areas, an equivalent number had fewer than ten. These differences need to be kept in mind when considering the relative impact of the individual On Track projects, since outcomes may have been jointly determined by multiple programmes in 'initiative rich' areas.

3.9   Summary and conclusions

Collectively, the demographic data summarised in this chapter confirms that On Track areas were generally located in communities that experienced a high degree of deprivation, higher than average rates of crime, and lower than average rates of educational attainment, often even in relation to their wider administrative area which was already poor. The On Track project areas can therefore properly be considered as 'poorest amongst the poor' – a factor that makes it difficult to design adequate controls or comparators in this type of research, as we discuss later. At the same time, closer inspection of the data reveals that an aggregate portrayal of the On Track areas obscures a considerable degree of diversity that existed between them, in terms of ethnic make-up, family structure and crime rates for example. For example, it is clear that the densely urban populations struggled more with crime and low

academic attainment, whereas the more rural areas appear to fair better across all demographic categories, although urbanity and rurality were not the only determinants of variation within the group of projects. Lastly, even within On Track areas we find diversity, so that for example not all households within On Track areas were equally poor, despite being located in generally impoverished neighbourhoods.

What this suggests is that it is unlikely that a single type of On Track intervention would be capable of addressing the diversity of needs that existed across the projects, and one would expect that a great deal of local tailoring might be required to develop services that were relevant and practical for the individual communities, and within communities, for the individuals most in need. The next chapter and Chapter Six consider the various ways in which projects interpreted the On Track remit and utilised resources from multiple agencies in order to identify and implement services that were locally practical and relevant, and hence often distinctively different.

Chapter Four: Getting started – the development of strategic partnerships

4.1 Introduction

Partnership working has long been considered an effective way for local agencies to address complex policy and operational problems, especially those relating to issues such as crime and the effects of poverty (Audit Commission, 1998). By definition, partnership working involves agencies from multiple sectors joining their expertise and resources in the planning and delivering of services. This occurs on both the strategic level - via strategic partnerships, partnership boards and management groups, and on the delivery level - through referral systems between agencies and the joint delivery of services. When successful, multi-agency partnerships are assumed to result in services that are both more effective and more cost-efficient.

Because of these potential benefits, encouraging multi-agency working has been a key feature of New Labour policy and a number of government initiatives have mandatory partnership requirements. For example, Health Action Zones, The Children's Fund and Sure Start are all governed by multi-agency partnerships. In the case of Sure Start, funding was originally contingent upon the establishment of partnership boards whose membership consisted in thirds of representatives from statutory agencies, voluntary organisations and local parents. Governance arrangements for Children's Fund programmes also required multi-agency partnerships, although they were expected to adapt pre-existing local partnerships with input from parents and carers in the local community, rather than develop entirely new boards.

The extent to which pre-existing successful partnerships can be built on by new services has, it has been suggested, proved a critical determinant of later success (Glendinning, Powell and Rummery, 2002), and like the wider Children's Fund On Track projects were advised to utilise a pre-existing strategic partnership with multi-agency links. It is likely that some of the variation between the On Track projects described in previous chapters is related, in part, to differences in terms of the agencies involved in these governing bodies and their ability to co-operate effectively, as with Sure Start (see Tunstill, Meadows, Allnock, Akhurst, Chrysanthou, Garbers, Morely, and van de Velde, (2005) for further discussion of Sure Start partnerships and their strengths and difficulties). Within the context of these partnerships, On Track projects were expected to develop the following interagency systems:

- bring together a range of support services and programmes which could respond to the needs of children and their families at critical stages
- ensure mechanisms for identification of children at risk and their referral

- develop improved co-ordination and joint management between and across services and model improved structures for preventive service delivery.

This chapter utilises information gathered from the On Track Regional Assessment Team reports, the Tracking study, the qualitative study of service providers in six areas, a workshop with On Track area schools, and the responses from a brief telephone 'exit interview' with project managers conducted towards the end of the evaluation period to consider the quality of these multi-agency relationships through the following issues:

- the projects' various partnership arrangements
- the relationship between On Track and the Children's Fund
- the agencies involved in the delivery of services
- the extent to which the multiple agencies successfully integrated services
- processes that facilitated and impeded joint working
- the degree to which users participated in service development and delivery

The chapter then concludes with a discussion of the 'lessons learned' from On Track partnerships, and the ways in which multi-agency working might be improved in future initiatives.

4.2 Strategic partnerships within On Track

The multi-modal nature of On Track placed an emphasis on the need for multi-agency working, as a variety of agencies were necessary to ensure that an appropriate mix of services from the Home Office categories were available. However, On Track projects were not expected to form new partnerships, but instead pursue their agenda within the framework of existing strategic partnerships:

> *There is a strong presumption that the pilot will be managed by an existing partnership. It will be for local areas to decide which partnership is strategically best placed and has the capacity to deliver a cross-cutting and cross-agency initiative of this sort. Possible partnerships already in existence include YOT Steering Groups and Children's Strategy Groups.* [Home Office, 1999]

The subsequent On Track Delivery Plan Guidance Notes emphasised this point even further, stating that "*We do not want or expect you to create a new strategic partnership unless there are extremely strong reasons why no existing group is suitable.*"

In addition, the Home Office guidance notes advised that all relevant agencies be represented on both the strategic partnership and project management levels. Particular emphasis was placed on involving agencies from Social Services, Education, Health, Police and Probation, and Youth Offending Services. The aim of

partnership working was "…*to achieve a single agenda for children at risk of developing antisocial or offending behaviour.*"[Home Office, 1999]

Although funding was contingent upon the partnership arrangements described in each project's delivery plan, little is known about the actual structure of these management groups. From the qualitative study of service providers we do know, however, that On Track managers and staff did participate in various different strategic forums that included the following:

- Local Children and Young People's steering groups or strategic partnerships. This sometimes meant involvement in specific initiatives in conjunction with other partners. For example in one project the On Track manager had worked with the Youth Offending Services, health and voluntary sector organisations to develop a multi-agency information sharing protocol.
- On Track managers sometimes attended steering group meetings in organisations that they had commissioned to provide On Track services.
- Children's Services Partnerships were another forum attended by On Track project managers. Managers represented On Track both on the level of the Partnership Board, as well as specific subcommittees within the Partnership.
- Managers also described attending steering groups for area based initiatives operating with remits related to On Track, such as the Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP).

In four of the six instances, it was clear that the On Track project retained its own separate strategic board throughout the duration of the initiative.

The Home Office required all On Track projects to specify in their delivery plans their management structures in terms of who would assume the responsibility as their Lead Agency and Accountable Body. It was expected that the lead agency would provide specific management and operational support to the projects (including line management arrangements) and the accountable body would carry the risk and manage the funding and finances. The DfES required the projects to reconfirm their lead agency and accountable body arrangements at the time of the Children's Fund integration, and as the case studies suggest, these arrangements were critical in determining the success of the partnership and the delivery of services. Although information regarding management structures for all 23 On Track projects at the time of the delivery plan was not available, the projects needed to re-specify these arrangements when they integrated themselves with their local Children's Fund and these details are summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 The Lead Agencies and Accountable Bodies involved in On Track projects		
On Track Project	**Lead Agency**	**Accountable Body**
Bradford	Social Services	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Brent	Brent Education Arts and Libraries (Achievement and Inclusion Division)	Brent Council
Bridgend	Bridgend County Borough Council	Welsh Assembly
Brighton	Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership	Brighton and Hove City Council
Easington (Durham)	Youth Offending Service	Durham County Council
Greenwich	Coram Family	Greenwich Council
Haringey	Youth Offending Service	Haringey Council
Haverhill (Suffolk)	Children and Young People's Directorate (Previously Social Inclusion)	Suffolk County Council, St. Edmunsbury Borough Council and Haverhill Town Council.
Kerrier (Cornwall)	NCH Action for children	Cornwall County Council
Luton	Safer Luton Partnership / Crime Concern	Luton Council
Manchester	Children's Board	Manchester City Council
Northampton	Social care and health	Education
Oldham	Children and Young People' s Strategic Partnership (Children's Fund)	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
Portsmouth	Children's Fund under Head of Regeneration	Portsmouth City Council
Rhondda	Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council	Welsh Assembly
Rochdale	Children's Partnership (previously early years)/Children, Schools and Families	Rochdale Metropolitan Council
Sandwell (Bromwich)	Education Children's Services	Sandwell County Council
Scarborough	NSPCC	North Yorkshire County Council
Sheffield	Primary Care Trust Children and Young People's Directorate	Sheffield City Council
Solihull	Children's Society (Children's Fund)	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Southwark	Youth Offending Service	Southwark Council
Sunderland	Youth Offending Service	Sunderland City Council
Wirral	Youth Offending Service	Originally Children's Society, now Council Youth Justice Management Board

4.3 The relationship between On Track and the Children's Fund

The relationships that developed (or not) between On Track projects with the subsequently introduced Children's Fund were critical elements in the overall trajectory of On Track as the programme matured. Once the responsibility for On Track passed from the Home Office to the DfES as part of the Children's Fund initiative, On Track projects ceased to exist in their own right and were required to integrate themselves with their local Children's Fund programme (DfES, Children's

Fund Guidance, 2001). The integration process forced many On Track projects to reconfigure their multi-agency arrangements and projects were required to redefine their governance structures and submit them for approval during a regional team assessment that took place in 2003.

Although Children's Fund Guidance encouraged the programmes to incorporate On Track within their partnerships, it was acknowledged that occasionally there would be practical reasons for the two initiatives to remain separate (DfES, 2001). This was due, in part, to the fact that On Track had a crime prevention focus, while Children's Fund activities were more generally directed towards improving children's overall well-being. However, the Regional Assessment Teams required On Track projects to provide evidence of close links to the Children's Fund if they chose to maintain separate governing bodies.

The successful integration of On Track into the Children's Fund varied across all On Track projects. In the majority of cases (14), the project's strategic management arrangements were fully integrated into their local Children's Fund partnership. In fact, in one case (Bristol) On Track ceased operating all together and existing project activities were completely absorbed into the local Children's Fund. Six On Track projects became linked to the Children's Fund partnership as a separate subgroup and four projects retained their own governing structure.

Boxes 4.1 – 4.3 provide case examples of the ways in which On Track management structures became integrated into the Children's Fund programme, drawn from the qualitative study of service providers. Note here and throughout the rest of this report that the identities of projects and staff have been disguised to preserve anonymity and confidentiality of information. Information gathered from the qualitative study of service providers suggests that all projects experienced some difficulties during this process and not all came through the transition equally well. Their success, or lack of it, appeared to depend on variety of factors that were not all within the projects' control. In a number of instances, the merger created tensions between the On Track and Children's Fund project teams. Several projects felt that these tensions were related to a lack of clarity from central government once the responsibility for the initiative had been passed from the Home Office to DfES. There was also a general concern that the situation created competition between the On Track and Children's Fund projects for funding and mainstreaming opportunities. In fact, one manager felt that the merger created resentment amongst On Track staff, since it was introduced with the assumption that the smaller and weaker On Track project would automatically become part of the bigger and stronger Children's Fund.

Despite these tensions, a number of managers reported that the merger with the Children's Fund was beneficial for their project. Box 4.1 provides an example of how one On Track project's work became more efficient as a result of this relationship.

Box 4.1: Case study example A: a successful integration with the Children's Fund initiative
(Source: Graham et al, 2006)

At the time of funding, the On Track project was established within the Social Services department of the local council.   From the beginning, the project had its own steering group that included managers from Social Services, Health, Education, the Police, the Youth Offending Team and Sure Start. When the Children's Fund initiative was introduced, the On Track project retained its steering group, but took on the overarching targets of the Children's Fund along with its own On Track 'sub' targets. The On Track project manager also became a member of the Children's Fund Management Team. At this time, the two projects were provided with the same site space and their line management arrangements became streamlined. After the merger, the Children's Fund manager provided regular supervision and support to the entire On Track team, including the On Track project manager.

The On Track manager reported that these changes were largely positive for both the On Track and Children's Fund teams. Through co-operative working and mutual respect, a niche for the project had been established within the Children's Fund. The On Track project benefited from being able to extend its physical boundaries by doing work under the auspices of the Children's Fund and the Children's Fund team reported valuable learning from the On Track model of practice.   The two staff teams worked closely together, attending joint training sessions and learning from each others' skills and practices. In fact, the two teams had become so inextricably linked that the manager felt it was impossible to see them as separate entities. As a result, much of the administrative work was streamlined and operational tasks for both projects were combined.   In the end, it was believed that the two projects had become '*one big team*' and, therefore, it made little sense to run with separate organisational structures. Nevertheless, this was occasionally seen as a sensitive issue: while the differences in policy and procedures might appear - objectively - to be slight, staff responsible for their integration considered that they could possibly be major in some people's eyes and any changes had to be introduced with care.

It is likely that the success of the above example is due both to the fact that the Children's Fund project manager shared the same site as the On Track team, as well as the 'cross-pollination' that took place between the two projects' strategic bodies. An overview of the Regional Assessment Team reports suggests that many other projects similarly benefited from the introduction of the Children's Fund. However, in at least five cases, tensions created by the merger were substantial, largely because of differences in ethos, operational practices and issues of power. The case illustrated in Box 4.2 describes how the merger of the two projects resulted in a substantial reduction in On Track services.

Box 4.2   Case study example B: a difficult merger with the Children's Fund initiative
(Source: Graham et al, 2006)

The original funding for this On Track project was awarded to the county council by the Children and Young People's Unit. The Children's Fund grant, when introduced, was awarded to a local branch of a national voluntary organisation, however. When the two organisations merged, the larger Children's Fund programme effectively took over the smaller On Track project – who met the transition with some degree of trepidation. The merger also coincided with substantial budget cuts by central government. At the point of merger, the project was a relatively small unit with highly paid staff, the majority on whom were on secondment from other organisations. The identified overlap in service delivery between the two organisations combined with budget constraints meant that On Track services (and staff) were cut back, achieved by terminating the employment of the seconded staff. The result was a much-reduced On Track team under the auspices of the local Children's Fund manager. During this time, the On Track project went from being a well-staffed, independently managed, self-sufficient organisation with a crime-reduction agenda to being a small part of a larger agency with a social inclusion agenda, managed on a part-time basis.

Box 4.2   continued

There was a perception by managers that the On Track team's morale had been damaged by staff reductions and a substantial change in ethos. The On Track team felt that their aims and *modus operandi* were not fully appreciated by the Children's Fund and considered that demands upon them to introduce new services at short notice against a backdrop of reduced staffing were unreasonable. These ongoing tensions resulted in difficulties establishing relationships with other agencies, a serious disruption in service delivery and conditional approval to their 2003 delivery plan submission. A further factor in this difficult amalgamation was possibly that unlike the situation in described in Box 4.1, the two projects had no physical proximity and were based in separate towns.

As the above example suggests, fundamental differences between the Children's Fund and On Track project teams sometimes hampered the delivery of services. In fact, in some instances, it was not possible for the projects to merge, despite their managers' best efforts. Box 4.3 provides an example of a failed merger – but also demonstrates how issues of power could be resolved once the projects reverted to their separate entities. In this instance, the two initiatives were able to work co-operatively once they were allowed to go back to their original working arrangements and retain their separate status within the community.

Box 4.3   Case study example C: an unsuccessful integration with Children's Fund
(Source: Graham et al, 2006**)**

In the original funding bid for this project, the designated Lead Agency for the On Track project was the Youth Offending Service, working within the local authority. However, a local branch of a national voluntary organisation was appointed as the Lead Agency for the Children's Fund. At the time of this transition, the voluntary organisation attempted to merge management chains by seconding On Track staff, but the move was not welcomed by the On Track team. Tensions ensued regarding both the ethos of the initiative and the delivery of services, leading the Regional Assessment Team (DfES, 2003) to state that " . . . *this proved to be a destructive alliance that threatened the progression of the programmes as a coherent approach to prevention."* As a result, the On Track team went back to its previous working arrangements with the Youth Offending Service and their relationship with the Children's Fund was managed through a service level agreement. Despite the dissolution of their strategic relationship, the two initiatives were able to retain a number of joint ventures. Tensions remained over funding issues, but some managerial input from On Track into the Children's Fund to cover for managerial absence appeared to have eased some of the stresses previously encountered. Information taken from the Regional Team's Assessment report suggests that both initiatives were able to work cooperatively and productively once the Children's Fund abandoned its efforts to force the On Track team to integrate.

As the case illustration in Box 4.3 suggests, multi-agency management arrangements occasionally resulted in tensions that interfered with the project's ability to become established. Projects also reported disruptions because of shifts in reporting arrangements, which were sometimes initiated by borough-wide strategic changes, but also because of changes in personnel. This was the case in example A (Box 4.1), where the social services department had a particularly strong presence because the project manager was at one time a social worker herself. The project's relationship with social services became weaker, however, when the original project manager left and was replaced by someone with strong links to health.   The second manager was then seconded to education and was subsequently replaced by a third manager who originally worked as a social worker within the On Track project. However, this manager had difficulty re-establishing the links to the social services department and

felt at the time of the exit interviews that there was "*. . . an absence of a lead agency*". Here, the many changes of management staff with different backgrounds seems to have eroded the sense of a lead agency affiliation.

To summarise the lessons from these three case examples, it appears as though the arrival of the Children's Fund was ultimately a positive experience for the majority of projects – but a highly disruptive one for a significant few. Problems seemed to be more likely to occur in situations where there was a physical distance between the projects, or when the organisation responsible for the Children's Fund was external to the agency responsible for On Track. As was the case for both examples A and C, the Children's Fund grant was awarded to a voluntary agency. Clearly, differences between the organisations in terms of both their ethos and working practice created tensions that ultimately interfered with their service delivery.

4.4 Service delivery arrangements

On Track projects had varying organisational structures on a spectrum from those who commissioned all of their services from external agencies ('contracted out') to those using only staff directly employed by the On Track project to provide services ('in house'). In between were projects who adopted a 'mixed economy' approach to service delivery, whereby core services were delivered by an in-house team, but other services were contracted out to external agencies delivering specialised interventions. Those hired specifically to deliver On Track services came from a wide variety of professions, such as education, social services, health and voluntary organisations. Clearly, both the 'mixed economy' and 'contracted-out' delivery models required joint work between agencies in order to be successful. The diagrams below show some of these different configurations.

Figure 4.1 **'Contracted out' project structure** (Source: Graham et al, 2006**)**
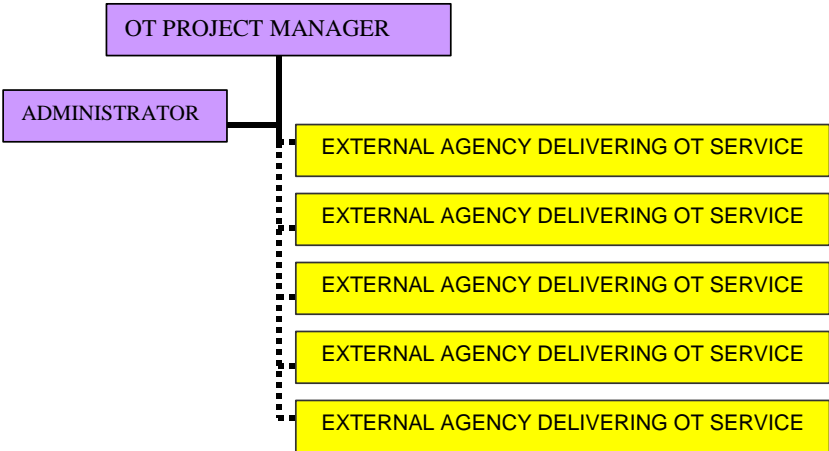
Figure 4.2 **'In house' project structure** (Source: Graham et al, 2006**)**
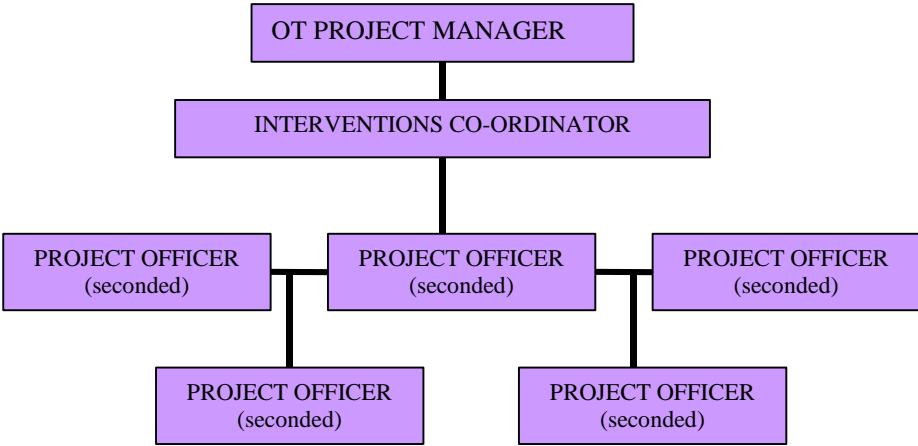
Figure 4.3 **'Mixed economy' project structure** (Source: Graham et al, 2006**)**
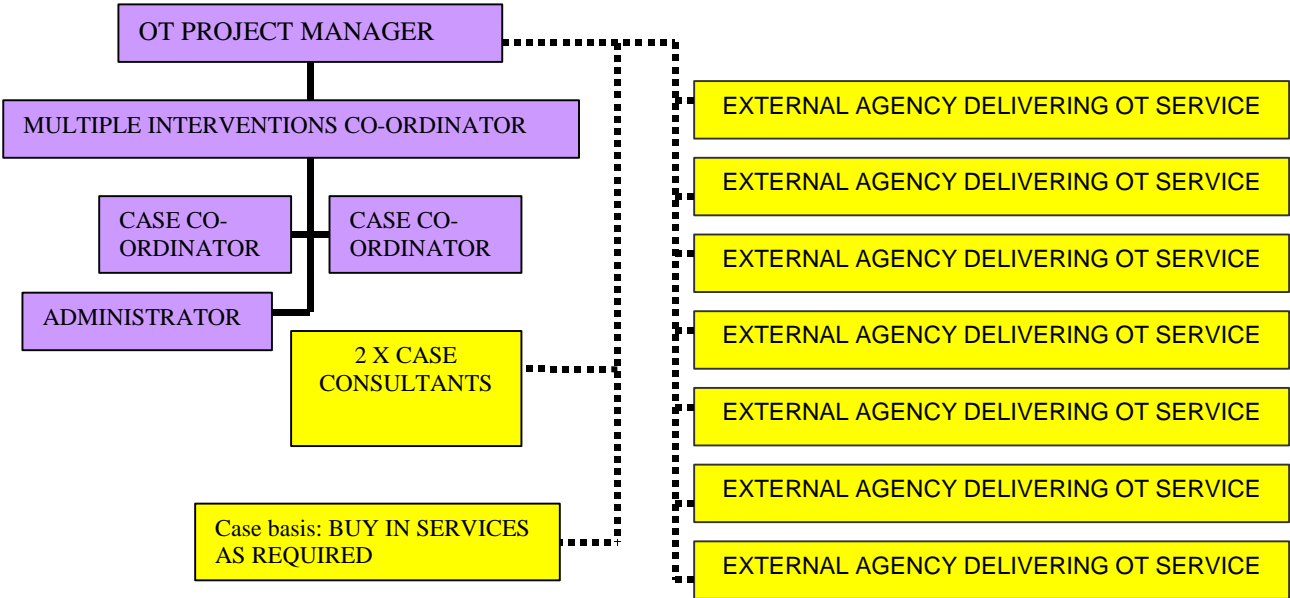
Where projects commissioned services or funded posts within other agencies there were a range of management arrangements. In some cases, employing agencies alone provided management and supervision to workers. For example, in one project, workers were managed by both their external agencies and the On Track project, with the On Track team providing ongoing 'process' management, as well as training and development. The implications of the different staffing structures are considered in Chapter Five.

The specific reasons why the projects adopted an in-house, mixed-economy or contracted out approach remain unknown. However, the evidence presented later in this report in Chapter Six suggests that projects were more likely to reach a higher percentage of their population if they adopted a mixed economy approach.

4.5   Multi-agency working: Developing relationships

In the pursuit of achieving a single agenda for children at risk of developing antisocial or offending behaviour, On Track projects were expected to engage relevant agencies at various levels of service delivery. In particular, the Home Office guidance notes emphasised that although the programme's primary purpose was crime reduction, it was also the case that "*much of the programme will be concerned with health, education and family interventions*" (Home Office, 1999). For this reason, projects were expected to demonstrate evidence of developing services with a variety of local agencies, including those from both the voluntary and statutory sector. Project managers participating in the telephone interviews in 2006 (n15) overwhelmingly rated their multi-agency working as effective, with the lowest score on a scale from 1 – 10 (where 1 is the lowest and 10 the highest) being a seven. However, the experiences reported by the managers participating in the qualitative study of service providers tell a more nuanced story. In general, it appeared as though On Track projects had little difficulty forging relationships with agencies with whom they had already had a connection, as was the case with the case example in Box 4.1. Engaging new agencies, however, was often a difficult process. In fact, one On Track project manager reported that multi-agency working was the most difficult part of her job:

> *Bloody awful. Absolutely awful. It has definitely been the most difficult part of the project … I think we have been quite unlucky in that we have had a few quite difficult people in the past. … One of the things I inherited (was) a ready made team of people and there were, and had been, issues almost from day one that had never been resolved.*
> [On Track Project Manager]

The various agency sectors (statutory, schools, voluntary, etc.) presented their own challenges to multi-agency working, as some organisations were more difficult to engage than others. Statutory agencies appeared to be the most problematic for projects to engage and in some instances, projects were not able to engage them at all. The sections below consider the various successes and failures projects had in engaging these agencies, as described by the project managers in the qualitative study of service providers and head teachers and others who took part in the qualitative research with schools.

4.5.1 Engaging the statutory agencies: Social services, child and adolescent mental health services, police and youth offending

We were able to explore how relationships between On Track projects and local statutory agencies developed over time from a number of different perspectives, including from within On Track projects, and from outside via group discussions

with stakeholders and On Track area school personnel. Problems were most often reported in cross-agency working with children's /social services departments and also with parts of the health sector, particularly Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). The police and even Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) were also felt to be largely absent from On Track's working relationships in some projects, despite On Track's crime prevention focus.

Key challenges

For example, some On Track project workers criticised statutory agencies for excluding them from joint working once a matter became 'serious' (for example, in a child protection case). Workers from voluntary sector backgrounds believed that they were sometimes not afforded the same degree of professional credibility as a statutory agency. A case example of a situation like this is given in Box 4.4.

Box 4.4   Case example of failure of joint working between voluntary sector On Track provider and local statutory agency (Source: Graham et al, 2006**)**

A home visiting worker seconded from a voluntary organisation to an On Track project, had been working with a family as part of a multi-agency partnership, which included social services. The family had been identified via the school as being *'at risk'* and there were concerns about the wellbeing of the child, especially on the part of the school. Social services were involved, though their view was the case was not serious, and that case work by their agency should cease. Meanwhile the On Track home visiting workers had been working closely with the family, visiting them almost on a daily basis and advising and supporting the mother with the child. On one visit, the home visiting worker discovered a child of 5 years unaccompanied at home, and immediately reported this to the social services department. The police and social services then took out various protection and care orders, but neither agency informed the On Track home visiting worker or kept On Track informed about the progress of the case. Contact was only made when social services required a report for an interim care order. The On Track worker felt that the good work they had done with the family went unacknowledged, and that the case remained 'unfinished business' for the project:

Before that [statutory intervention] happened, we did get [mother] into regular appointments, even things about getting the child's attendance in school right up, because she was really behind in school. ….And then to have no contact at all, it's just you're left in limbo really. … it's like unfinished business. You like to put things to bed. [On Track worker]

Unwillingness to work across agency boundaries could cut both ways, however, and On Track projects were often at pains to stress their independence from the statutory sector because of families' generally unfavourable attitudes towards services such as social services. In some projects, there was an explicit policy not to involve social services in their cases except when child protection matters arose.

Relationships with CAMHS were good in some projects but '*a bit uneven*' in others. One project manager voiced a strong opinion that '*this Authority would not be unique in having difficulty engaging with CAMHS*', a view supported by other managers who found CAMHS '*distant*' though possible to draw in by understanding their ethos, building up personal relationships and keeping the focus on children and families.

The visible lack of police (and sometimes YOT) involvement in some of the projects was also a source of concern. As a crime prevention programme, workers and managers in On Track projects had often expected a higher level of co-operation and joint working with their local police force than they encountered. Strategic police partnerships were absent in the six projects participating in the qualitative study of service providers, though there were some front line links. Some On Track workers put this down to the fact that the police would generally see their remit as working with families and young people who were already engaged in criminal activity who by definition would be above the threshold or beyond the remit of On Track:

> *The Police, Youth Offending Team ….we have no contact really with those two agencies at all. …. Strange isn't it, for an anti-crime initiative?* (Reason?) *Because I think that we can't provide the sort of services that they see as required… mostly because … the sorts of referrals that we actually can deal with, are not really the sort of referrals that the Police or Youth Offending Team have got lying around. …So there's a mismatch between their needs and what we provide.*
>
> *[On Track worker]*

Alternatively, it was argued that the engagement or lack of it was down to the priority given by the local force to preventative activities, or to the enthusiasm and motivation of individual officers.

Organisational factors also interfered with the projects' ability to establish relationships with statutory agencies. For example, one project cited a re-organisation in Children's Services which resulted in the severing of community links, rendering it virtually impossible to obtain what the manager described as *'meaningful information'* from them. A member of the On Track team working with families stated:

> *We try to have partnerships with social services, but there's just such a difficulty at the moment. They're not playing ball. …They're just… I think, just overwhelmed by everything they've got.*
>
> *[On Track worker]*

Social services representatives in stakeholders' group discussions agreed with this analysis, speaking of how field social workers' time was exclusively devoted to the *'heavy end'* of child protection, leaving no space for them to address issues of prevention.

> *(I think) social services have brought some of this about themselves, because for too long we've done this thing where …..anything with a merest hint of child protection about it, we've said 'oh back off, we're the experts, give it to us'. So everyone quite happily gives it to us we then promptly make a mess of it because we're not really geared up resource-wise, staffing-wise to actually do a proper job of it. So we make a mess of it and everyone says 'oh look, social services have made a mess of it, how terrible'.*
>
> *[Social Services external stakeholder]*

Others, however, placed the blame on the local authority where 'real strategic thinking and the real planning doesn't happen'. Some On Track workers felt it was left to the workers on the ground to find out what was happening in the area - and to inform others of what was going on in On Track.

Successes

Despite these problems, a number of projects reported positive working experiences with statutory agencies once relationships had been established. In one On Track project where the Lead Agency was the Youth Offending Service (YOS), such close links had been forged with the Youth Offending Team and Youth Inclusion Programme that services delivered by On Track had become, as one project manager put it, the *"prevention arm of the YOS"*.

Another project reported a similar positive experience with the police and in another, an extremely successful working partnership with CAMHS was established very early on in the life cycle of the project to deliver school-based services that acted as a bridge between preventive and therapeutic services at various tiers. This service alone facilitated links between health, Job Centre Plus, On Track family workers and On Track Children's Centres, and as the project manager described it:

> *I think in [our project] our main ties have been with the schools and with child medical and mental health services. We've also had a strong connection to the …strategic directors of the social services, but not always staff lower down. But they (schools and CAMHS) have always been very behind us. And we've also had quite a strong link to the early years part of what was the education (service) as well.*
>
> [On Track Project Manager]

Certainly a key factor in developing successful multi-agency relationships appeared to be personal contact with other professionals. This worked in two ways: firstly, in setting up the partnerships and secondly in maintaining them. As one external stakeholder put it:

> *I think On Track works because of … this is my feeling, because of the personal contacts that they develop.*

4.5.2   Engaging schools

Both qualitative and quantitative data show that schools were a main vehicle through which all On Track projects delivered their services (see Chapter Six), and as the programme matured, schools became increasingly more central to the delivery of a wide range of On Track services. However, service providers found that building effective relationships with schools was not always easily or quickly achieved. Even where projects reported they otherwise had a relatively easy time establishing links with local organisations, they were apt to describe initial problems engaging schools. As one participant in the qualitative study of service providers pointed out, '*there was a fair amount of reluctance in some of the schools*.'   An On Track service worker from one

project represented a fairly common view when she commented that reluctance stemmed from an overall scepticism on the part of schools regarding the introduction of anything new. From her perspective, the only solution was *'to work with the school and their goodwill …get a good rapport with them.'*

Key challenges

A major difficulty for all projects lay in the fact that negotiations had to take place with each individual school:

> *I think when On Track started and they had these ideas about the different interventions that could be used with the schools there was quite clearly a different response from one school to a neighbouring school. …One school was very receptive and another school may be downright hostile. So it quickly became apparent that there was actually a lot of work to do with selling On Track to agencies.*
>
> *[External agency stakeholder]*

This had certainly been the experience of several managers who referred to the importance of going into schools and meeting with head teachers in order to promote On Track services. One manager had spent time meeting with school staff and designing a service which fitted with the National Curriculum. However, even after many of the initial difficulties with schools were overcome, some areas of doubt and suspicion lingered between individual schools and projects. A support worker participating in the qualitative research observed that there sometimes remained a fundamental disregard for the support On Track services provided:

> *School staff don't appear to value what we are able to offer, where we're coming from. And on a personal level they quite often don't value us for the knowledge that we've got and the experience that we've got.*
>
> *In [area] we had a uphill battle. We were walking through treacle backwards. And now we are friends. And you know they [schools] know us. We know them. We were not talking to teachers and linking all the interventions that we do with them. We are now talking to them about their needs and they are referring children. They could refer much more to us I think, they are still frightened of parents. But it is much, much better now.*
>
> *[On Track service workers]*

School staff participating in the qualitative workshops also acknowledged that especially at the outset, relationships had not always gelled immediately. For example, there had been anxieties about professional boundaries:

> *I think at first we were very selfish about 'this is our bit' and 'this is your bit'. And now, everybody's sort of working together. Because it's very difficult to get a lot of different professionals to work together and for them to not feel as if other people are encroaching on their patch, and putting their oar into somebody else's little bit.*
>
> *[Head teacher school in On Track area]*

Both schools and On Track projects acknowledged the important role of senior staff in getting new relationships off to a good start. One school representative commented, in relation to an On Track service provided by a voluntary agency working within her school:

> *I think the key thing is with* [On Track service] *that we have been very lucky in the quality of the two managers, and if you don't get the right manager I can see very easily how it could go wrong because they are trying to serve two masters. You've got the school and what the school wants, and you have got your* [On Track service] *hierarchy and frustrations.*
>
> [Schools workshop participant]

Successes

Despite these problems, multi-agency working was prevalent in all schools involved with On Track. On Track projects were particularly successful in developing systems within schools for identifying children at risk and engaging professionals from external agencies to address their specific needs. In addition, participants in the qualitative schools workshop reported that On Track was instrumental in co-ordinating multiple agencies within schools that school themselves had previously found difficult to access, including the police, Youth Inclusion Programmes, Youth Offending agencies and CAMHS. This was usually because the local On Track project had already established a successful working relationship with these agencies and therefore introducing them to the schools was a relatively straightforward process. Representatives participating in the schools workshop were generally enthusiastic about the new relationships they had subsequently developed with these new agencies, and expressed interest in developing more integrated services.

> *My impression was that On Track were actually instrumental in getting agencies to meetings and organising meetings where there were many agencies… I guess it would have been up to the school, or another agency to do. And I think there was more cohesion because they [On Track] were organising these meetings.*
>
> [Head teacher, School in On Track area]

> *I think I'd agree… that On Track has played a vital role in bringing agencies together. (It) has helped agencies to foster new models of joint working and professional practice. Because it has enabled the schools to work with a whole vast range of people who are connected to health, social services, the police, specialised services…... (Now) we've got very positive relationships with members of the community that have evolved over quite a number of years. And that's going to form the basis of the commitment to the extended schools provision of the future with Children Centres. It is very positive.*
>
> [Head teacher, school in On Track area]

> *In our school we've actually got an On Track worker (based with us) and she's like my colleague. She's a behaviour support worker and she's also the On Track (worker). So*

if anybody needs anything, she will know exactly who to call to help out, which is really good. Before (she came) you had people run around (saying) – 'Who do you ask for this? Who do you ask? What's available?' (Whereas) she knows all that, and she can contact the agencies, the appropriate agencies, if need be. Which is really a benefit for us, to have someone like that in our school.

[Learning mentor, school in On Track area]

4.5.3   Engaging the voluntary sector

On Track Delivery Plan Guidance highlighted the importance of voluntary sector organisations, stating that they *'may be best placed to engage the families concerned and deliver the services most effectively'* (Home Office, 1999). The guidance also encouraged On Track projects to include voluntary organisations representing key subgroups living within local community, particularly those who represented black and minority ethnic groups.

Two thirds of On Track projects either commissioned voluntary organisations to deliver at least one service as part of their service menu, or worked in partnership with voluntary organisations to deliver On Track services. The number of interventions delivered by voluntary organisations varied across the 23 On Track projects. As one might expect, projects operating a contracted-out model of service delivery were more likely to have engaged voluntary organisations, although all of the projects participating in the qualitative study of service providers' perspectives reported that relationships with voluntary sector agencies were generally (though not unfailingly) less problematic than their relationships with statutory agencies. As one project manager commented: *I think the voluntary sector are more open in terms of funding a service and they are usually interested in developing new ideas.*

Box 4.5 provides an example of the different voluntary agencies commissioned by one project that contracted out services to voluntary agencies as part of their 'mixed economy' approach to service delivery.

Box 4.5   Voluntary organisations providing services for On Track Brent

Voluntary organisation	Service delivered
The Place2be	Therapeutic and emotional support to children in school where children can express their feelings through talking creative work and play
Family and Education Advocacy Support Trust (FEAST)	Pastoral support and mentoring project where a pupil is matched to a mentor
The National Pyramid Trust	After school clubs for small groups of vulnerable children aimed at building self esteem and confidence
R time	Children develop positive relationships by working in pairs on a variety of easily achievable activities

4.6   Referrals between agencies

The Home Office Delivery Plan Guidance required projects to specify their systems for identifying risk and referring children across agencies, as well as establish information sharing protocols between agencies.   The Home Office also told projects to include target dates for when these systems would be fully implemented, with the promise that projects would be receiving more advice and "*additional material on model protocols.*"   However, it appears as though this additional support was never made available and projects instead developed their own referral and information sharing systems with little or no additional guidance from the central government.

For these reasons, relatively little is known about the kinds of referral routes and information sharing systems projects developed. What we do know suggests that working together around information sharing and referral was a challenge for many of the projects, since this often involved the development of whole new mechanisms for working together and common assessment frameworks. Findings from the qualitative study of service providers' perspectives suggest that case discussions and meetings were the primary method for sharing information and referring individual cases, and it is clear that several projects developed care pathway systems for referring families and sharing information across agencies. A general overview of how these referral relationships developed is provided below.

4.6.1   Referral relationships

Projects had fostered referral relationships in a variety of ways. Working together around referral was a challenge for the projects, since it often required the development of entirely new systems for working together, including agreeing common assessment frameworks and new partnerships to facilitate joint referral and

assessment. For some projects the process of setting up new referral mechanisms resulted for the first time in a cross-agency mechanism for identifying and assessing families and children in need in the local area. For example, one project created the post of Multiple Interventions Co-ordinator who ensured that all agencies involved with a family or child were kept informed about changes and progress, and set up multi-agency panels when necessary to discuss next steps. At the other end of the spectrum, another project described how a simple administrative change to include information about the involvement of other agencies on the referral form meant that On Track workers could see immediately where a family or child was engaging with multiple agencies and were able to consider the scope for cross-agency working or liaison.

Broadly speaking, projects were satisfied that the referrals they received from other agencies were appropriate and suitable. Only one project described the referral process as having failed and the manager felt this was largely due to the limited amount of cross-agency working around On Track. Other reasons for this perceived failure were that the very limited professional networks (which principally focused on schools) meant that other agencies were unaware what services On Track could offer and therefore which children or families were suitable for referral. This had led to some inappropriate referrals with families with inappropriately high levels of need being referred to On Track. Additional problems with referral reported by other projects included families living outside of their area being referred into On Track areas, as well as agencies having a mistaken impression about what On Track could offer the families. Generally, these difficulties were resolved once greater awareness and sharing information between agencies was achieved. Without this awareness, there was a fear that other agencies may inappropriately begin to see On Track as the place to send all families who were not in high risk categories and result in On Track being swamped with referrals and trying to be '*all things to all people'*. See Chapter Six, section 6.4.5 and Figure 6.5 for a breakdown of referral routes for users of On Track services).

4.6.2 Case meetings

On Track projects used case meetings and discussions as their primary means of identifying needs and referring families to specific services. Case meetings across the various On Track services included informal case discussions between the On Track partners, as well as systems for convening more formal multi-agency reviews. The degree to which On Track staff members were involved in these processes varied from project to project. For example, one project participating in the qualitative study of service providers had only informal case discussions amongst their in-house staff and had no involvement with case meetings in any other way. At the other end of the spectrum, some projects held regular internal case review meetings for their own workers, and staff also attended case meetings routinely called by external agencies. Other examples of case meeting arrangements are described below in Box 4.6, derived from the qualitative study of service providers (Graham et al, 2006):

Box 4.6   Different types of case meetings in On Track projects (Source: Graham et al, 2006**)**

Within-project case discussions. This model of casework happened where On Track services were provided by in-house staff and those externally contracted. In some projects, regular meetings were convened either on a monthly, bi-monthly or weekly basis. In other sites, only active cases using targeted services were discussed and in a few instances, meetings were scheduled only when service workers had concerns or saw a need for the introduction of further services. Front line service workers also reported informal discussions of cases on a continuing basis, either inside the On Track office where all staff were based at the same site, or by telephone on a regular basis.

Employing agency case discussion or progress reviews. In projects with services delivered by externally contracted agencies, workers were often located within their own agency which commonly offered a wider range of services beyond the On Track provision. In some cases On Track staff located in these external agencies attended regular case reviews within their employing agency. These reviews included discussion of On Track cases, and those held by the employing agency.

Multi-agency case meetings convened by On Track. Two projects had formal systems for the discussion of cases at the stage of initial referral or review. These models are described further in the section below (Referral pathways). In these projects, after a case had been assessed by the On Track team and the child or family referred was deemed as in need and eligible for On Track services, the On Track team convened multi-agency team meetings. These took place in schools, other agencies or on On Track premises. For example, in one project the On Track team invited all service workers either already involved in a case, or thought to be relevant to it, as well as relevant school staff and On Track workers. In another site, the On Track team convened meetings termly in schools to look at cases to be referred into On Track services or to other agencies, reviewing progress made so far and further need. CAMHS consultants were funded to attend these meetings, and relevant school staff also invited. Agencies already involved in working with the family were also invited.

Attendance at multi-agency case meetings convened by other agencies. On Track service workers reported being invited to case meetings convened by other agencies outside of On Track. This was typically at a front line level when another agency working with an On Track child or family had cause for concern around a lack of progress or an escalation of service need within the family. The most common example of this was when On Track workers were invited to Child Protection Conferences convened by the local social services department if child protection concerns had arisen. This form of case conferencing was more unusual than others described above.

4.6.3   Referral pathways

Although case discussions and meetings were the primary method for sharing information and referring individuals within most On Track projects, some projects also developed pre-specified referral pathways to move children and parents across agencies. For example, one On Track project utilised a formal referral system that involved multi-agency meetings which were convened by On Track and attended by school staff (for example a head teacher, SENCO, learning mentors or teaching staff with pastoral responsibilities) and CAMHS consultants. During these meetings, decisions were made regarding whether children required further specialised assessment by the CAMHS team or whether their needs could be met through On Track services. Once a full assessment was conducted, a tailored package of interventions was constructed that included targeted services provided by both the On Track team and by external agencies. Figure 4.5 provides an illustration of how the referral pathways worked between the On Track and CAMHS teams.

Figure 4.4:   Example of formal referral pathway (Source: Graham et al, 2006**)**

Referral from schools into specific services and universal services

Service delivery by individual service strands

Termly meeting in schools to look at higher end cases (On Track, schools, CAMHS consultants.)

CAMHS take appropriate cases from On Track

Higher level of risk factors... On Track undertake full case assessment

Package of care designed for service user. On Track partners deliver, co-ordinated by On Track core staff. Some services bought in where necessary.

Service users leave On Track when programmes of intervention complete and user is seen, through assessment, as achieving aims.

In this particular example (Figure 4. 4), the On Track project was able to refer service users onwards to external agencies, but did not receive referrals from outside agencies, with the exception of schools. Schools referred pupils and families to the On Track project's central team who then in turn referred these individuals to services that they had contracted. This process was facilitated by a top-tier panel, whose membership included representatives from local agencies responsible for services for children and families and was headed by a 'Multiple Intervention Coordinator' (MIC) employed by On Track. The purpose of this panel was to share information and expertise, make referrals for individuals they deemed to be most at risk, and 'roll off' any children whose needs had been met by services and for whom intervention was no longer required.

A more common model however (as illustrated below in Figure 4.5), was that On Track targeted services took referrals direct from a range of other agencies, or from their own services. On Track staff working with children or families in these cases would suggest the need for other On Track services where appropriate. This was achieved through formal case meetings between On Track staff, informal referral, or a combination of both.   In some cases, externally contracted workers also referred service users into other services provided by their employing agencies. Informal case discussion and inter-On Track service referral took place not only among On Track projects where workers shared a site, but also in projects where staff was based in an external agency. Formal meetings between the On Track partners only occurred on a monthly basis, but they were supplemented by a large degree of informal telephone contact each week.

Figure 4.5: Example of less co-ordinated use routes through On Track (Source: Graham et al, 2006)
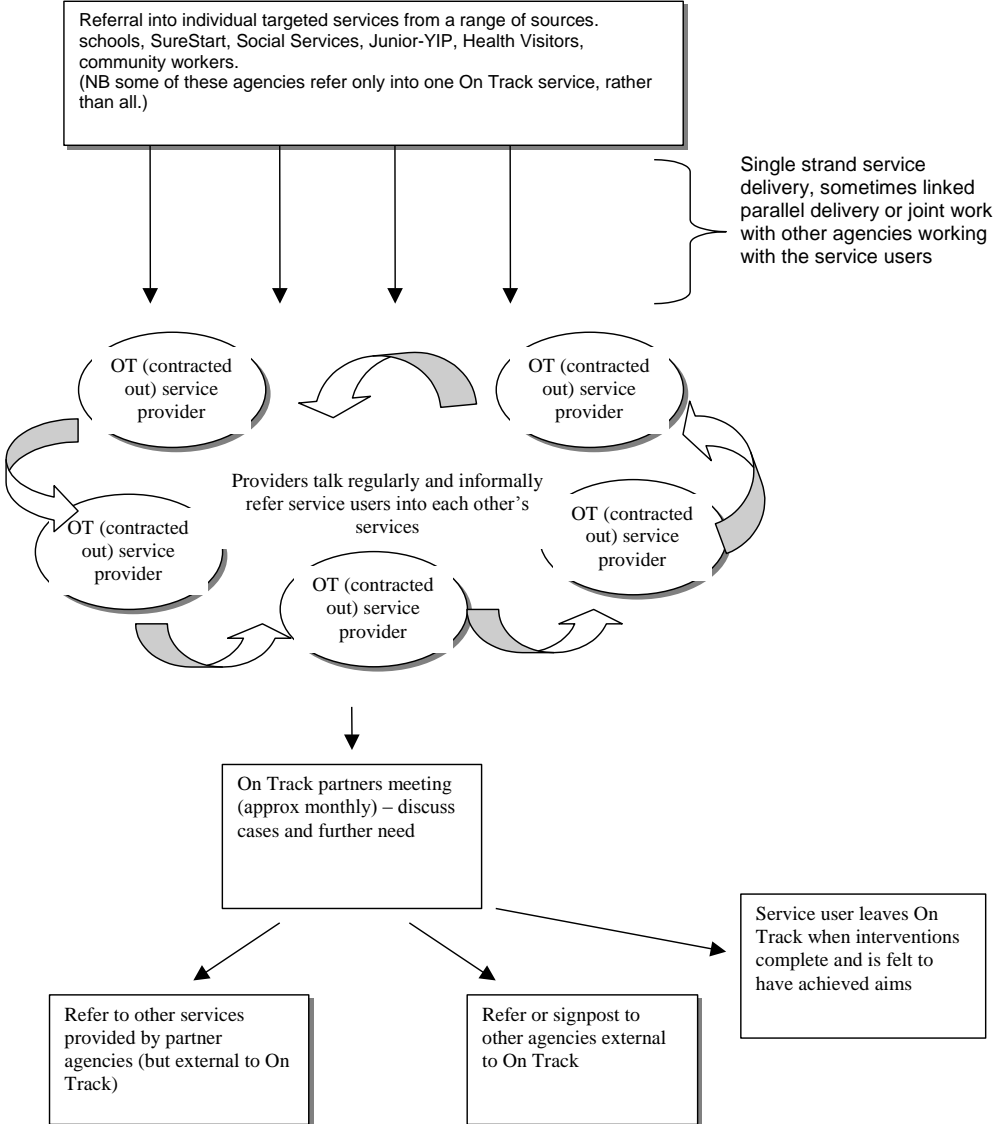
As the two examples above suggest, there was a fair degree of variation between the projects in the extent to which different external agencies were involved in the referral, with some projects having access to a smaller pool of external agencies than others.

Table 4.2 provides a summary of the referral systems used by the six projects participating in the service providers study, including the two projects that are described above.

Table 4.2 Sources of referral from and to agencies beyond On Track for projects included in the qualitative study of service providers (Source: Graham et al, 2006)		
Project	**Referrals from**	**Referrals to**
A	- Schools - Sure Start - J-YIP - Health Visitors - Social Services - CAMHS - Community workers	- J-YIP - Social Services - CAMHS - Voluntary sector family support services
B	Schools	- CAMHS - Social Services - Education Welfare - Voluntary sector family support organisations - Parenting organisations
C	- Schools - Health visitors - Social Services - Education welfare/ LSA - Local Family Centre - YISP - Multi Agency Support Team	- Social services - Health
D	- Schools - Sure Start - Social Services - Health Visitors - Voluntary sector family services organisation	- J-YIP - Sure Start - Social Services - CAMHS - Voluntary sector family services organisation
E	- Schools - Health Visitors - Social Services - Doctors - Home visiting organisation - DV forum - Substance misuse agency	- Social Services - Home visiting organisation - DV forum - Substance misuse agency
F	Schools	None

4.7   Delivery relationships

As with referral pathways, the delivery relationships between On Track projects and other services varied enormously across the projects. On Track services within the projects were typically delivered by the On Track project staff themselves; both in projects where services were staffed in-house and in those that contracted out service delivery. Contracted out delivery included dedicated members of staff from agencies providing On Track services and sessional workers. However, there were some exceptions to this general pattern. These exceptions appeared in a range of different forms:

- *Mainstreaming* involved co-delivery with other professionals with the aim of those professionals taking on service delivery without On Track once the programme ended (or earlier if possible). At the time of service providers' study, one project had shifted all service delivery into this model: project workers were co-deliverers and staff trainers. Their role was to develop programmes that met needs, co-deliver programmes with school staff or other professionals and then support them afterwards as they took forward the delivery of future services; (see also Chapter Fourteen).

- *Linked parallel delivery* involved communication with other professionals outside On Track who were working with the same child, parent or family. This happened in several ways. In some sites, if On Track had already been working with a family when another agency became involved, On Track workers would go with the child or parent for their first meeting with a new professional. In other services, established relationships between On Track workers and other professionals meant workers discussed cases on an ongoing basis, both in order to avoid duplication of work and to improve joined-up service delivery.

For example, one project had particularly strong links with the local Youth Offending Team, Youth Inclusion Support Panel and the Junior Youth Inclusion Programme. The On Track home visiting service carried out joint visits with professionals from these programmes. A schools-based service also kept in touch with professionals from these programmes when both were working with the same family.

> *...for instance, I had a boy last week that had really been naughty. He was going go-karting with Junior YIP. I spoke to Junior YIP and they said when we get him tonight we'll have a chat with him, we'll say 'well, no you're not going [go-karting]'. And the boy actually came in the next morning and apologised to me and went to the other member of staff and apologised to them because he realised that we're all singing from the same song sheet."*
>
> *[On Track service worker]*

Relationships between front-line and operational staff were often very close in areas where there was co-delivery of services. Multi-agency relationships in terms of service delivery were also easier to achieve in areas that had established formalised joint referral and assessment systems. The process of forging effective multi-agency links had taken time, however, as one project worker described:

> *It is a very much dripping tap. It hasn't gushed out. But … I think realising now that you are part of a bigger picture, that you're not working in isolation. It's very important that actually some of the information that you hold might actually be important to a social worker, might be important to a doctor for instance. … So knowing that you've got a role within that, I think that's important…. that idea has come from On Track. I think that idea … now it's the norm, or it's becoming the norm, it will become the norm that 'Every child matters'… but I think 3 or 4 years*

ago people were … well… people were tentative, because they didn't want to share information.

[On Track worker]

Evidence of healthy, functioning delivery was found in the form of regular, effective cross-agency communication about cases and service provision. Where this was happening it was either doing so in a formal way with regular cross-agency meetings diarised to facilitate information exchange, or through other less formal ways of keeping in touch. For example, in one area, On Track learning mentors kept in regular telephone contact with other learning mentors, attended support meetings and generally had integrated themselves into that support network.

4.8   Branding and packaging On Track services

The extent to which On Track was identifiably packaged as a distinct service provider or service entity may well have impacted upon the ease with which multi-agency partnerships were forged, and on how relationships developed over time. Branding or lack of it could have enhanced or reduced awareness of On Track amongst other service providers, and would certainly have affected how they saw On Track in relation to their own service remit and offer. The Home Office Delivery Plan Guidance said little about the branding and packaging of On Track services, although it did emphasise several points that would influence projects' decisions regarding how services should be promoted. These points included:

- Services must be readily accessible to parents, including those hardest to reach
- Families living within On Track areas should have enough knowledge of services to self-refer
- Services must not be perceived as stigmatising.

Thus, projects needed to advertise their services in a way that was both informative and inviting.   This section considers the degree to which projects made their presence known to other agencies and to potential users through the 'branding' of their On Track services.

It appears as though the decision 'to brand or not to brand' took place at an early stage in the project's development and was based on a variety of factors, which included the way in which the service was targeted and the extent to which the individual project manager felt that it was a wise investment.   The projects also differed in terms of *how* they branded themselves. Whilst the majority of On Track projects used an identifiable logo on their literature and publicity, there were differences between the projects in terms of the emphasis placed on early crime prevention as an objective. In general, there was a tendency to deemphasise the crime prevention aspects of the remit, at least as far as users were concerned. Below, we draw from the qualitative strands of the evaluation - mainly the qualitative study of service providers (Graham et al, 2006), but also the validation exercise and 'exit' interviews conducted with project managers during the later stage of analysis of the

evaluation results. We consider whether and how projects branded their services, as well as how services were perceived by families living within On Track areas.

4.8.1   To brand or not to brand? Those who didn't

Projects that had decided not to brand themselves identified a number of factors that influenced their decision, including the fact that the crime prevention aspect of the service might reduce its appeal, or link it to an otherwise highly stigmatising services. For example, one manager felt that any link to crime prevention or risk factors would be off-putting and stigmatising to potential users:

> *We did not advertise On Track as a crime prevention project at all… I mean I'm a parent myself, and I wouldn't want my children to be stigmatised… we don't want to say it's a crime prevention [initiative], so we advertised the programme as a government funded programme designed to provide extra support to children and families ….[and] that it can improve their chances of success in the future.*

> *[On Track Project Manager]*

> *I think the label of antisocial and criminal behaviour has been really unhelpful to us because actually when you look at the risk factors you're working on it's very watered down from there. You're looking at children that might have behavioural problems in school, that's a risk factor, or lone parents or on a low income or that they're under achieving at school. That's actually not that threatening but we've got this big label of 'it's antisocial and criminal behaviour'….*

> *[On Track Project Manager]*

These types of concerns were common across all the projects that took part in the qualitative study of service providers and considerable emphasis was placed on how to promote their work without families or children feeling they were being labelled as '*difficult*' or '*at risk*'. As a result the projects often emphasised their role in 'making a difference' to the lives of families and to the local community.

In a similar vein, many On Track projects were at pains to distance themselves from the potentially stigmatising association with statutory services, who might not be well-regarded by some of the local populace:

> *I think... we felt very strongly that we didn't want to be associated.... Although the local authority is our overseer, if you like, as far as the finance goes, we didn't want to be strongly seen as being linked with the local authority. And certainly not with youth offending or social care because I think both of those would have had quite a stigma attached to them.*

> *(On Track Project Manager)*

One project manager also argued strongly against undertaking major publicity launches and promotional work because she feared this could raise community and

professional expectations that the service might not be able to meet. Like many others, this particular project had struggled to reconstitute its services following budget cuts and funding reorganisation, and there was a sense that expectations had in the past been disappointed, leaving a legacy of bad feeling amongst staff and amongst other agencies. In these circumstances, some projects preferred to keep a low profile.

However, some reasons for avoiding too much branding were more pragmatically driven. For example, one reason cited for avoiding labelling 'On Track' too clearly was to offset potential difficulties with managing change when, or if, the On Track initiative ended or was subsumed into other agencies and initiatives. Here the rationale given was that without a strong On Track identity it would it would be easier to manage changes and avoid confusion amongst users and referrers if services stopped being provided through On Track but continued in some other guise. Another manager, operating a contracted out model of service delivery, felt that branding of the On Track project was simply unnecessary because the services they commissioned were already known in the area. By others, branding was viewed as an expensive exercise and a luxury that could not necessarily be afforded.

4.8.2   To brand or not to brand? Those who did

Generally speaking, projects that were in favour of a degree of branding of their work had utilised a range of approaches. The first method involved active publicity and branding of the local On Track project and its services. Those projects that adopted this strategy generally had a professionally designed logo which was displayed on all their literature. For example:

> ….we've just produced new leaflets..., we've linked the On Track logo on everything.... We've got a 'Young [name of borough]' logo which is part of the Children's and Young People's Plan logo. So we've added theirs to ours.

> [On Track Project Manager]

Just under half of all On Track projects invested in a custom-designed logo with the other half either adopting the Children's Fund logo (where the two projects were aligned) or not creating a logo at all.

These projects also employed a range of other strategies for promoting their services, including:

- leaflets in schools
- providing free gifts like On Track pencils, erasers and 'yo-yo's' to children
- staff wearing On Track name badges and On Track t-shirts
- leafleting local households
- promoting the scheme through display boards at parents' evenings and school events

- making use of the local media (radio and newspapers) to publicise the scheme
- holding community fun days and annual conferences or events to publicises the work of the project
- promoting the scheme via personal and professional contacts. For example using a network of school nurses to promote its services, and giving talks to professionals in agencies working with similar groups to advise them about the activities and support On Track could offer.

On Track projects that had decided to brand themselves heavily often explained the decisions in terms of users' 'rights': that branding On Track and its services "*helped parents understand exactly who you are*" [Project manager] and that users of On Track services had a right to know what On Track was and why their child had been targeted to receive an intervention. However, in general, projects concentrated on identifying the On Track project as a whole, rather than branding specific services within the project:

> *And we've managed to.... make a brand for ourselves really. That we are '[Name of Project] On Track'. People tend to know...Tend to call us 'On Track'. They (know they are) going to 'On Track' …..So, you know, the children certainly feel that they're …..involved with 'On Track' rather the name of the group they go to …..*

> *[On Track Project Manager]*

Some projects reported a sense of considerable success in raising awareness of the project among local people. These comments from different project managers were typical:

> *I think in [this Project] we have... (become) identified with a particular area. We tend to be identified with particular communities. When one of my staff was involved in doing some work around... raising money because of the Kashmiri earthquake, he said people had begun to say to him immediately 'Well what is On Track doing about this?' As if we were kind of obliged to. So I think we have got quite a big profile locally.*

> *I think the fact that we are ourselves has helped an awful lot with people coming forward to us. I think there are other aspects to it as well. It is not just about the brand, it's about...., we've got our own (identity) and I think that people see that as quite independent but I think it's …also about the service they get when they come to you.... When people come to you in that we're offering universal as well as targeted interventions people feel they can just walk in through the door. And I think that's been really, really important.*

> *Certainly in [this Project] it is the evidence that we seem to be kind of known and embedded within the local community. In fact, for the last two years in a row, our biggest referrers have been schools - understandable because of the number of schools - and our second biggest referrers have been self referrals. Which is fantastic, you know. But I think that demonstrates the profile within the local community that the project*

has (grown).... But also the feedback that you get from other agencies and service users is.... we are kind of seen as an agency that isn't statutory, but can deliver a certain kind of work.

[On Track Project Managers]

From the perspective of On Track staff, one project manager explained that her team definitely saw themselves as the 'On Track team' and that her project was heavily branded within professional circles in terms of a holistic package of preventative services. In this respect, the project wanted to ensure that their identity was distinct from other services providers and that their work added value instead of duplicated the work of other agencies. This strategy was considered especially beneficial for services that were hoping to be mainstreamed as the initiative matured (see also Chapter Fourteen).

Last, in contrast to the overt avoidance of the 'crime prevention' tag discussed above, some projects described how their project had found the risk and resilience model helpful in explaining the service to potential users. The concept of being 'at risk' of developing more serious difficulties and antisocial behaviour was something their project had found accessible and helpful for parents to understand. Potential issues around stigma had also been offset by an emphasis on protective factors. However, in general where there was branding of the project as 'On Track', staff and managers did not unduly emphasise the early prevention remit of the initiative. In these instances projects focused on raising the profile of services, particularly in schools. One project reported their service *"had become so integrated into schools that we ceased to be (thought of) as services and were part of the fabric of the schools"* [Project Manager]

4.9 Factors that facilitated and inhibited multi-agency working

4.9.1 Project managers

Overall, the consensus from those participating in the qualitative study of service providers' perspectives was that the success of multi-agency working was to a great extent dependent upon the skills and leadership of the On Track project manager. This is discussed in more detail in the next chapter in relation to staffing and workforce issues, but where multi-agency working was concerned, this was also reported to be an important 'enabling' factor. In particular, the ability to think and work across traditional professional boundaries was an important attribute. Interpersonal skills that included an understanding of 'the language' and something of the working practices of different statutory sectors – particularly in relation to health, education and social services – was especially helpful; for example, the ability to take into account the hours worked in different professions, such as working around the 'classroom hours' of teachers; knowledge of the usual locations for meetings and service delivery; and a sense of how to integrate new procedures with those already in place in other agencies. As well as working across agencies, then, project managers also had to be able to work across levels within agencies. Close

relationships with at three levels - front line, operational and strategic – were described as optimal, meaning project managers had to have a management and communication style that worked across multiple levels.   At the front line level this was around the specifics of service delivery, and at the operational and strategic level it was around facilitating and resourcing the process for developing and promoting a shared agenda. Of the three levels the operational level was most frequently cited as the most difficult for On Track projects to connect with.

> *I think On Track's been very fortunate here, largely because of [project manager] who's incredibly charismatic, (and) will worry a bone to death until he gets what he wants. I think you just can't underestimate the input of [project manager]. (He is) extremely flexible, extremely forward thinking (and) has such an in depth knowledge of the community that (we're) working in. And (has a) vision of what he wants to achieve for that community.*
> *[External stakeholder, On Track area]*

4.9.2   Organisational and structural factors

A variety of other facilitating or inhibiting factors for effective multi-agency working were identified from qualitative strands of the evaluation, especially in relation to organisational and structural factors. These revolved around the institutional and organisational structures that most clearly enabled agencies and individuals to work together towards a common goal.

First, a clear strategic lead from the local authority was seen as fundamental to successful joined-up working. For example, this could take the form of setting up 'community clusters' (whereby communities or schools within a local authority are clustered together to provide services that are part of a coherent range of core services necessary to promote the wellbeing of children and young people in the whole cluster), or senior participation in steering groups and multi agency strategic boards. However, the relationship between local authority and projects needed to be viewed as bi-directional, and projects that formed close working relationships with key local authority stakeholders were especially likely to report easier relationships across agencies. Third, within the structure of On Track projects themselves, shared protocols and administrative procedures specifically designed with multi-agency work in mind, as well as multi-agency referral panels, were structures that enabled cross agency working. Some projects had specific posts dedicated to supporting cross agency case work, (for example a 'Multiple Intervention Coordinator'), or cross agency team working, (for example, a Multi Agency Support Team), who helped forge and maintain working relationships with external agencies.

4.9.3   Practical and logistical issues

Obvious though it sounds, it became clear in qualitative strands of the research that where the profile or 'visibility' of On Track projects to external agencies was high, multi-agency relationships were more quickly established. In some areas,

considerable advertising and 'PR' work had been done by projects and project managers to promote the project's work, and here, On Track was more quickly integrated into the wider multi-agency fold. Awareness of On Track at higher strategic levels was described as particularly helpful in facilitating multi-agency interaction, in addition. Conversely, a low local profile acted as a barrier to developing multi-agency partnerships. External agencies were not always fully aware of the On Track brief or, in some cases even that an On Track project was operating in their area.

Projects working in more limited geographical areas tended to have an easier time of establishing multi-agency relationships, and those with spread-out and especially large rural catchment areas appeared to have found it more difficult to become integrated with other agencies. Apart from anything else, the logistics were more complicated for these projects – for example in instigating and coordinate joint partnership working.

Finally, the competitive funding environment whereby agencies might be competing with one another for money to develop or sustain services sometimes acted as inhibiting factor to collaboration. Problems also arose when one partner agency was struggling financially to commit to the same level of interaction and information exchange.

4.9.4   Staffing and workforce issues

Wider issues connected with staffing and building a workforce are reviewed in detail in the next chapter, but in relation to barriers to multi-agency working, a key factor was that inevitably, in the early stages of the programme, given its developmental, not to say experimental nature many of the On Track staff were inexperienced at the challenging type of work they were required to deliver, or else were inexperienced in delivering work in a community-based context. Not surprisingly, at least at the outset many had not yet developed links with schools and other professional agencies. As one On Track worker noted:

> *At the beginning too many staff were inexperienced and unsure regarding developing school relationships and broader pieces of work. On Track lacked credibility with professionals… and progress was impeded.*
>
> *[On Track, Seconded Social Worker].*

Where projects were using a contacted out or mixed economy structural model, project managers were especially likely to report that the absence of a strong 'core' team had made it more difficult to coordinate external agencies. Occasionally, projects also identified that there was a lesser degree of commitment to 'the On Track mission' by staff from agencies that provided contracted out services. Staff were sometimes affected by conflicts of loyalty between the priorities of their particular

employing agency and those of the On Track work, and furthermore sometimes did not necessarily adhere closely to the agenda of the On Track work. Some project managers described disputes over what was and what was not 'On Track' work, and some had developed specific service level agreements which they used to ensure that work done under the On Track 'flag' was consonant with what the project expected.

It was also clear that many of the professionals involved in the delivery of On Track services suffered from heavy workloads. This inevitably reduced the resources they might otherwise have put towards developing multi-agency relationships and activities.

4.10   Conclusions: What did the On Track projects achieve through multi-agency working?

Research regarding multi-agency initiatives such as On Track suggests that bringing agencies together in a manner that is effective and productive, but is hard work (Chaskin and Joseph, 1995). A variety of studies stemming from the recent National Evaluation of Sure Start (Ball, 2002; Myers, Barnes and Brodie, 2004; Tunstill, Allnock, Meadows, and McLeod, 2002; Tunstill et al, 2005) indicate that differences in levels of commitment between agencies are common and that time is often required for the various stakeholders to work out their various roles and responsibilities. This indeed proved to be the case with On Track, as project managers often remarked that establishing relationships with multiple organisations was at times the most frustrating part of their job, especially when it came to statutory agencies.

Nevertheless, it appears as though the majority of On Track projects were able to overcome these obstacles and develop a wide variety of services and relationships. One Head Teacher at a primary school in an On Track area told the research team: "*The relationships which were made (were) a success, (and) might not have been formulated (but for) of the work of On Track*"

Furthermore, it appears that strong multi-agency partnerships were a crucial component for reaching families and children. To the extent to which project throughput (the percentage of children living within the community reached by services) can be used as a measure of a project's success, it was clear that more individuals were reached through a 'mixed economy' approach to service delivery, which was by implication highly dependent upon effective multi-agency working arrangements. (See Chapters Six and Thirteen for further analysis of project reach and how this varied across areas)

Stakeholders participating in the qualitative study of service providers' perspectives also felt that multi-agency arrangements were a key factor in ensuring that families

and children's needs were understood and that the appropriate services were provided:

> *Multi-agency working has meant that schools and others are getting a clearer picture much sooner of a family's needs as (part of) a number of people involved with the family sharing information at child conferences. I would say for us it has been (demonstrated by) an increase in …referrals with child protection issues, (where it has been) possible to gain a much higher level of intervention much more quickly.*
>
> *[External stakeholder]*

Participants in the qualitative study of service providers' perspectives also cited multi-agency relationships as a particularly effective way of mainstreaming services and linking up parallel delivery systems for the same service users. These relationships were best supported by a variety of factors that included:

- A dynamic and creative project manager who understood the viewpoint of multiple agencies
- A clear strategic lead from the local authority
- A high profile of On Track within the local authority
- More limited (as opposed to extensive) geographical coverage of the on Track projects
- Clear structures and systems in place to allow multi-agency working
- The existence of a coordinating body

Furthermore, a close working relationship with the Children's Fund team appeared to be a positive experience for many of the On Track projects, despite the fact that the initial integration of the two initiatives proved stressful for many of them. However, it is noteworthy that for a small minority of projects, this integration was highly disruptive, interfering with both the projects' ability to engage multiple agencies and with their ability offer services to local children and their families. It appeared that this was more likely to occur if the Children's Fund grant was awarded to an agency external to the On Track project's Accountable Body.

Other indicators of good, cross agency delivery relationships included a broad awareness of the services provided by different agencies, respect for the different strengths offered by different approaches and a genuine willingness to place the family or child at the centre of referral and delivery decisions, rather than an emphasis on '*whose case*' the family was. This lack of professional or agency 'territorialism' about children and families was deemed as one of the most important features of healthy multi-agency relationships. In areas that had seconded workers as part of the On Track team, this was often described as facilitating good inter-agency working. However, where secondments had ended or broken down it was not always possible for those links and networks to be maintained.

Although some projects reported initial problems with engaging local schools, schools eventually became the primary vehicle for multi-agency work for the majority of projects, with many strikingly positive reports from primary school personnel. Of course, success was not inevitable in every case, but in general, schools provided a natural infrastructure for other agencies, such as the police and youth offending teams, to offer services to a wider constituency of children and also acted as a spring board to reaching families. Once services were up and running, many schools themselves also expressed enthusiasm regarding their ability to offer more to their students than they had previously. As one Head teacher in the schools workshop remarked, "*I think it was one of the first intervention strategies that had really worked in coming into school and working with school*".

And as this quote illustrates, in at least one On Track area, the project had a profound and very real impact on whole school functioning, where the concept of prevention had been taken to the heart of the school's approach to children's learning:

> *We actually are changing our curriculum. We are changing our timetables to accommodate these On Track (services), which is as it should be really, and (to make sure) people make best use of the service. And now some children miss some things, but we feel their On Track support for their particular problem is more important, and if they miss a history lesson then they miss a history lesson.*
>
> *[Schools workshop participant]*

Findings from the Regional Assessment Team reports in 2003 suggest, however, that the one 'agency' missing from much of this work was the local community. Only a few projects made it a point systematically to involve parents and children in the development of local services. Otherwise, user participation took place on the level of consultation, if it occurred at all. This was likely due to the fact that the involvement of children and families in service delivery was not emphasised in the original guidance and that some managers believed that user participation was the responsibility of the Children's Fund and not their own team, especially where resources were stretched and teams had to prioritise their effort.

Of course, the success of the project and its multi-agency relationship was highly contingent upon the individuals who made up each local On Track team. In the following Chapter we consider a range of staffing and workforce issues in more detail: how these individuals were recruited, the way in which they were trained and resources required to support their line management arrangements.

Chapter Five: Building the On Track workforce

5.1   Introduction

Workforce – how to build it, develop it, and retain it – has become an important item on the 'Change for Children' agenda. The *Every Child Matters* Green Paper set out a number of aspirations for the children's workforce, and after years of comparative neglect, policy has taken on the development and sustainability of the professionals who must deliver the Change agenda with renewed vigour. The establishment of a National Parenting Practitioners Academy to train and develop the family support workforce, the drafting and launch of professional National Occupational Standards for working with parents (Lifelong Learning UK, April 2005) and the series of measures set out in Green Papers and other key policy documents (including the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services, October 2004) all testify to a new determination to replenish what had become a depleted and demoralised workforce (especially in social services) and to build the new cross-disciplinary personnel base necessary to deliver the ambitious programme of reforms and re-organisations in children's services. The proliferation of family support work that has occurred over the past ten years via programmes like Sure Start, and the various Family Support, Children and Parenting Funds has meant that demand for workers has never been higher – and this combined with somewhat disappointing results of outcome studies of volunteer and peer-led interventions (e.g McAuley, Knapp, Beecham, McCurry, and Sleed, 2004) and repeated studies stressing the critical role of well-trained staff to undertake sensitive and demanding work (e.g Quinton, 2005; Penn, Barreau, Butterworth, Lloyd, Moyles, Potter and Sayeed, 2004; Moran et al, 2004) - has underlined the importance of nurturing and further developing this important professional group.

Not unexpectedly, working for an initiative like On Track that delivers innovative services across multiple agencies and disciplinary boundaries was reported to place new and unfamiliar demands on the workforce, from the top down. In this chapter we explore the evidence from different strands of the evaluation of how the workforce coped with delivering On Track, what skills and training were required, and how issues like recruitment and retention of staff impacted on implementation issues.   In the Phase One evaluation, researchers speculated that a 'new breed of professional' had been spawned and nurtured through initiatives like On Track. Early evaluation work on the wider Children's Fund also suggested that traditional boundaries between agencies and staff were being crossed as part of the new drive towards collaborative multi-agency working (Mason, Morris and Smith, 2005). In this chapter, we assess the case for these claims from On Track track's perspective, based on the findings of the evaluation in Phase Two, and discuss the implications for the children's workforce more generally. If true, then On Track workers and managers may perhaps offer prototypes of the new multi-skilled, multi-dimensional workforce that is required to deliver the government's new vision of integrated, multi-agency services for children. Finally we draw out key messages for the future

arising from the On Track experience. In this chapter we draw mainly on the qualitative study of service providers (Graham et al, 2006), the qualitative study of service users (Grewal et al, 2008), as well as the study of schools' perspectives and a range of contacts between the evaluation team and projects including one-to-one telephone interviews and group discussions to validate emerging findings in the final stages of analysis and reporting.

5.2   The professionals involved in delivering On Track

No central list or audit of the staff involved in delivering On Track since it began exists, but the Phase Two evaluation showed that diversity of professional background was the consistent feature. The variable project structures described in Chapters Four and Six facilitated this: staff could be both specially appointed to On Track roles, or 'borrowed' on secondment from other agencies, and the multi- agency construction of the partnerships brought in staff from almost all key public sector statutory agencies (health, education, social service, police and youth justice) as well as those who had previously worked in the voluntary sector. This included those who were paid by, or on behalf of, On Track, and those who worked in partnership with On Track projects - most notably, teachers and other school staff. Relatively few projects utilised volunteers to any great extent.

5.2.1   The 'new breed' of professional?

To what extent were those working with and for On Track really a 'new breed'? The evidence from the qualitative research amongst service providers, and from qualitative research with schools suggested that On Track staff were certainly expected to work in new ways, and that this was not without initial adjustment problems, especially at the outset. One of the key indicators, voiced most clearly by staff on secondment from external agencies, was the flexible job specification for both front line and managerial level workers. Since On Track was such a new initiative and was breaking new ground, old certainties and ways of working rapidly proved inadequate, leaving some staff feeling their way towards a new model with little guidance except the cumulative confidence and learning of their own experience. Though many On Track project managers were highly experienced, confident professionals, one, for example, described the first year of managing On Track as '*the hardest year of her life*' (Graham et al, 2006 p41). Front-line workers described the de-skilling effect that working without a clear job specification could have especially after having come from an agency with a clear set of professional standards, methods and expectations (Graham et al, 2006 p44). By contrast, the 'requirement to try new things' was one of the defining aspects of On Track, and it took time for many to get comfortable with the freedom this allowed. Yet once staff adjusted, there was, for some, a definite sense of exhilaration in the flexibilities and possibilities for innovation and experimentation that On Track allowed. Certainly, for those that survived the experience, On Track was felt to have been a strong learning and development experience that '*empowered*' and equipped staff with professional skills they might never otherwise have acquired.

Some agencies that benefited from On Track input (e.g schools) were extremely positive about the exciting new skills to which On Track workers gave them access. Head teachers spoke enthusiastically about home-school liaison workers placed in school with On Track monies, and about the positive effects of parenting support staff in building better relationships with families. Youth justice teams were also appreciative of the youth support workers to whom they could access via On Track, enabling them to do more time-intensive outreach work with hard to reach youngsters and parents.

5.2.2 The role and importance of project managers

One of the most striking findings to emerge from the evaluation study was the extent to which the role of project manager (or 'co-coordinator') proved critical to the survival and success of each project. Two contrasting project management scenarios emerged – those where a charismatic and determined project manager provided strong leadership over a long period – often staying in post throughout the life of On Track from 2000 onwards – and those where there was rapid turnover of managers (Graham et al, 2006 p41). There appeared to be no specific type of manager in terms of professional background – successful managers came from social services, education, youth justice and many other backgrounds – but the ability to keep a cool head and a responsive attitude in the face of constant change appeared a vital attribute. Those who 'branded' their projects (explicitly or otherwise), articulated a clear vision of the structure and expected mechanism of change of their project, and those that built a strong sense of a 'special' team committed to the experimental, and to some extent risk-taking, nature of On Track appeared to do best.

Skill sets for On Track project managers

To document the skills required of an On Track project manager would probably take up a whole report in itself. In terms of service delivery, managers had to provide a practice lead in terms of direct work with users, but they also had to develop relationships and often win over somewhat reluctant external agencies to the On Track cause, and demonstrate the 'added value' of On Track on a daily basis. Thus, an effective On Track project manager needed to be skilled in a variety of areas that included business plan development, human resources, strategic planning, team leadership and risk management.

Leading the team's work

In terms of leading the work of the project, managers were called on actively to give a lead in direct work with users. For managers whose background was in direct work this was relatively easier, but for some whose role had mainly been at a strategic level, this could prove problematic. The absence of fixed working times and patterns among a highly differentiated team of workers could also prove a challenge for management. People '*swanning in and out as they please',* as one manager put it, could

make the professional image of the project and the organisational tasks (including ensuring that people were available to deal with urgent calls) difficult to maintain.

Facilitating cross-agency contacts and working

Just as vital as the ability to lead a team were skills at facilitating relationships with external agencies. As we discussed in Chapter Four, multi-agency working was at the heart of the original vision for On Track and project managers were key to making this a reality. In one project that took part in the service providers' study, for example, the researchers concluded:

> *The manager was also well known and well-connected in the local community and this appeared to be crucial to …effective partnership working with other agencies. One participant in a stakeholders' group discussion referred to [the manager's] ability to "pull people in along the way. As a need is identified they've pulled the appropriate people in…[The project has become like] a spider's web"* (Graham et al, 2006 p47)

Elsewhere the researchers noted:

> *(With) many years of experience of working in the community, [the manager] had drawn on their knowledge of the area and perceptions of the main issues both when writing the On Track bid [for funding] and when initiating and developing the services. [The manager's] existing network of contacts and the degree of respect afforded by workers in other agencies meant that [there were] few problems in integrating On Track into the local infrastructure.* (p44)

By contrast, in another project, one project worker directly attributed the failure to the current project manager, who "(*doesn't) see that multi-agency (working) is any bonus*". Where project managers failed to give this lead, multi-agency working often seemed never to have gone smoothly, leading to "*very little dissemination…and sharing of work*" as one external stakeholder put it.

Although here the comment may have been that the manager showed little personal commitment to multi-agency working, the problem of dual roles for managers was mentioned a number of times. In some case, On Track projects had been subsumed by or had eventually merged with Children's Fund projects, and in other cases managers (like some staff) were on secondment from other agencies, including the Local Education Authority, Social Services, and a range of voluntary organisations. This wearing of two hats was not without problems, (and is discussed below in more detail in relation to front-line staff), and led sometimes to a sense of impermanence that made it harder for the project to bed down.

Coaching, mentoring and developing staff in an evolving organisation

Managers also had a complex role when it came to orchestrating and bringing on staff in this comparatively new and undefined area of service provision. Some

commented that the key to managing a multi-disciplinary team was to focus playing to the different strengths of team members, and also to allow and encourage staff to pursue innovative service models in the direction that their enthusiasm took them. But knowing how much freedom to allow to workers to innovate and find their own ways of working was a challenge. Getting it wrong could result in teams feeling rudderless and lost (see below). However, when managers got it right, there was praise. As one front line worker commented:

> *I think (working in) On Track builds your confidence because of the support we have….(our manager is) such a good manager in that way....she won't do things for you…she'll suggest and help – but she knows you can do it.*
>
> *[On Track worker]*

Another said:

> *Our organisation is an empowering organisation. Until I came down here I didn't know what empowerment was….Here you're left to develop…and I flourish (like that). It's great.*
>
> *[On Track worker]*

Managers who made a virtue out of necessity and who grasped the time-limited nature of On Track, encouraging staff to get the most out of their time there and see the temporary nature of On Track as a development opportunity rather than as a difficulty and a source of anxiety, perhaps performed relatively better in this respect.

A further key to staff development was the manager's ability to facilitate team working across the various On Track services so that the general ethos was 'pulling together' rather than working in isolation. Where staff were encouraged to become involved in other services outside their own discipline this led to greater understanding of overall project objectives and better cohesion among staff. In one project a new manager achieved this by instituting weekly team meetings and encouraging staff to become more involved in cross-service planning, thereby increasing their sense of ownership of the project as whole. In another project, staff cohesion was, according to stakeholders attending the local discussion group, a major factor in the project's successful work in the community. Participants commented on the extent to which the staff worked from the basis of a shared value system and were '*almost evangelical*' in their sense of purpose. One member of the group commented on how '*everyone links with each other, and it's an absolute pleasure to see them*'. This person speculated on how this occurred, given that staff came from a variety of disciplines and not all were employed directly by On Track. The consensus of the group was that it arose from a shared value system which stemmed from the charismatic nature of the manager.

Managers who were asked about how they saw their role during the validation exercise agreed that it was pivotal to the success and development of the project.

They commented that a good On Track project manager needed to be able to understand the 'language' and something of the working practices of very different sectors – especially health, education, and social services. They thought their role required a greater degree of lateral thinking than social care management jobs had once required, including not just understanding the ethos and professional discourses of the different sectors that were brought together under the On Track banner, but also the practical details of differing working practices – working hours (especially an issue for school-based staff who worked around classroom hours), working locations (in-home vs site-based, for example), referral and assessment procedures, risk management procedures and so on and so on. Perhaps On Track managers, above all staff involved with the initiative, embodied the new composite skill set that will have to become par for the course as the policy drive to integrate children's' services gathers speed. In this sense, they were blazing a trail for a new breed of children's service managers far beyond the boundaries of the On Track programme.

As external stakeholders summed it up in one group discussion:

"[The manager] is probably the key to everything."

"I think you can't underestimate the input of [project manager] into On Track"

5.3   Building an appropriately skilled workforce

5.3.1   Training and skills development

On the whole, training needs for On Track workers appeared to have been met. Certainly, from the users' perspectives, On Track staff presented as well-trained, competent and professional. Parents and children in the qualitative study of service users spoke enthusiastically about project staff, who were highly rated on all aspects of their direct dealings with families. In addition, aggregated figures from both Waves of the cohort study showed that overall, in relation to all On Track services (whether family support or school-based), around one in nine of parents felt that staff were easy to talk to, trustworthy, good listeners, and were understanding. Only one in ten or less held negative views (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p102). Secondary school children who had used On Track services were slightly less positive, but still between six and eight in ten rated the staff skills positively (p104). Children and young people in the qualitative study of On Track users indicated that workers were skilled in child-centred methods of working (Grewal et al, 2008 p45) and parents found them supportive and non-judgemental. Their degree of local knowledge, their sense of confidence in the work they were doing and the impression that they 'knew what they were talking about' were praised.

From staff perspectives, the picture was generally the same. The qualitative research amongst service providers, which explored the work of six projects in depth, concluded that overall, *"staff training was an uncontentious matter in the On Track projects"* (Graham et al, 2006 p47). In general, staff commented favourably on the amount

and quality of training available, and most seemed able to access external training opportunities when they wanted. In addition, the multi-disciplinary nature of On Track project work exposed less experienced staff to the benefits of working with senior practitioners with a wide range of experience and expertise, and so the learning environment within On Track projects was often a stimulating one.

However, for some staff, the challenges of working in the particular context of On Track meant that access to training was especially important. If lacking (for example during periods of budgetary constraint) this could compound a sense of being required to work outside one's professional comfort-zone. Some staff had felt that at times, resources were not adequate considering they were being asked to develop and deliver new services outside the boundaries of their professional specialism. Indeed, the 'vague' job specification that seemed to be a hallmark of the On Track initiative - especially in its early days - was a source of considerable anxiety for some. Some staff found that their On Track roles lacked the precision and definition they were used to in other workplaces. One worker pointed out that her job in the project was more vague than any other she had ever had and that she had not been alone among the staff in finding it difficult to adjust from a formal style of working to one where the requirement to try new things was one if its key aspects.

> *Well I'd say in the first year, and this is me being honest, I felt the most de-skilled I'd ever felt in my entire working life … I didn't feel I was challenged. I suppose what I needed and maybe what others have needed as well…what would have been useful, would have been that we were very much directed in the beginning into certain projects … (as) you're trained to do. 'Go and deliver that' and at the same time start to think and work out other ways that you can work, in an evolving way that is going to be forward-thinking and bringing people in. But at the same time you're actually doing something that makes you feel worthwhile as opposed to having this wishy-washy sort of vagueness about what exactly are you meant to be doing.*
>
> *[On Track worker]*

The major issue here was that workers in the project considered they had insufficient opportunity and support to develop services prior to their being implemented. This had initially led them to feel unqualified to do the job, though the situation had improved with time.   On the other hand, the issue of the open and evolving nature of the work described above in negative terms by some, was, paradoxically, the very thing that appealed to others. Perhaps a willingness to work on the edge of (if not outside) one's professional comfort zone was in fact the major requirement of an On Track worker.

5.3.2   Recruitment and retention

Recruitment

Related to this, but also a by-product of the relatively swift expansion of the family support field more generally, some projects experienced difficulties in recruiting

good staff in the first place. As acknowledged by recent policy focus on workforce issues and findings from the evaluation of Sure Start (Ball, 2002), attracting and training up new staff to keep pace with service expansion has not been easy and services in the last few years have been in increasing competition with one another in respect of staff recruitment. For On Track, a critical factor, common to many organisations with short-term funding, lay in attracting and retaining staff who were sufficiently experienced, or, in the words of one manager, '*of the right calibre*'. The time-limited nature of On Track as a 'pilot' compounded these difficulties, of course.

Retention

Retention of staff once recruited was an ongoing challenge for the On Track initiative that was never fully solved. In some senses, this was again an inevitable by-product of the short-term nature of the programme, which at the outset was conceived and experimental and time-limited - although in practice, the programme has run on beyond its originally-specified end-date and some workers have held On Track posts for a very respectable length of time. Typically, staff contracts were issued or renewed for only short periods of time and this had an adverse effect on staff retention. One project manager, for example, highlighted the deleterious effect of the funding cutbacks on staff:

> *I think that the biggest impact is the unsure part around not having the money…*
> *So… you're working hand to mouth to some extent … that has a big impact on*
> *people's positive mental health around their role and their work and things like that.*
> *And I think that that's the thing. So it puts stress on the workers, that's the impact it*
> *has. It was stress for the workers around the unknown.*
>
> *[On Track project manager]*

However, the anxieties created by the impermanence of the programme (and therefore one's job within it) were fatally compounded by repeated budget cuts and for some, the change in governance when On Track became incorporated into the Children's Fund. In one particularly extreme example - though not unique in the difficulties created – one project represented in the qualitative study of service providers had its budget halved in the span of one year, leading to a substantial decrease in commissioned services. Later, when the Children's Fund gained extra money through a contingency fund, it was able to reinstate some of the losses to On Track, but ironically, the effect on the demoralised On Track workforce was not positive. They found themselves having to restore at short notice a service which they had previously had to close, a situation which, they felt, made them appear unprofessional in the eyes of service users. As workers noted, the potentially unsettling effect on service users in this context was not a trivial matter, since efforts to build trust amongst hard to reach families and children could be undermined very easily.

Staff morale by budget cuts was affected in all projects, it is fair to say, but especially in one where, according to one worker, they '*went down into the pits*'. There, funding

reductions coincided with organisational and management changes which led the manager to comment that:

> *I certainly think they've been really knocked back morale-wise by all sorts of confusions and changes.*
>
> *[On Track project manager]*

Short-term contracts also produced uncertainty among workers who were more then likely to leave for other employment when the opportunity arose. Although looking for alternative employment might be a constant in the lives of temporary staff, it became particularly acute as contracts were coming to their conclusion. One manager described staff becoming '*twitchy*' as the end of their contract approached and illustrated this with a '*horrendous'* staffing situation when three members of staff approaching the end of their contracts became pregnant and immediately took sickness leave, with only one returning to work after her period of maternity leave.

As one manager remarked:

> *They know that their contract is going to come to an end at a particular point in time. So nobody's going to wait until their contract end on, say the end of March 2006, they're going to be starting looking for jobs long before that because everyone has bills and mortgages and that's a very unsettling thing for a project. And I think it's been one of the drawbacks.*
>
> *[On Track project manager]*

Overall, however, most projects accommodated and adjusted to the short-term nature of On Track as a programme. Indeed for many managers and workers there was a sense is that it was 'a fact of life' that jobs were not permanent, and that staff simply had to accept and adapt to this. It was also true that there were a number of On Track projects in which there had been considerable workforce stability over practically the whole period of the programme, in spite of the ups and downs in funding and governance. In one project, for example, in which all the staff were from external 'contracted-in' organisations, the majority of those in post at the time of the research interviews in 2005 had been there since the outset. Moreover, they expressed a considerable degree of job-satisfaction and felt that they were engaged in valuable work in the community. Clearly, these staff may have had more of a sense of stability than in-house On Track staff whose jobs were ties to the fortunes of the project itself; but the key perhaps, to dealing with the problem of job insecurity was to help staff understand how to turn this to their advantage, stressing the learning and development opportunities and seeking to maximise this kind of 'pay-back' for staff prepared to work under conditions of impermanence.

5.3.3   Secondment and multi-agency working arrangements

One apparent solution to the difficulties posed by On Track's status as a pilot, experimental programme was to second both front-line staff and managers to projects from external agencies - both statutory bodies such as local Children's Services and local education authorities, and voluntary agencies, both national and local.

This arrangement had varying ramifications for these projects, and offered both benefits and drawbacks. On the one hand, it provided skills and expertise - valuable commodities in the early days of On Track – and an awareness of the local issues and head-start in terms of local networks. On the other hand, secondment often brought its own tensions to a project. In one example, a seconded staff member had been recruited directly into a new post without previously having worked for the employing organisation, and her post would become redundant when the On Track programme ended. She was, therefore, in the same situation of uncertain future as colleagues employed directly by the project on short-term/temporary contracts. Conversely, employer organisations might seek to retain or reclaim their staff during secondment. In another project, a seconded post had been agreed with On Track but the employer organisation was reluctant to have the worker located within On Track, as the On Track manager had requested. Their solution to what had become an impasse was to promote the worker concerned and not provide an alternative worker on secondment to On Track. One project manager described how operating services with seconded staff had produced '*all sorts of hassle*'. Among these was the refusal of an employer organisation to extend the period of secondment but to offer On Track the option of employing the worker itself on a permanent basis. This carried considerable financial implications (if, for example, a worker was approaching retirement age with many years' service).

At certain times in the year when statutory agencies typically had recruiting drives, individual workers might be put under pressure to return to their employing organisation. One worker described the dilemma of being made to choose between resigning her permanent post with the employer organisation and accepting a temporary contract with On Track. The path followed by this worker - remaining with On Track - was not untypical of that followed by other seconded staff who chose not to return to their former employment once their On Track contract ended, and speaks well of the environment and opportunities that were felt to be offered by On Track projects. One manager also commented on the fact that staff from statutory agencies rarely returned to their original employer but were more likely to move on to work in a Children's Centre, suggesting that work in On Track provided a bridge for professionals entering the developing structures of the new era in children's services provision.

Finally, a further issue arising from engaging seconded staff was the potential for a conflict of working practices to occur. On Track project policies and procedures had

to be followed, but at the same time staff would have regard for the professional policies and procedures laid down by their employing organisation. Management problems could also arise. A worker attached to one project which employed external agencies to deliver On Track services pointed out that:

> *We have our own internal management structure, and then it was difficult to kind of get or ascertain what my relationship exactly was with On Track. And sometimes it felt that they were trying to manage me, and other times I felt that they weren't managing me.*
>
> *[On Track worker, on secondment from external agency]*

5.3.4 Workload issues

Administrative workload

Working in a newly developed service was undoubtedly very demanding for some staff. Managers were especially prone to overload, and not surprisingly some struggled to manage their complex and multiple roles.

Administration and paperwork are never easy in service-delivery organisations, but for On Track, quite apart from the 'normal' administrative workloads for services engaged in direct face-to-face work with users (for example, assessment and referral admin, record-keeping etc,) the amalgamation of On Track with the Children' Fund in 2003 created a new and additional set of requirements for On Track projects, since they had to conform with Children's Fund administrative procedures as well as those that had been developed previously.

Unfortunately the demands of being subject to a major national evaluation from day one only contributed to this. The effects, especially at the outset, were substantial and many projects complained about this, with the expectation that projects themselves provide extensive community profiling and costs data a particularly problematic issue. In the minimal costs analysis that was carried out on Phase One data[5] it was found that in the region of 50% of project costs were incurred by time spent on paperwork and administration. Although some of this will have been accounted for by normal administrative effort, and by planning and set-up requirements associated with delivering a new programme, it is likely that evaluation requirements contributed to this high proportion. In Phase Two, evaluation requirements were scaled back, though some projects still found the data demands of the research team problematic to satisfy. It was, however, not possible to ascertain whether there had in fact been any drop in time spent on 'admin' in Phase Two.

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[5] (Matrix Research and Consultancy, 2004, unpublished paper for the DfES)

5.4 Conclusions

Overall, it was clear that there were substantial demands placed on the workforce charged with the task of delivering On Track. Though some of these demands were no different to those reported by social care staff in numerous other studies, some of the demands were of a new and distinctive type, and were associated with the particular challenges and requirements of On Track itself as a service that straddled traditional agency boundaries, and as a programme that was from the outset expect to be time-limited.

Within On Track, the project manager's role was central and critical. The skills and leadership demonstrated by individual managers appears to be closely linked, if not determinant, of whether the project sank or swam in the longer term. Working in an On Track project also required that staff at all levels were prepared to work outside their professional 'comfort zone', in the sense that they were able to work across agency boundaries, and sometimes to work in ways for which they had not been formally trained. We found that generally, staff considered access to training was good within the programme. However, for staff working in these ground-breaking types of initiatives that are not sheltered within a strong institutional structure, it may be that training could more closely reflect the challenges they face. This includes not just the core skills required to work with families in the community, but the specific skills, and indeed the mindset, required to work across agency boundaries, and to work in time-limited, innovative initiatives. Helping staff make the most effective use of the career development opportunities offered by such programmes, so that problems associated with retention can be minimised, may also be an area for attention in future initiatives of this kind. Such issues are well outside the current curricula for staff training in social care. However, it may be that the requirements placed upon On Track staff and managers prefigures what will become commonplace for those involved in implementing the new integrated model of children's services envisaged in the *Every Child Matters* agenda.

Chapter Six: The services that were delivered as part of On Track - process and implementation issues

6.1   Introduction

As the previous chapters suggest, On Track was a complex initiative targeted at children and families with a highly diverse set of needs and concerns. Chapter One described the multi-faceted nature of the programme by introducing the six Home Office intervention categories and noting the high degree of flexibility projects were given in delivering services within these categories. Chapter Two highlighted the fact that no two On Track communities were the same. This chapter underscores the diversity that existed between projects even further, by describing differences in the ways in which local projects interpreted the remit of the programme and developed their services accordingly. This chapter considers variation and similarities between projects by documenting project *inputs* (staffing models and structures), and then examining their collective and individual *outputs* – first in terms of their activities, and then in terms of the individuals that they reached. In so doing, this chapter will address the following key questions:

- How many services the projects offered, collectively and individually
- What kinds of services the projects offered
- The distribution of services across the six core Home Office categories and the degree of homogeneity between projects in what was offered ('programme fidelity')
- The service delivery models and referral routes used to deliver the services and reach users
- Eligibility requirements and referral systems used to ensure that services were targeted appropriately
- The extent to which the pattern of service delivery across the programme changed over time
- The proportion of the child population reached through On Track services in On Track areas
- Key characteristics of service users, including the risk and protective factors with which they presented
- The amount and intensity of service use and changes over time ('dosage')

These questions are answered with reference to several strands of the national evaluation study. First and most importantly, we draw on findings collected from the Tracking Study of services and users, reported in full detail in Dinos et al (2006). This study utilised data that were collected by services and input into a bespoke database for analysis by the research team. We also draw on the cohort survey (Finch et al, 2006a; Aye Maung et al, 2008a) and the qualitative study of service providers (Graham et al, 2006) and users (Grewal et al, 2008). Some data from the Phase One evaluation dataset is also used to illustrate change over time.

6.2 The services that were delivered

6.2.1 Defining a 'service'

This chapter begins with an exploration of the full range of services offered by all On Track projects, nationally and locally, during Phase Two of the evaluation. One of the complications noted by the national evaluators in Phase One was the range and variety of services, making it difficult to develop a meaningful system of classification for descriptive purposes. They found many interventions to be multi-faceted, often subsuming several services under one broad umbrella, so that the definition of what constituted a single service or intervention varied from project to project (Hine, 2005). In an attempt to understand and capture these complexities, the Phase One evaluators introduced the concept of 'strands' and 'threads' as sub-categories of interventions, and asked projects to identify each separate element accordingly.

It was evident that this approach presented difficulties at the analytical stage, however. For this reason, the Phase Two evaluation opted for a simpler schema of categorisation. This conceptualised a 'service' as the smallest unit of provision offered as part of the programme. Similar services delivered in different locations were also counted as many times as they appeared, so for example, a Parenting Group delivered by one project at two different locations was counted as two services. However, services delivered on a one-to-one basis - for example, a home visiting service - were counted only once per project, even though they were tailored to meet the needs of individual users and projects sometimes initially described these as separate 'services'.

6.2.2 Number of services offered

In total, 1,103 service units were identified as implemented by 23[6] projects during data collection for the tracking study in Phase Two of the national evaluation of On Track (October 2003 - July 2005). When the Phase Two evaluation commenced, the majority (63%) of services were recorded as 'new services' and relatively few (17%) had been extended or enhanced since 2000, when the On Track initiative began. The remaining 14% of services were classified as having existed prior to On Track in Phase One, but subsequently brought under the On Track flag, mostly with some enhancement or extension of coverage.

As would be expected from the previous chapters, the 1,103 services were not equally distributed across the 23 On Track projects. Figure 6.1 shows the distribution of these 1,103 services on a project-by-project basis. While the average number of services offered by each of the local projects was 48, there was considerable between-

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[6] 24 projects were operational in Phase One but this reduced to 23 by the end of Phase Two when Bristol On Track was absorbed into the local Children's Fund.

project variability in the number of services offered, ranging from as few as 13 to as many as 106.

This between-project variability is likely to reflect differences in the ways in which projects interpreted the initial directive from the Home Office and how they subsequently deployed their resources. For example, it appears that some projects purposefully commissioned a small number of targeted services to address the most pressing needs or problems in the local community, whereas others adopted a broader, more universal approach as a way of reaching the entire community. It is also likely that the numbers and types of services across the programme as a whole reflected local circumstances connected to funding, strategic partnerships and the pre-existing circumstances of local service provision.

Figure 6.1 Number of services delivered by each On Track project
(Source: Dinos et al, 2006)
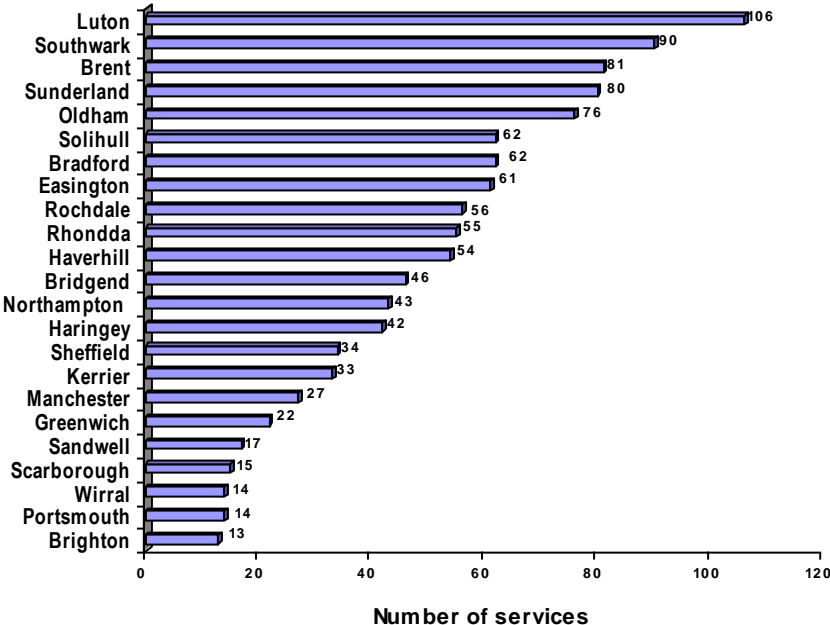
Base = 23 projects and 1,103 services

6.2.3 The distribution of targeted and universal services

On Track projects offered two *types* or modes of delivery, universal and targeted. Box 6.1 provides examples of both types of services and the ways in which they were delivered. It will be noticed that some services (e.g parenting support) could be delivered as either universal or targeted services, so there was a degree of overlap (see also Figure 6.4).

As Box 6.1 suggests, universal services consisted of open-access interventions available to everyone by self referral (although in some cases there may have been some geographical criteria for participation). Typical universal services included

drop-in play schemes or after school clubs that were open to all children. Targeted services, in contrast, were offered to individuals based on specific needs. Some form of assessment of the level of individual need was usually carried out to assess a person's eligibility for that service. Typical targeted interventions included speech and language therapy and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).

Box 6.1 Examples of On Track Services (Source: Graham et al, 2006)

Universal services (open access)

Delivered to all
- Year six transitions work
- After-school clubs
- Issue based work in classrooms (e.g. on bullying, domestic violence, health)
- Training in massage (children to massage other children)

Open to all
- Health drop-in in secondary school
- Parent 'open access' time at On Track project base
- Parent drop-in service in schools
- Parenting support groups

Targeted services (restricted access)
- Diversionary/activity based work with children (small groups)
- Small groups in schools working on particular issues (self confidence, self esteem, anger management)
- One to one mentor services in schools (with parent support included)
- Solution focused therapy
- Home visiting/ support services
- Parenting support groups
- Individual and family therapy

The distribution of targeted and universal services implemented across all On Track projects was more or less equal with just slightly more universal services (n606 services, 55%) than targeted ones (n497 services, 45%). Forty five per cent (n497) of services were reported to be targeted in nature.

As the Table 6.1 shows, there was wide variation between the projects in terms of the balance of targeted and universal services. Seven projects took a predominantly universal approach, with two-thirds of their services falling into the universal category. For example, 86% of all Haringey's services were universal and included many leisure-based activities, such as after school clubs, drama workshops, and summer play schemes. On the other hand, six of the projects offered primarily targeted services, with only one third or less falling into the universal category. For example, only 13% of Scarborough's services were universal, because the vast majority of their work was conducted through highly intensive services, such as family therapy, parent training (via the Webster Stratton 'Incredible Years' series) and school-based targeted work for children dealing with emotional issues. The remaining eleven projects fell somewhere in the middle, with several (including Southwark, Rhondda, Sheffield and Haverhill) showing a more or less even

distribution between targeted and universal services. It is noteworthy that projects that offered fewer services (e.g. Brighton, Portsmouth) also had a higher concentration of targeted services, reflecting the fact that targeted services tend to be more time and resource-intensive.

What might explain this difference in approach? Information gathered from the qualitative study of service providers sheds some light on this, suggesting that the decision to provide predominantly targeted or universal services was often related to whether the project gave a higher prominence to the crime prevention, or alternatively the social inclusion, aspect of its remit. For example, managers who felt that On Track was primarily a social inclusion initiative argued that projects should move away from highly targeted services aimed at individual children and their families and work towards a more inclusive approach which sought to engage the wider On Track community with universally available preventative services. In contrast, projects that saw their remit more in terms of crime prevention were more likely to identify and target individual children (and their families) for participation in the project and relied more heavily on individual case work.

Table 6.1 Distribution of targeted and universal services by project (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)				
	Type of On Track Service			
	Targeted		**Universal**	
On Track Project	**%**	**n**	**%**	**N**
Scarborough (n15)	**87**	13	**13**	2
Manchester (n27)	**85**	23	**15**	4
Portsmouth (n14)	**79**	11	**21**	3
Brighton (n13)	**69**	9	**31**	4
Brent (n81)	**68**	55	**32**	26
Bridgend (n46)	**65**	30	**35**	16
Bradford (n62)	**58**	36	**42**	26
Rochdale (n56)	**57**	32	**43**	24
Haverhill (n54)	**54**	29	**46**	25
Sheffield (n34)	**53**	18	**47**	16
Rhondda (n55)	**47**	26	**53**	29
Southwark (n90)	**47**	42	**53**	48
Oldham (n76)	**43**	33	**57**	43
Sandwell (n17)	**41**	7	**59**	10
Luton (n106)	**37**	39	**63**	67
Kerrier (n33)	**36**	12	**64**	21
Easington (n61)	**34**	21	**66**	40
Greenwich (n22)	**32**	7	**68**	15
Northampton (n43)	**30**	13	**70**	30
Wirral (n14)	**29**	4	**71**	10
Solihull (n62)	**23**	14	**77**	48
Sunderland (n80)	**21**	17	**79**	63
Haringey (n42)	**14**	6	**86**	36
All (n1103)	**45**	497	**55**	606

Base = 23 projects, 1,103 services

6.2.4 Distribution of services according to the Home Office categories

As described in the first chapter of this report, the Home Office originally advised On Track projects to develop their services within six core 'evidence-based' categories that included home visiting, family therapy, parent training, pre-school education, home-school partnerships and a sixth category covering services provided by specialists. Examples of services developed within these categories are listed in Box 6.2, where it can be seen that both targeted and universal services could be offered within each of the six original Home Office categories. It is important to note that these examples do not necessarily describe all the services delivered under each category by each project. Many projects used only some elements of the evidence-based framework. Some used other models, and some developed their own 'bespoke' versions of these services.

Box 6.2: Examples of On Track interventions within the six Home Office categories

Home visiting
Several On Track projects co-ordinated their services with *Home Start* to deliver home visiting services to particularly needy families living within their project area boundaries. Home Start is a voluntary organisation that trains parent volunteers to provide support to other families who are in difficulties. Families eligible for this service could include those with a parent with post-natal depression, or where there had been a bereavement or there was a child with special needs. Most of these services were delivered as targeted interventions (provided on the basis of need).

Parent support and training
Parent support and training was offered as both a universal and targeted service within all of the projects. The popular *Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities* is an example of a universal parenting course offered by several projects. This 12-week course emphasises a positive, authoritative approach to parenting and participants receive a certificate upon completion. Other examples of parenting support interventions used by several projects were the Webster Stratton courses (both *Incredible Years* and *Dina Dinosaur* were used) which use video-modelling and group work approaches.

Family therapy
Solution Focused Therapy was an approach used by several On Track projects as a form of family therapy. This method aims to empower families by helping them to identify solutions to their problems and providing them with appropriate strategies for implementing them. This therapy was offered both through home visits and at schools. Most family therapy was offered only as a targeted intervention, but a few projects implemented this as universal service (equivalent to around one fifth of all family therapy services)

Home-school partnerships
First-day Response is an example of a home-school partnership intervention targeted at potential truants, whereby parents receive a phone call whenever their child has not attended school. Home-school liaison workers were based in some projects doing one-to-one work with families, and other examples included *Parents as First Teachers* and the *SHARE* curriculum designed to help parents support children's learning at home and in school. These services were delivered as targeted and universal interventions in more or less equal proportions.

Pre-school education
A number of On Track projects offered the popular *High/Scope* curriculum to pre-school children living within their catchment area. First introduced in the US in the early 70's, the High/Scope approach encourages young children to plan and make decisions for themselves, as well as emphasising pro-social interactions. The Home Office originally recommended the High/Scope curriculum as an example of an 'evidence – based' pre-school intervention. Another example involved the use of play with '*Persona Dolls'* to stimulate children's awareness of stereotyping and racism. Around four fifths of these services were delivered on a universal basis.

Specialist
Place 2 Be is one example of an intervention provided by specialist therapists. Art and play materials are used to help children understand and express their feelings safely, so that they gain confidence and independence.

Figure 6.2 provides an aggregated overview of how On Track services were distributed across the six Home Office categories, as classified by project managers. As it suggests, just under half (45%) of all services delivered as part of this initiative were grouped within a sixth, 'specialist' classification. The next largest classification was home-school partnership (33%), followed by parent support and training (9%), family therapy (6%), home visiting (6%) and pre-school education (2%).

Figure 6.2 Distribution of services by Home Office categories (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)
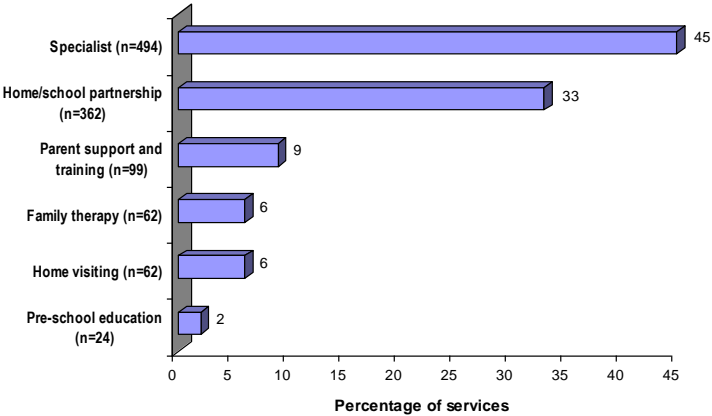
Base = 23 projects and 1,103 services

As Table 6.2 suggested, the national picture shown in the Figure masks the extent of individual variation that existed between the projects at the local level. Clearly, some projects, (for example Easington and Haringey) heavily utilised the specialist category for classifying their services, whereas others (Greenwich and Haverhill in particular) had a more even distribution across the other five Home Office interventions. By and large, however, the bulk of the services for most projects either fell into the specialist category or home-school partnerships. As we will see in later chapters, schools were seen by projects as likely to provide an optimal environment for delivering services. Though in some areas the necessary relationships between projects and schools took a while to take root, many On Track services eventually flourished under this category.

It is also noteworthy that relatively few services fell into the family therapy, home visiting and preschool education categories. This is probably not surprising, since both family therapy and home visiting are resource-intensive forms of intervention. Pre-school education, by definition, does not include services for children in the target age range of four to 12. In fact, only half of the projects offered any kind pre-school education provision at all, and in many projects, these services had been discontinued during the lifetime of Phase Two of the programme. When budget cuts were implemented during the life of the programme pre-school services were often seen as least central to the core objectives of the On Track programme and therefore were prime candidates for cuts.

		Home visiting		Pre-school education		Parent support & training		Family therapy		Home-school partnership		Specialist	
Table 6.2 Distribution of Home Office category by project (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)														
		%	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
Bradford	n62	7	4	5	3	5	3	7	4	16	10	61	38
Brent	n81	0	0	0	0	7	6	22	18	9	7	62	50
Bridgend	n46	9	4	2	1	24	11	13	6	50	23	2	1
Brighton	n13	8	1	0	0	8	1	0	0	77	10	8	1
Easington	n61	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	97	59
Greenwich	n22	5	1	9	2	18	4	5	1	32	7	32	7
Haringey	n42	5	2	0	0	7	3	2	1	7	3	79	33
Haverhill	n54	4	2	0	0	22	12	6	3	37	20	32	17
Kerrier	n33	6	2	9	3	18	6	3	1	30	10	33	11
Luton	n106	6	6	0	0	11	12	0	0	62	66	21	22
Manchester	n27	7	2	4	1	7	2	4	1	67	18	11	3
Northampton	n43	5	2	0	0	2	1	2	1	54	23	37	16
Oldham	n76	5	4	1	1	7	5	0	0	32	24	55	42
Portsmouth	n14	50	7	0	0	7	1	14	2	7	1	21	3
Rhondda	n55	9	5	11	6	13	7	6	3	22	12	40	22
Rochdale	n56	20	11	0	0	2	1	9	5	66	37	4	2
Sandwell	n17	0	0	12	2	24	4	12	2	18	3	35	6
Scarborough	n15	13	2	7	1	13	2	0	0	40	6	27	4
Sheffield	n34	3	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	59	20	35	12
Solihull	n62	5	3	2	1	10	6	5	3	42	26	37	23
Southwark	n90	1	1	2	2	11	10	10	9	30	27	46	41
Sunderland	n80	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	80
Wirral	n14	7	1	0	0	14	2	14	2	57	8	7	1
All	n1103	6	62	2	24	9	99	6	62	33	362	45	494

6.2.5   Specialist services

Just under half (45%) of all On Track services fell into the specialist category. The Home Office Guidance designated this as a way for projects to offer interventions managed by 'specialists' who did not necessarily deliver their services within any of the other five categories. It was anticipated that this category would give projects the flexibility necessary to address specific individual needs using a tailored therapeutic approach. Examples of potential specialist interventions suggested by the Home Office included speech and language therapy and post-natal depression counselling. The specialist category was not, however, intended to be used as a 'catch-all' classification for all interventions that did not fit neatly within the other five categories. Furthermore, it was expected that all services within the specialist category would still address risk and protective factors associated with antisocial behaviour.

However, closer inspection of the data from the tracking study revealed that although therapeutic interventions accounted for the largest sub-group of services described by projects as 'specialist', the specialist category was also used to classify a broad variety of services. Some of these were not *directly* related to risk and protective factors associated with antisocial behaviour, and would more usually be categorised as preventive – in the broadest sense of that term. For example, specialist services included cookery, drama, football, swimming, and youth clubs. In order to better understand the types of services that were provided by projects within the specialist category and to facilitate more meaningful analysis, the research team inspected all reports of specialist services known to be operating in the six exemplar projects who participated in the qualitative study of service providers (Graham et al 2006). These were then grouped thematically, as a result of which ten distinct groups of 'specialist' services were identified:

- Event – this could take the form of a day trip or a whole-school event like a 'fun day'
- Drama – activities such as drama clubs or drama lessons
- Sports – usually diversionary services aimed at providing at risk children with constructive out of school activities
- Youth Club – provision made available to children before and after school - these could be offered on a universal or targeted basis
- Transition – dealing with transitions from primary to secondary school
- Health – could include substance misuse support services
- Learning – services focused on curriculum or curriculum support learning
- Play Scheme – services that provided a space for young children to play together
- Therapeutic, counselling and one to one (usually school based) – could take the form of emotional support for children, or advice services
- Other - where we were unable to determine the nature of the service or it did not fit into the above categories.

The distribution of these specialist service categories is presented in Figure 6.3.

The Figure suggests that many projects did offer specialist services as a way of meeting the specific needs of individual children and their families. In fact, counselling services constituted the highest percentage (39%) of all services offered within the specialist category. An example of a counselling service falling within the 'specialist' category includes Oldham's 'Child Domestic Violence Counselling Service' that provided support to children living in homes where there was domestic violence.

However, there were also a fair number of services, such as drama classes and sports clubs, that did not directly address any of the primary issues related to the overall On Track initiative. In fact, sports clubs, after school drama classes, youth clubs, play schemes, one-off events and other services that could not be otherwise categorised made up over 40% of the specialist services offered by the six projects sampled in the

qualitative study of service providers. Examples of such specialist activities included a badminton tournament sponsored by a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. It is also noteworthy that many of the specialist interventions were school-based. An example of such a service was Oldham's 'Triangle' project that aimed to create community cohesion by linking primary schools through an arts-based curriculum targeted at children with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Figure 6.3: Distribution of specialist services (based on data from six projects)
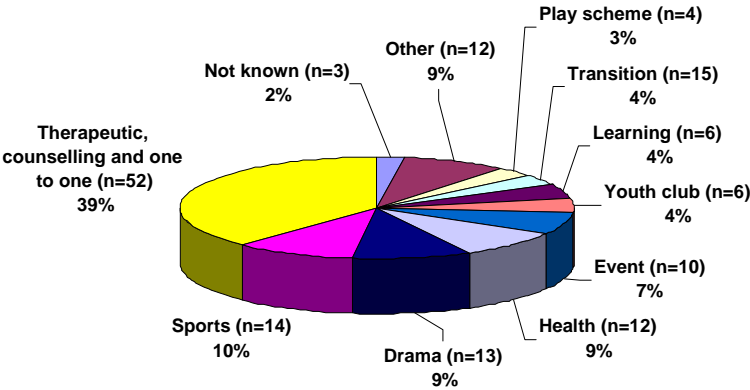
Base: 6 projects, 137 services

6.2.6 Distribution of services according to the Home Office categories by service type (targeted and universal)

In the tracking strand of the evaluation, service providers were asked to indicate whether the service was offered universally or targeted and the Home Office category it fell into (e.g. specialist, family therapy, etc.). Figure 6.4 provides an overview of the distribution of targeted and universal services within each of the six Home Office categories.

Figure 6.4: Distribution of services according to the Home Office categories by service type (targeted and universal) (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)
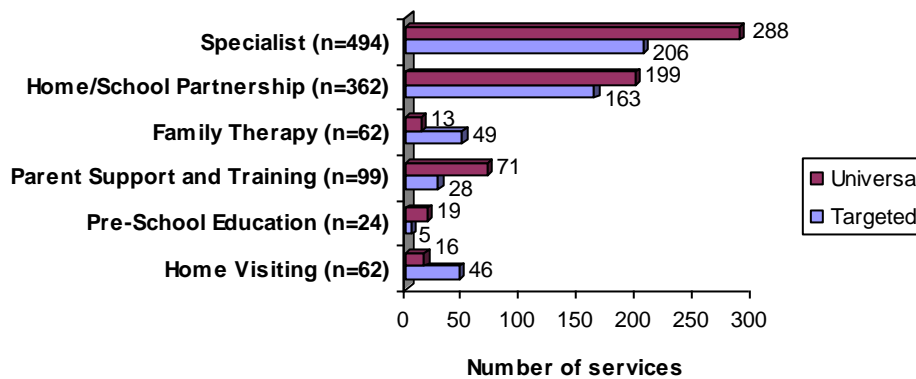
Base: 23 projects, 1103 services

As Figure 6.4 suggests, the majority of services (n288, 58%) offered within the specialist category were defined as universal, as were a slight majority of services labelled as home-school partnerships (n199, 55%). This was also the case for services offered within the parent support and training (n71, 72%) and preschool education (n19, 79%) categories. However, the opposite was true for the remaining two categories, with home visiting offered as a targeted service in 74% (n46) of the cases and family therapy offered as a targeted service 79% (n49) of the time.

6.2.7   Projects' interpretations of the Home Office categories

The findings presented above raise several questions. For example, why did On Track projects offer so many services under the specialist category and what was their overall understanding of service provision within the other five Home Office categories? The qualitative study of service providers explored these issues (Graham et al, 2006), and revealed a certain level of difficulty in applying the Home Office classification system to the complex reality of On Track local projects. Managers described how some services could fall under more than one category, whereas other services did not seem to fall into any. For example, one- to-one family work arising from a school referral could be classed under home visiting, family therapy, or home-school partnership. On the other hand, other services, such as the provision of daily fruit for children in schools, did not fall neatly into any category and were thus either placed into the specialist category or more or less arbitrarily placed into one of the other five categories. The project managers also questioned the value of a pre-school category when the On Track programme had been intended to work with children of school age.

However, it was clear that the perceived lack of relevance of the categories reflected a broader viewpoint that the overall focus of the On Track initiative had shifted over time from a more tightly defined crime prevention agenda to a more general focus on community development and family support: in other words, towards a 'social inclusion' agenda (Graham et al, 2006 p55):

> *For example family therapy, … reading that as someone on the outside you'd think family therapy meant actually working with families in therapeutic situations. Classic family therapy, you've got the worker or therapist who meets with the family, you know and who talks to the parents and the children and works with them together and all that sort of stuff. Well that is far too specialised (a) for our staff team to do. If you've got a qualified family therapist, that's quite a valuable resource. And(b) … and this really gets to the nub of On Track … (b) the sort of referrals we would get for family therapy for example would be far too…. what I call 'high tariff', far too chronic, far too difficult really, for preventative work. Anybody referring to us for some sort of therapeutic input would be referring a family who would be already involved in quite difficult antisocial behaviour. We're supposed to be preventing antisocial behaviour not actually trying to cope with families who already are engaging in antisocial behaviour.*
>
> *(On Track project manager)*

According to the qualitative study, the original Home Office categories therefore appear to have provided an inadequate system for classifying the various individual services the On Track projects delivered, and this system was thought to have become more inadequate over time. It is not entirely clear why this should be. It might reflect a mismatch between the original broad remit of On Track (ie, the focus on early prevention) and the nature of some of the service categories which were suggested in the initial guidance to projects (some of which were therapeutic rather than preventive). Equally, it may reflect the changing nature of the On Track remit over time as the programme moved through different government units and departments. Or, it might reflect the fact that some projects developed their work with only indirect reference to the original government guidance.

From a broader perspective, however, the data collected via the tracking strand of the evaluation suggests that the majority of projects were delivering a multi-modal suite of services which clearly had relevance for an early crime prevention agenda. However, the strength of the crime prevention objective varied between projects. Some projects tackled early offending head-on through vehicles such as universally offered anti-bullying campaigns, whilst others addressed crime more indirectly through services such as sports programmes that aimed to raise children's self-esteem. Moreover, a check run during tracking data analysis involving an inspection of the grouping of services by Home Office category against the projects' own allocation to a 'Best Fit' category revealed surprisingly little difference using either system. In summary, we concluded that for the purposes of analysis, the Home Office categories probably worked as well - or as badly - as any other model of categorisation that might have been employed.

6.3   On Track project models and service environments

As will be clear by now, the On Track projects were given a considerable degree of freedom in interpreting the original Home Office remit and were encouraged to tailor the original guidance to the needs of their local community. While projects received a set of guidelines regarding the six intervention categories, there was no specific advice regarding how and where these services should be delivered. This section explores similarities and differences between the projects in terms of the models used for managing and delivering services, as well as the various service delivery environments.

6.3.1   On Track project service delivery models

The first sections of this chapter describe how projects varied in terms of the proportion of services that were either universal or targeted, as well as in terms of their distribution across the six Home Office intervention categories.   Projects also differed in terms of the service models they used for managing and delivering their services. At the time of the Phase Two evaluation, projects were asked to specify their management systems via the following classification system developed by the research team during the early stages of the study, and shown diagrammatically earlier in Chapter Four (Figs 4.1-4.3):

- An *in-house* approach to service delivery whereby the On Track team has the primary responsibility for delivering the interventions. Such projects tended to employ a large staff team.
- A *contracted-out* method of service delivery where project managers negotiated delivery contracts with local agencies and services were contracted out through service level agreements. These services were then paid for through the On Track budget.
- A *mixed-economy* approach that utilised both in-house and contracted out methods of delivery.

Table 6.3 lists the 23 On Track projects in terms of their main service delivery models. The rationales for the categorisation are:

- *In house* – All services were delivered internally by an in house core On Track team, hired specifically to work within the On Track framework for a designated period of time (usually dependent upon funding). In addition to this some projects would commission sessional workers from other agencies, both statutory and voluntary. For example, one project operating an in house model hired up to 20 sessional workers in addition to its core team made up of 8 professionals.
- *Contracted out* – Projects operating this model of service delivery commission all their service from external agencies that would have responsibility for delivering their service under the umbrella of On Track. Project models ranged from a core team of a minimum of 2 people (a project co-ordinator and an administrator), to a core team of up to 7 people including a project co-

ordinator, administrator, a multiple intervention coordinator, case coordinators, and other support staff.

- *Mixed economy* – Projects would use both models to deliver different elements of the project.

The findings reported in Table 6.3 suggest that just under one-third (seven) projects adopted a contracted out approach to delivering services and only five applied an in-house approach. The remaining eleven used a mixed economy approach – where a core On Track team co-ordinated and delivered some services, but services were also contracted out to external agencies through service delivery agreements.

Table 6.3 Modes of service delivery (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)		
Contracted out approach	**In house approach**	**Mixed economy approach**
- Brent - Brighton - Greenwich - Portsmouth - Sandwell - Sheffield - Wirral	- Bradford - Haverhill - Luton - Northampton - Sunderland	- Bridgend - Easington - Haringey - Kerrier - Manchester - Oldham - Rhondda - Rochdale - Scarborough - Solihull - Southwark

6.3.2 The On Track service delivery environment

Given the multi-faceted nature of the six core Home Office interventions, On Track services could be delivered in a variety of environments that included schools, health agencies, community centres and family homes. Data collected through the Tracking strand of the evaluation found that more than half of all On Track services were delivered in schools (51%, n562). The second most frequently reported delivery environment was in users' own home (20%, n217) and an additional 9% of all services were delivered in a community or family centre (9%, n102). The high number of services offered via schools made it possible to consider differences between projects in terms of the distribution between school-based and non-school-based services and this is reported in Table 6.4.

		School based		Non-school based									
Table 6.4 Service delivery environment by project (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)													
		School		**User's home**		**Community or family centre**		**On Track drop-in centre**		**On Track Project Office**		**Other**	
		%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
Haringey	(n40)	85	34	0	0	8	3	0	0	8	3	0	0
Manchester	(n27)	85	23	7	2	4	1	0	0	4	1	0	0
Sunderland	(n80)	78	62	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	18	0	0
Brent	(n80)	75	60	20	16	3	2	0	0	3	2	0	0
Northampton	(n41)	73	30	7	3	7	3	0	0	12	5	0	0
Oldham	(n64)	72	46	5	3	20	13	0	0	3	2	0	0
Southwark	(n90)	62	56	36	32	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0
Wirral	(n13)	62	8	31	4	0	0	0	0	8	1	0	0
Luton	(n106)	60	64	26	28	11	12	2	2	0	0	0	0
Easington	(n57)	56	32	42	24	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
Solihull	(n59)	56	33	7	4	17	10	2	1	19	11	0	0
Haverhill	(n53)	55	29	4	2	8	4	15	8	19	10	0	0
Kerrier	(n31)	45	14	13	4	13	4	0	0	29	9	0	0
Bradford	(n55)	38	21	13	7	7	4	2	1	40	22	0	0
Bridgend	(n42)	38	16	29	12	17	7	0	0	17	7	0	0
Scarborough	(n12)	25	3	17	2	0	0	25	3	33	4	0	0
Rhondda	(n53)	23	12	34	18	25	13	9	5	9	5	0	0
Rochdale	(n53)	23	12	60	32	15	8	2	1	0	0	0	0
Sandwell	(n15)	13	2	40	6	20	3	13	2	13	2	0	0
Greenwich	(n18)	11	2	72	13	6	1	6	1	6	1	0	0
Sheffield	(n29)	10	3	14	4	48	14	0	0	7	2	21	6
All	(n1019)	55	562	21	217	10	102	2	24	11	108	6	6

Base = 21 projects, missing = 2; 1,019 services, missing = 84

It can be seen from Table 6.4 that the On Track projects fell into one of three delivery environment categories: primarily school-based, primarily non-school based and 'equally distributed' between school and non-school environments. Just over one-third of the projects (9) offered the majority of their services through schools and just under one–third of the projects (8) offered 62% or more of their services off school premises. Only four of the projects had a relatively equal distribution of school and non-school based services.

6.4   Eligibility criteria and referral routes

The original Home Office guidance placed an emphasis on the need for projects to develop robust systems for identifying children in need and referring them to the appropriate services. In fact, projects were required to specify in advance in their delivery plans: how they would identify children at risk; what standardised assessment tools they would use; and the systems they would use to track, monitor

and refer their users. In addition, projects were asked to establish target dates for when these systems would be fully implemented. The Home Office guidance also emphasised the need for projects to establish systems that were easily accessible for self referral, stating that "*relationship and trust building will be key – as will encouraging self-referral [and] this will be an important area for developing best practice.*" (Home Office, 1999) This section considers the various ways in which users were eligible for services, the ways in which their needs were identified and the systems used for referring them to the appropriate professionals and agencies.

6.4.1 Eligibility by type of user

Services were designed with a view to meeting the wide ranging and often multiple and complex needs of users. Many services set criteria to determine which users would be eligible to attend a specific service. Eligibility criteria included targeting particular types of users (e.g. children, parents, etc.), particular minority communities and specific kinds of needs (e.g. family conflict, learning problems).

According to data collected from the Tracking strand (Dinos et al, 2006), the largest proportion of On Track services were developed with child users in mind. One in five services was formed to support parents and almost a quarter were developed to meet the needs of families. Approximately one in every ten services was designed for professionals (e.g. services providing training or support to professionals).

6.4.2 Eligibility by user groups

Sixty-seven (n739) per cent of all services were aimed at, although not exclusively limited to, specific populations within the community. For example, thirty seven per cent (n276) of services were intended to be supportive to minority ethnic communities. A few On Track services were provided for asylum seekers or refugees (25%; n21) and the traveller community (21%; n231).

Box 6.3 provides some case examples of how projects and external stakeholders regarded the issue of defining the 'target' user group, adapted from the qualitative study of service providers (Graham et al, 2006) which explored in-depth the working models of six 'exemplar' projects.

Box 6.3 Defining On Track user groups (Source: Graham et al, 2006)

Projects differed in how they established who the target group for their activities should be. One project was exceptional in having based its service plan on a detailed risk audit undertaken in schools in the On Track area in 2001. However, the other five projects had undertaken similar, but generally smaller scale needs-analysis in their areas throughout the life span of the On Track initiative.

Another critical difference was within-project awareness of the target group. Broadly speaking On Track 'core' staff (managers and On Track-located workers) tended to have a higher awareness, and greater clarity about, the nature of their target group(s). Those providing services through contracted-out services, and local external agency stakeholders, were less uniform in their understanding of the target group(s).

Workers were most likely to identify the On Track target group as those who fitted the specific aims and objectives of their individual services (for example, a transitions worker would discuss the target group as being children moving from primary to secondary school). Nevertheless this was often framed within an understanding of the early prevention remit of On Track. In contrast, external stakeholders were typically less clear about who On Track services were aimed at and why, with the exception of those who had been heavily involved in the implementation of the initiative through steering group membership or other mechanisms. For example, a senior YOT care manager who attended a stakeholder group discussion in one area described how, from his role on the steering group for the project, he understood the explicit targets of On Track to be *'the parents and kids'* but that alongside this there were *'covert'* targets like schools and local health centres where the intention was to increase multi-agency cooperation and to encourage other agencies to engage with families in a different way.

6.4.3   Eligibility by need or problem

For the Tracking study, projects also provided information on the extent to which On Track services were designed to address different needs or problems within the community. In many cases (30%, n328) only users (children) who had problems with behaviour were eligible to attend. In 28% of the cases, services were designed for children who had learning problems. In addition, 21% and 16% of the services dealt with issues related to the wider family such as family conflict and parenting problems respectively. It needs to be noted, however, that this information is not based on an 'objective' measurement of needs but rather represents service providers' perceptions of needs and reports via the tracking study database. Definitions provided to projects of the various types of problem are discussed in detail in the Tracking study report (Dinos et al, 2006).

6.4.4   Eligibility by type of service

Information on eligibility criteria by type of service, whether targeted or universal, showed that whilst services aimed at parents or professionals only were delivered more or less equally as both targeted and universal services, those aimed at children, the wider community or at volunteers were more likely to be delivered as universal services. Universal and targeted services were equally likely to cater for minority ethnic groups and asylum seekers, and services aimed at travellers were somewhat more likely to be delivered as targeted interventions. Parenting problems were covered more or less equally by both types of service, but services aimed at problems in respect of family conflict, learning or behaviour problems tended to be delivered as targeted interventions.

Table 6.5 Eligibility criteria by type of service (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)		Type of service			
		Targeted		Universal	
		%	n	%	n
Status					
Family	(n 257)	**56**	143	**44**	114
Professionals	(n 134)	**50**	67	**50**	67
Parents only	(n 231)	**48**	111	**52**	120
Children only	(n 752)	**46**	346	**54**	406
Community	(n 52)	**27**	14	**73**	38
Volunteers	(n 45)	**24**	11	**76**	34
Groups					
Traveller	(n 231)	**53**	122	**47**	109
Asylum seeker	(n 232)	**52**	121	**48**	111
Minority ethnic	(n 276)	**50**	139	**50**	137
Issues					
Family conflict	(n 229)	**65**	149	**35**	80
Learning problems	(n 306)	**63**	193	**37**	113
Behavioural problems	(n 328)	**59**	192	**41**	136
Parenting problems	(n 178)	**53**	94	**47**	84

Base = 23 projects and 1,103 services

6.4.5   Referral routes

Figure 6.5 shows the different referral routes into On Track services. In most cases, there was more than one possible entry point into a service. Users who accessed multiple services may have been referred by different agencies each time and therefore the Figure presents the frequency at which each referral occurred.

Figure 6.5 Referral routes of On Track services (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)
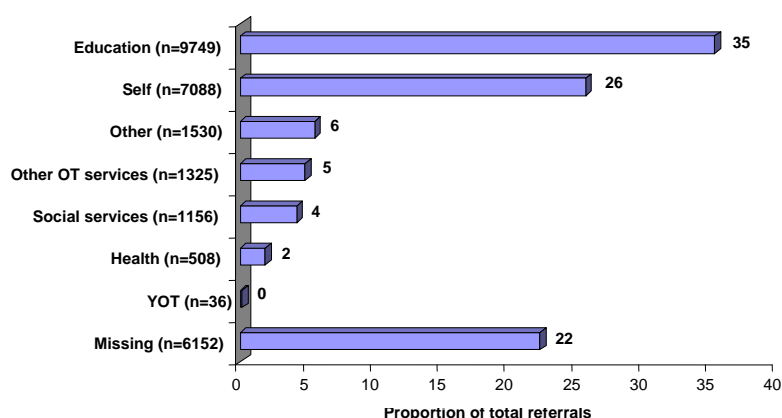
Base = 23 projects and 27,544 services used

As Figure 6.5 suggests, a large proportion of data pertaining to referral routes was missing (22%). Nevertheless, these figures provide insight into the different entry points for On Track services, suggesting that 35% of all referrals were made by

educational services (e.g. schools) and 26% of all referrals came from the users themselves. Self-referrals were particularly common amongst those participating in pre-school education and parent support and training, whereas educational agencies provided the majority of referrals to services falling within the home visiting, family therapy, home-school partnership and specialist intervention categories.

6.5   Changes in service structure and delivery over time

This section considers changes in service structure and delivery over time by comparing On Track services developed in Phase One (2000-2003) and Two (2003-2004) – first in terms of the number of services offered and then in terms of changes in the distribution of services offered within the six Home Office categories.

6.5.1   Number of interventions in Phase One versus the number of services in Phase Two

Figure 6.6 compares the number of interventions offered in Phase One with the number of services offered in Phase Two across all projects. When interpreting the findings reported in Figure 6.6, it should be remembered that during Phase One, the term 'intervention' was used as a generic way of describing an overarching service (for example, a parenting support course) which was then separated into smaller units of provision (where necessary) called 'strands'. In the Phase Two tracking systems, however, both of these terms were replaced by the generic term 'service', which was used to represent the lowest unit of provision. Thus, when comparing Phase One and Phase Two data, for the most part the term intervention implies multiple units of service provision and the term service implies a single unit of service provision. For this reason, we report these figures in terms of proportions rather than numbers of services. It is also worth noting that no formal guidance existed in Phase One or Phase Two for classifying interventions or services, so projects made their own decisions regarding how provision should be classified. And as we have indicated, in some cases projects struggled to understand how the national Home Office categories could be made meaningful in the local context. For this reason, it should be kept in mind that the data in Figure 6.6 regarding interventions and services represent different units of provision for each of the projects and should be interpreted accordingly.

Figure 6.6 Interventions in Phase One and services in Phase Two by On Track project, as a proportion of all interventions/services offered (Source: Dinos et al, 2005; Dinos et al, 2006)
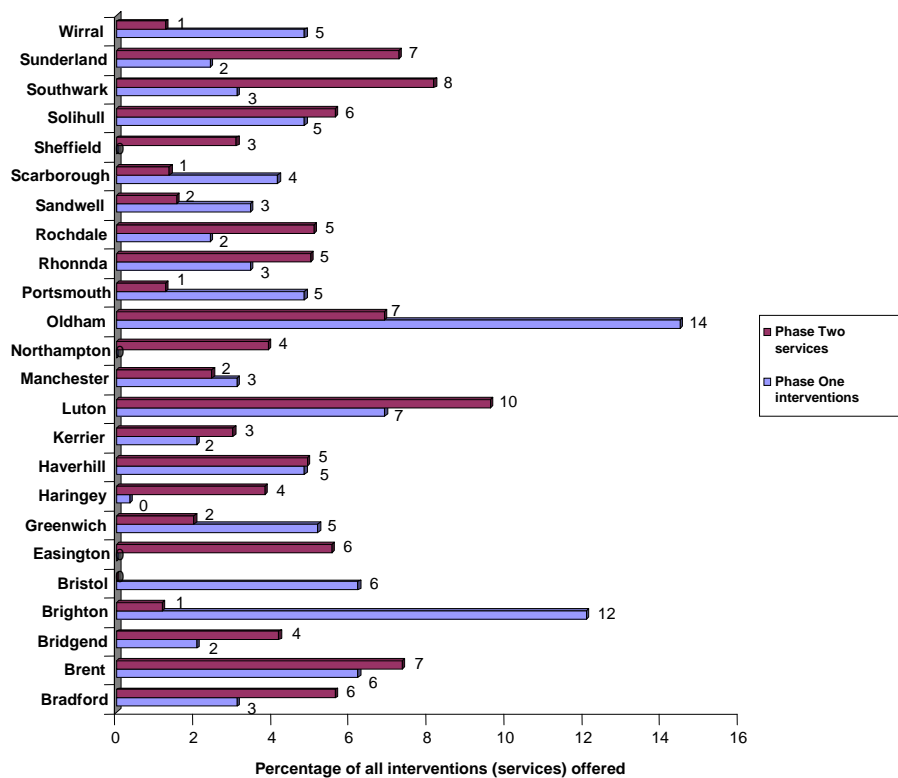
Base = Phase One: 21 projects 290 interventions; Phase Two: 23 projects, 1103 services

Note: Phase One data missing for Sheffield, Northampton and Easington

Overall a total of 290 interventions were delivered in Phase One across all 24 projects and in Phase Two, 1,103 services were delivered across 23 projects (as Bristol was no longer delivered as an On Track project). It is also apparent that eight projects actually reduced the number of services offered, with Oldham and Brighton showing the greatest decrease in the percentage of services. However, 13 of the projects substantially increased the proportion of services offered during Phase Two.

6.5.2 The distribution of interventions in Phase One and services in Phase Two by Home Office category

Figure 6.7 provides an overview of the distribution of interventions (or services) across the six Home Office intervention categories. From Figure 6.7 it is apparent that there was a shift in service provision, showing substantial increases in services offered via the home-school partnership and specialist categories and a decrease in the number of services offered in the home visiting and preschool education categories. One possible reason for this shift could be that many of the school-based universal services were mainstreamed during Phase One of the evaluation and started to extend in Phase Two (see Chapter Fourteen of this report for more detail).

Figure 6.7 Interventions in Phase One and services in Phase Two, by Home Office category
(Source: Dinos et al, 2005; Dinos et al, 2006)
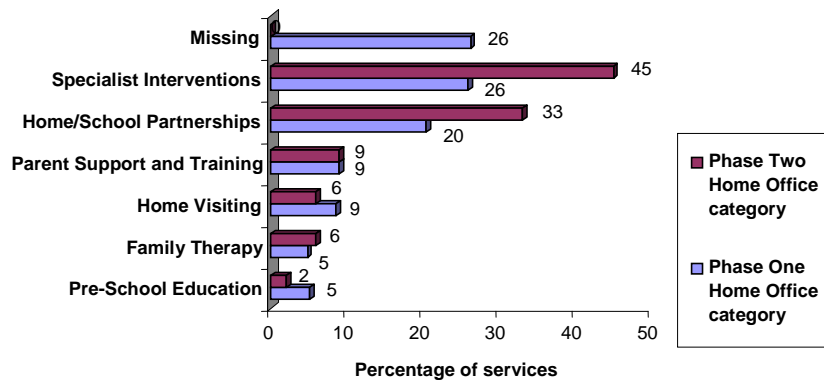
Base = Base = Phase One: 24 projects 290 interventions; Phase Two: 23 projects, 1103 services

6.6   On Track service users

As emphasised in Chapter One, the primary aim of the On Track initiative was to reduce the risk factors and increase the protective factors associated with antisocial behaviour amongst youth in highly deprived areas. The previous half of this chapter considered project outputs in terms of the services that were put into place. This section now considers project outputs in terms of how many and what kinds of children and families actually used On Track services. In answering these questions, the following sections will consider:

- the number of children and parents participating in On Track services
- the percentage of On Track areas' population reached through these services (throughput)
- the characteristics (including presenting risk factors) of On Track users
- the reasons why individuals used services
- the amount (or dosage) of the service individuals received.

6.6.1   Distribution of On Track users across all projects

In total, the On Track projects reached 16,761 children and parents over the period of the Phase Two evaluation. Figure 6.8 provides an overview of distribution of these users across all 23 projects active throughout Phase Two.

Figure 6.8 Distribution of On Track users across all projects (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)
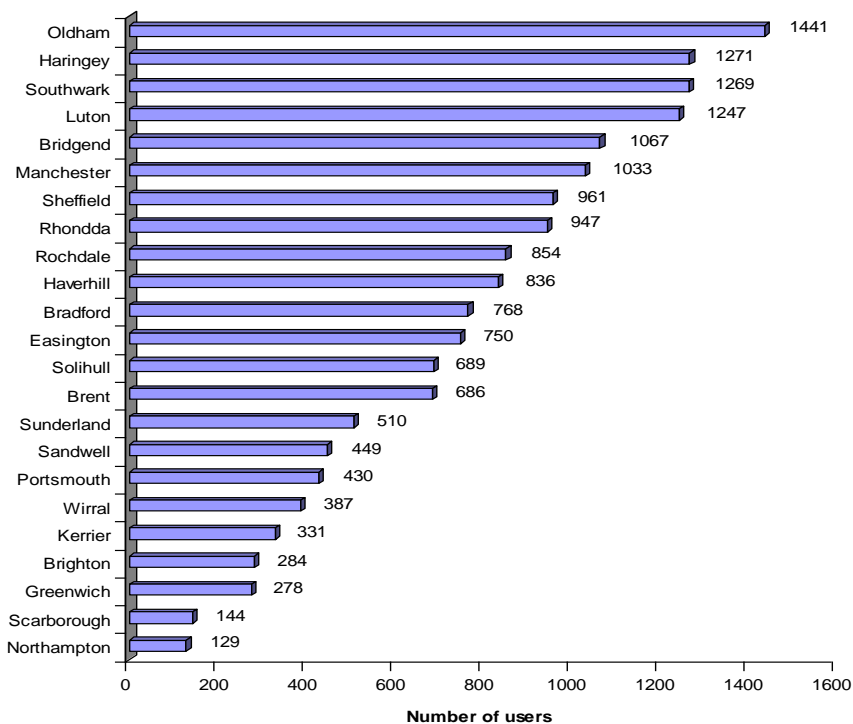
Base = 16, 761 users in 23 projects

Although the average number of users across all projects was 729, Figure 6.8 shows that there was a high degree of variability between projects in terms of the number of users they actually reached -- from as few as 129 to as many as 1,441. At first glance, this wide variation appears to suggest that some projects were much better than others in reaching parents and children. However, it should be kept in mind that projects differed in the extent to which they recorded information regarding users of universal services, and therefore the totals presented are likely to underestimate the total number of users for all 23 projects, as well as the number of users for individual projects. The between-project variation in terms of users also reflects differences in the strategies used for reaching users. As mentioned in previous sections, it was clear that some projects felt that it was better to reach fewer users with more intensive services, whereas others took a more universal, but less time and resource-intensive approach.

6.6.2 Project throughput: the proportion of child population reached by all On Track projects

Another reason why the On Track projects differed so greatly in terms of their total number of users may have to do with the fact that there were also large discrepancies in terms of the number of families living within their catchment boundaries. As Chapter Three suggested, the number of children in the target age range (aged 4 - 12) varied by a factor of four, with some project areas having as few as 2,000 children and others having well over 10,000. For this reason, a more meaningful way to compare projects is to consider the number of children and parents actually reached

with respect to the overall population of children and families living within the project areas. In so doing, project *reach*, also referred to as project *throughput*, can be calculated by dividing the number of recorded On Track users by the number of individuals living within each On Track area boundaries based on data from the most recent Census (Census 2001). For the purposes of this Chapter, *approximate* project throughput was calculated by taking the number of recorded On Track child users between the age of 5 and 14 and dividing it by the number of children between the ages of 5 to 14 living within the catchment area, as recorded by the 2001 census. This age range was used (as opposed to the target On Track age range of 4 – 12) because it matched the age-related summaries published by the Census for the geographical output areas most closely approximating the On Track areas[7].

Table 6.6 provides a summary for each project's throughput, as calculated for children between the ages of five and 14 for targeted services alone, and for all services (targeted and universal) where we had figures available. Data on universal services alone could not be disaggregated, because less detailed data were collected for universal than for targeted service users. In addition, not all services recorded the number of users who were reached via universal services and thus the figures for overall users are likely to under-represent the number of children actually seen (see Dinos et al, 2006 for further discussion). It is also important to note that these figures do not include children under the age of five, or parents, although these groups were also recipients of targeted On Track services.

Using this method of calculation, the data presented in Table 6.6 suggest that on average, On Track projects reached 18% of the child population[8]. Whilst at first glance, this proportion may seem fairly low, it should be kept in mind that many On Track services were targeted at children and families experiencing higher levels of risk factors. For this reason, it would be impractical to expect that projects would be able to 'saturate' the population with services. Nevertheless, there was one 'outlying' project (Oldham) that appeared to come fairly close to complete saturation, with a full range of targeted and universal services. Otherwise, the next highest level of throughput was at 50% for Rochdale, and the level of project throughput dropped steadily thereafter. The majority of projects (n8) reached between 15% and 27% of children between the age of 5 and 14. Whilst three of the projects reported reaching only three percent of their population, it should be kept in mind that all of these projects did not keep records regarding their universal users and thus these figures are likely to be underestimates to some unknown degree.

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[7] On Track areas and Census Output Areas are of an approximately one to one match. Further details can be found in the community profiling report (Bowers et al, 2007).
[8] The cohort study found that 14% of households in On Track areas reported having used an On Track service. Since we expect a degree of under-reporting due to failure of households to correctly identify services used as 'On Track' services, this would suggest that a throughput figure of somewhat under twenty percent is likely to be a reliable estimate.

Table 6.6 also allows comparison of project throughput by main mode of service delivery. Those projects highlighted in the rows in light grey adopted a 'contracted out' approach primarily, and those in dark grey generally delivered their services through an in-house team. The projects that adopted a mixed economy approach are shown against a white background, and constitute six of the projects with the highest level of throughput. It is also interesting to note that of the ten projects reaching 12% or less of their child population, only one adopted a mixed economy approach. These findings suggest that the mixed-economy method may have been optimal for reaching a greater proportion of the child population.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Table 6.6 On Track 'reach': Users aged 5 – 14, by various whole populations in each project area (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)						
	Total population (all ages)	**Child population aged 5 - 14**	**Child users of targeted services aged 5-14**	**Child users of targeted services aged 5-14 as proportion of child population** (Col D / Col C)	**All users (targeted and universal services) aged 5 - 14**	**All users (targeted and universal services) aged 5 - 14 as proportion of child population** (Col F / Col C)
	N	n	n	%	n	%
Oldham	6,984	1048	301	29	983	94
Rochdale	8,496	1360	503	37	682	50
Manchester	9,440	1510	171	11	700	46
Rhondda	12,566	1759	249	14	632	36
Bridgend	20,995	2730	201	7	860	32
Southwark	14,447	2022	546	27	547	27
Sheffield	17,314	2597	374	14	678	26
Easington	17,428	2606	242	9	658	25
Luton	18,793	3382	260	8	844	25
Haringey	32,403	4860	76	2	1103	23
Brent	19,225	3460	438	13	575	17
Kerrier	14,325	1863	68	4	308	17
Solihull	19,006	3422	142	4	572	17
Haverhill	28,512	3992	390	10	491	12
Bradford	17,060	3582	226	6	409	11
Sandwell	7,320	1024	93	9	105	10
*Sunderland**	18,627	2421	185	8	185	8
*Portsmouth**	17,534	2980	198	7	198	7
Greenwich	11,299	1583	85	5	93	6
Brighton	20,706	3105	89	3	161	5
*Northampton**	21,535	3874	124	3	124	3
*Scarborough**	6,692	1204	42	3	42	3
Wirral*	26,380	3965	123	3	123	3
All (average)			**223**	**8**	**477**	**18**

* Information was available for targeted users only, therefore these figures underestimate total numbers of users.
Note: Projects not highlighted adopted a mixed economy approach.   Projects in light grey were primarily contracted out and those in dark grey used a primarily in-house model of delivery.

6.6.3   Users and throughput by Home Office category

As noted in the previous section, information on users of universal services was not routinely collected by all projects. Thus, a headcount of service users across both universal and targeted services is likely to be an underestimate of the total. However, reliable information does exist regarding the number of users recorded within each of the six Home Office categories for targeted services, and this, along with each project's throughput within each of these categories, is summarised in Table 6.7 below.

From Table 6.7, it is apparent that throughput was generally the highest within the specialist category, followed by home-school partnership interventions (which, it will

be remembered, were also the most frequent categories of service offered by On Track projects nationally). In addition, areas with the highest overall throughput (Table 6.6) tended to reach the majority of their population through home-school partnership services. However, project areas with greater throughput were more likely reach families through a constellation of services offered within four or more of the Home Office intervention categories. For example, Oldham, Rochdale, Manchester, Rhondda and Bridgend all reached families and children through a mixed selection of services that included home visiting, parent support and training and specialist interventions.

Table 6.7 Project throughput by Home Office category (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)						
	Child users per 1000 population under 4	Number of users (Child or parent) per 1000 population aged 5-14				
Project	Pre-school education	Parent support and training	Home visiting	Family therapy	Home-school partnership	Specialist
Bradford	1	3	2	4	21	105
Brent	0	17	0	29	25	133
Bridgend	1	45	51	29	308	2
Brighton	0	22	0	0	41	14
Easington	0	0	0	0	2	252
Greenwich	0	55	2	1	38	38
Haringey	0	8	6	2	25	211
Haverhill	0	56	13	7	51	79
Kerrier	0	11	2	117	35	17
Luton	0	33	4	0	226	36
Manchester	11	71	1	11	269	225
Northampton	0	0	23	1	5	31
Oldham	1	37	20	0	853	492
Portsmouth	0	4	25	39	1	9
Rhondda	0	101	30	20	223	283
Rochdale	0	1	187	32	421	24
Sandwell	7	151	0	30	52	26
Scarborough	10	19	10	0	0	14
Sheffield	0	0	0	0	95	169
Solihull	0	10	16	10	59	113
Southwark	0	48	4	6	38	237
Sunderland	0	0	0	0	0	76
Wirral	0	29	19	8	6	0
All (average)	1	25	18	15	121	113

6.6.4 Characteristics of On Track users

On Track user demographics

Demographic data collected via the Tracking Strand of the evaluation suggests the following about On Track users:
- Three quarters of all users were children (75%, n12,536) and just under quarter were parents (22%, n3,633)

- Almost a third of the users were between 6 and 12 years of age (30%, n4,988).
- 70% of the users were reported as residing within the On Track geographical boundary, meaning that nearly one-third of all users were either resident outside the 'official' project boundary, or residence details were not provided
- More than half (54%) of the users were of White background. A large number of users were from Pakistani (12%), Black or mixed African (7%) and Black or mixed Caribbean (6%) backgrounds.
- Just over half of all users were female (53%) and 44% were male. Amongst children aged birth to 17 years old there were more male (55%) than female users (45%). There were more female users in the age group above 18 years old (88%), which suggests that most adult users were female (ie, most adult users were mothers, rather than fathers).

Targeted versus universal service use

Just over half of the users (54%) were using universal services (i.e. used only universal services) and the remaining 46% used targeted services (i.e. received at least one targeted service). Male child users (59%) were more likely to have received targeted services than their female counterparts (41%). Just over half of the targeted users were white (at 54%, n4897), with the rest of the users coming from a variety of other ethnic backgrounds.

6.6.5 Risk factors amongst On Track users

In the Tracking data returns for Phase Two of the evaluation, On Track projects were asked to indicate, for each identified user, what separate 'risk' factors were present in the user's personal background and circumstances. Up to nine different factors could be listed; see Dinos et al (2006) for further details. This section provides an overview of practitioners' impressions of the risk factors present in the backgrounds of users of On Track services. By risk factors we mean those factors at the individual, family, peer, school or community level that increase the probability of future negative outcomes, as discussed in Chapter One. It should be kept in mind that these data are based on practitioners' reports rather data collected directly from users, but they do give insight into how services perceived the needs of the users reached through On Track services.

Risk within the overall user sample

At the family level, parenting issues[9] were reported with the greatest frequency (32%, n2,525), followed by family conflict (21%, n1,623) and lone parenting (16%, n1,257). Low income was reported with the lowest frequency, for 13% of the users (n981), though given the nature of the On Track communities where the majority of households were on low income, this figure probably represents practitioners'

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[9] Parenting issues refers to identified problems in any parent-child relationship in the immediate family, and might include, for instance, harsh or inconsistent discipline, neglect, inadequate supervision and monitoring, inappropriate expectations (to the child's age, cognitive abilities, etc) or high level of parenting stress or problems coping with parenting.

assessments of the proportion of families where low income was a particularly extreme stressor. At the individual level of risk, children's emotional and behavioural problems was the most frequently reported dimension of risk (52%, n4,015), followed by learning problems (22%, n1,745) and antisocial behaviour and offending (15%, n1,188).

Risk identified amongst users of targeted services

Figure 6.9 provides an overview of the number of risks observed in targeted users. From this, it is apparent that just over a quarter (26%) of those using targeted services were reported by service workers to have had risk factors in one dimension only. Just under a quarter (22%) had risks in two dimensions. 46% had risk factors in at least three dimensions.

Figure 6.9   Number of risk dimensions amongst users of targeted services
(Source: Dinos et al, 2006)
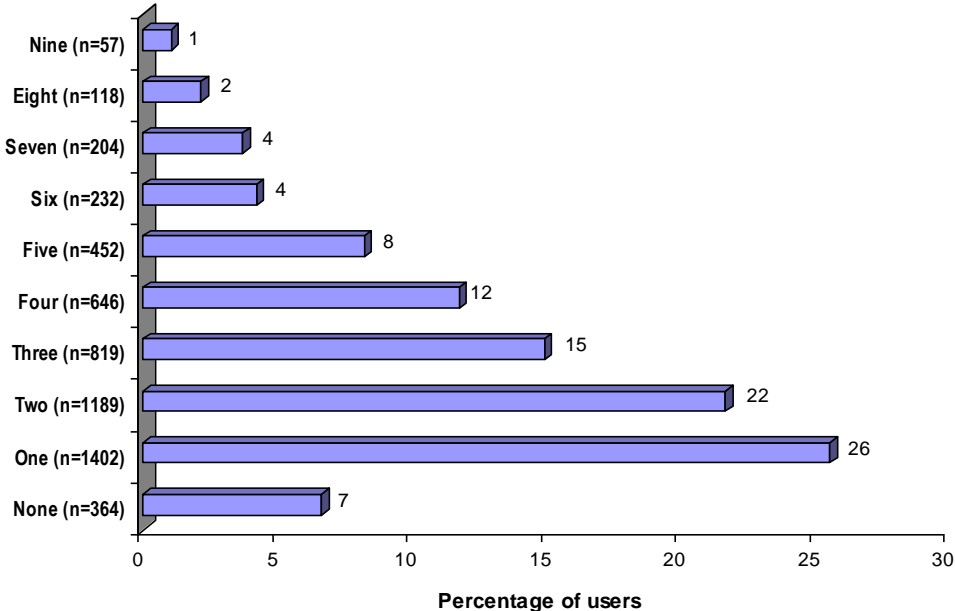
Base = 23 projects, 5,483 users of targeted services, missing = 2,305

In order to further understand the ways in which user demographics and risk factors were related, statistical analyses were conducted to consider the relationship between risk and sex, age, type of user, ethnicity, area of residence and type of intervention (e.g. single versus multiple service use) and the findings are presented in Table 6.8.

Table 6.8 Characteristics of users of targeted services by different levels of risk (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)		No Risk		Intermediate risk (1-5 dimensions)		High risk (6-9 dimensions)	
		%	n	**%**	n	**%**	n
Sex							
Male	(n 2,733)	**7**	189	**81*****	2222	**12**	322
Female	(n 2,692)	**7**	174	**83**	2235	**11**	283
Age							
0-5	(n 468)	**4**	19	**93*****	433	**3**	16
6-8	(n 1,054)	**5**	47	**85**	891	**11**	116
9-11	(n 1,762)	**11**	185	**81**	1420	**9**	157
12-14	(n 636)	**11**	72	**73**	464	**16**	100
15-17	(n 62)	**-**	2	**74**	46	**23**	14
18+	(n 830)	**-**	5	**83**	691	**16**	134
Ethnicity							
Chinese	(n 9)	**-**	5	**45**		**-**	-
Pakistani	(n 588)	**22**	127	**70**	414	**8**	47
Black or mixed African	(n 423)	**12**	49	**85**	359	**4**	15
Mixed heritage	(n 84)	**11**	9	**82**	69	**7**	6
Other	(n 88)	**11**	10	**84**	74	**5**	4
Bangladeshi	(n 112)	**8**	9	**86**	96	**6**	7
Black or mixed Caribbean	(n 277)	**6**	17	**84**	233	**10**	27
White	(n 3,584)	**4**	125	**83**	2968	**14**	491
Indian	(n 31)	**-**	1	**94**	29	**-**	1
On Track Area							
Outside On Track Area	(n 1,070)	**8**	88	**84**	894	**8**	88
In On Track Area	(n 3,865)	**7**	267	**81**	3138	**12**	460
Type of intervention							
Single intervention user	(n 2,663)	**7**	204	**87**	2501	**6**	162
Multiple intervention user	(n 2,616)	**6**	160	**77**	2007	**17*****	449
All users	(n 5,483)	**7**	364	**82**	4508	**11**	611

χ² tests; *** = p< .001

Percentages are not given where there is a small number of users

The following conclusions can be drawn from Table 6.8:
- *Sex*: male users using targeted services were statistically significantly more likely to have between six and nine risk factors (i.e. had more dimensions of risk present) than female service users.
- *Age*: users of targeted services above the age of 12 were significantly more likely to have a higher number of risk factors present than users below the age of 12. In particular, users between the age of 15 and 17 were most likely to be found in the highest risk group.
- *Ethnicity*: White, Black or mixed Caribbean and Asian Pakistani users were significantly more likely to have risk factors on a greater number of dimensions than were Chinese, Asian Indian and Black African users.
- *Amount of service use*: users who had a higher number of risk factors present were more likely to use multiple interventions.

6.7   Intensity of On Track service use

As described in Chapter One, a basic premise of the On Track programme was that a 'multi-modal' approach – offering as many different services to users as necessary to address the various risk and protective factors present in their backgrounds - was considered to be more effective than offering only one type of intervention to each user. The extent to which On Track was successful in implementing this approach will be explored in more depth in Chapter Thirteen, but the following information, collected via the Tracking strand of the evaluation should be considered here:

- Almost half of all users of targeted services accessed more than one universal and/or targeted intervention
- Throughout the evaluation period, users of targeted services (i.e. those who accessed at least one targeted service) attended an average of two targeted services, and each was accessed on average on 15 occasions for approximately one hour each time (64 minutes).
- On average, each universal service delivered 89 sessions throughout the evaluation period. Each session lasted approximately 76 minutes.
- According to projects' reports, a very large proportion of targeted service users (9 out of 10 users) fulfilled the attendance requirement, at least in part. This means they were reported to have attended all, most or at least some of the sessions they were offered.

6.8   Summary and conclusions

The data presented in this chapter overwhelmingly suggest that there was not one standardised On Track model or service that was consistently implemented in all twenty-three areas. Rather, there were 23 different interpretations of the original brief from the Home Office and subsequently hundreds of kinds of different services contained within the projects. For example, some projects took a predominantly universal approach, reaching over 94% of their population, whereas others offered fewer, but more intensive, services to less than five percent of the children between the ages of 5 and 14 living within their communities.

However, despite there being 'many On Tracks', rather than 'one On Track', there were some unifying characteristics that enabled the 23 projects to cohere around the concept of a core programme. Despite some lack of clarity about where a small handful of project activities sat within the On Track model, it was striking that each of the projects had developed a customised suite of activities and services which, in their own way, each contributed to a unified agenda of social inclusion and building resilience to crime and antisocial behaviour. Although some projects struggled to articulate the crime prevention remit of the programme in a way that avoided stigmatising or alienating users, project managers shared the view that the overarching theoretical model of On Track, based around understanding risk and protective factors and their role in child development, had been a relevant and useful 'organising framework' around which services could be planned and delivered.

Most projects fell into one of three structural models for service delivery: contracted-out, in-house or mixed economy. Although the myriad services offered under the On Track banner were characterised chiefly by diversity, nevertheless the various different names mask a fair degree of similarity, including that a majority of services worked with or through local schools; an emphasis on services that provided children with constructive leisure and out of school activities; and a strong base of parent support work. Even the seemingly disparate group of 'specialist' services turned out, when scrutinised carefully, to allow categorisation into a relatively small set of ten distinctive groups of activities.

In terms of the basic 'facts' of On Track – what it was, what it delivered, and how many users were reached during Phase Two - the results of the tracking study showed that 23 projects offered over 1,000 identifiably different services between them, including both universal and targeted services. Bearing in mind that we identified a degree of mis-match between the original Home Office categories and projects' ability to classify services in this schema, the home-school partnership services were the single largest category after specialist services, and preschool education services accounted for only 2% of all services overall. In total, during a period of data collection spanning just over 20 months, nearly 17,000 individual users were recorded by projects – a major achievement – especially since we also know this figure likely underestimates the numbers of users of universal services, some of whom were not recorded by projects. Because the eligible population varied greatly from one area to the next, the measure of 'project throughput' we developed probably gives a better guide to the success of On Track projects in reaching the local communities. This approximate measure revealed that on average, 18% of children aged 5-14 years in the On Track catchment areas were reached. The more even the balance of universal and targeted services, the greater the number of different service types offered within the project, and the more 'mixed' the economy of service delivery modes, the greater the throughput. The chapter also showed that there was a wide constituency of users of On Track services. Where targeted services were concerned, projects were reaching children and parents across both sexes and across the range of age groups and ethnicities, and also reaching those 'in need' on the basis of degree of risk.

In the next chapters we move on to consider the extent to which the projects were associated with measurable change for users. Using some of the measures discussed in this chapter, including project type and reach (throughput), we unpick the findings in relation to impact from the various different strands and explore how the programme may have been influencing child and family development over time.

Chapter Seven: Understanding the impact of On Track – a synthesis of strand findings: Introduction

7.1 Assessing impact – our chosen approach

As described in earlier chapters, the main objectives of On Track were to reduce risk factors associated with the development of later antisocial behaviour, while at the same time improving protective factors in order to build resilience and promote better outcomes across a range of dimensions for children and families. The aim of the next six chapters (Seven to Twelve) is to assess evidence of the influence or impact of the On Track programme on selected risk and protective factors, drawing together results from various strands of the evaluation. The risk and protective factors considered are summarised below in Table 7.1, conceptualised within five interrelated levels of child 'ecology': individual, family, peer group, school and community. The factors listed in Table 7.1 are a sub-set of the longer list of risk and protective factors presented in Figure 1.1 in Chapter One.

Table 7.1 Risk and protective factors influencing antisocial behaviour by young people		
Domain or ecological level	**Risk Factors**	**Protective Factors**
1. Individual	- Previous antisocial behaviour (ASB) and offending - Other conduct and behavioural problems - Antisocial attitudes or attitudes that condone ASB	- Positive emotional and mental health - Happiness at home (younger children) - Self-esteem (older young people)
2. Family	- Poor parental and emotional mental health - Poor parent-child relationship - High criticism and hostility - Poor parenting skills - Reliance on physical discipline - Low monitoring or supervision	- Good parent-child relationship - High warmth and involvement - Good parent-child communication - Parental commitment to school and academic achievement - Attending parents' evenings - Special contact with staff - Feeling involved in child's school life - Reading at home (younger children) - Coping with parenting - Social support for parents
3. Peer Group	Antisocial and/or substance misusing peers	Good peer relationships
4. School	- Truancy and exclusion - Low attainment and performance - Bullying and disruptive behaviour	- Positive attitude and attachment to school - School involvement and participation - Positive school ethos and approach
5. Community	- Neighbourhood crime and youth offending - Negative perceptions of the neighbourhood	- Social support for youth - Opportunities for constructive use of leisure time - Availability and uptake of family support services

We have already discussed, in Chapter Two, the challenge of making sense of the rich and varied datasets that comprised the evaluation. In that chapter we also discussed the relative merits and demerits of each strand of the research so that the reader can be aware of the limitations, as well as the strengths, of the design. Bearing these in mind, in the next five chapters, the impact of the programme is assessed in a number of ways.

Firstly, we considered the extent to which **statistically significant change**[10] over time in parents' and children's attitudes and behaviours was observed, across a range of risk and protective factors, in each of the three key quantitative strands of the evaluation: the *cohort study*, the *schools survey* and the *community profiling strand*. Second, we looked for evidence of **trends across more than one strand**, identifying where the results were consistent and where they were contradictory. This kind of comparison between the strands is used as a way of cross-validating the findings and allows more balanced conclusions than would otherwise be possible if we relied on data from one study alone. Third, we also consider **qualitative evidence** from the perspective of *service users, service providers*, and *schools*. In this respect, findings from the qualitative studies are used to set context and add flesh to the skeleton of results obtained from the quantitative research. Given the huge wealth of data available when the different strands of the evaluation are considered in combination, we have had to be highly selective in what we have chosen to report. Absence of discussion of a particular risk or protective factor does not necessarily mean that no measures were taken on that factor, but rather that the measures yielded no clear or consistent result.

Throughout the chapters that follow, as in previous chapters, references in small font (e.g. Bhabra et al, 2006(b), p123-125) provide signposts to the individual research strand reports where findings and methods are discussed in greater detail than is desirable in these 'overview' chapters. The structure of the next few chapters of the report is as follows: after a short overview of the methodologies of the quantitative strands from which data are drawn by way of reminder for the reader, key findings from the relevant quantitative study at different ecological levels are set out, taking each risk or protective factor in turn. Relevant qualitative data are then presented. Each chapter finishes with a brief summary and conclusions, and a table summarising the results in graphic form. In these tables, we indicate all statistically significant results, and also other 'noteworthy' results. 'Noteworthy' results are defined here as similar results that were detected using different measures, or in different strands of the evaluation, which pointed in a consistent direction but did not individually reach

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[10] 'Statistically significant' is the term used in scientific literature to denote that a statistical test has been applied to compare differences between two or more groups (for example, children sampled at different Waves of the schools surveys), and the test indicated the differences were highly unlikely to have arisen by chance, and therefore more likely to reveal 'real' differences between the groups. Some analysts take the view that the only results worthy of note are those that are statistically significant. However, others would argue that non-significant results may also be meaningful, especially when considered as part of a wider group of results that indicate a trend. We have taken the latter approach in this study.

statistical significance. An overarching discussion and conclusions about On Track's impact are presented in Chapter Twelve.

There is one important caveat that applies throughout these chapters dealing with the impact of the Programme. We use the terms 'impact' and 'outcomes' of On Track as shorthand for describing the possible influence of the intervention on various aspects of individual, family, school and community life. Here we are referring to 'changes' in the sample populations that appeared to be associated with the presence of On Track in the local area, or with the actual use of On Track services by groups of individuals. We do not, however, definitively claim that On Track *caused* these changes. No study can hope to measure all the possible influences along the pathway to change, and this evaluation was no exception. Moreover, the period of data collection was not long enough, and did not start early enough in users' lives, to rule out the possibility that factors other than On Track were involved in causing change in risk and protective factors. We also cannot know enough about other services that families may have been using, which might also have influenced change in one direction or another. However, where the data are consistent (ie more than one study or measurement shows the same results), and especially where there is a rigorous counterfactual element (ie, a control or comparison group where the intervention was not operating), we can assess whether there seems to be more than a chance association between the presence of or use of On Track and favourable (or unfavourable) changes for children and parents. This allows us to make cautious interpretations about the possible influence of On Track, but always bearing in mind the potential for other, competing interpretations.

7.2 The data sets – a brief overview of the cohort study, schools surveys and the community profiling study

Detailed methodological information on each study that was used as a source of data for this and subsequent chapters is contained in the individual strand reports (see Chapter Two for full references). A summary of the methods for each strand is provided in Chapter Two of this report and further technical detail on multivariate analysis of the cohort study can be found in Appendix 3. However, the reader may find it helpful to be reminded of the key features of design and analysis in the three key strands that form the backbone of the impact chapters. These are summarised in the three boxes below.

Text in italics in the boxes (e.g *'Diff'*) indicates the headings that appear in tables and figures in subsequent chapters.

Box 7.1 Cohort study key features

Cohort study – self-report data from parents and children in the community

- **Two Waves** of data collection: Wave1: 2004; Wave 2: 2005
- **Four samples**:
  (1) 'Matched' comparison sample ('*Matched*') – n426 max at W2
  (2) Residents in On Track areas ('*On Track area*') – n468 max at W2
  (3) Self-identified users of On Track services in general ('*On Track users*') – n133 max at W2
  (4) Project-identified users of high intensity On Track services ('*Booster*') – n213 at W2
- **Cohort design** (same people interviewed at each Wave)
- **Counterfactual** or comparison group (the Matched sample): obtained from comparable non-On Track communities and further weighted in analysis using propensity score techniques ('*adjusted*') to ensure maximum comparability in demographic characteristics
- **Analysis:**
  T-tests for independent samples; * or ** indicate levels of statistical significance (95% confidence and 99% confidence levels), measuring:

  (1) Differences between samples (1) & (2), and (1) & (3) measured at each Wave ('*Diff*') , net of demographic factors
  (2) Differences between samples (1) & (2), and (1) & (3) in degree of change from W1 to W2 (*'change from W1 to W2'*), net of demographic factors
  Note that results for sample (4) are not subject to significance testing due to differences in sampling procedures relative to samples (1), (2) and (3).

Main strengths of the design

-Panel design
-Rigorous samples (1), (2) and (3)
-Counterfactual element

-Good response rates
-Analysis of difference between groups controls
for key intervening socio-demographic variables

Main limitations of the design

-Small numbers in some sub-groups
-Short follow-up period between Waves (1 year)
-W1 timing approximates to mid-point of OT, not start

Full reports on this strand: Finch et al (2006a, 2006b); Aye Maung et al (2008a, 2008b)

Box 7.2 Schools surveys key features

Schools surveys – self-report data from children and young people in schools in On Track areas

- **Two Waves** of data collection: Wave 1: 2001; Wave 2: 2004
- **Two samples**:
    (1) Primary school students - 13,365 at W1; 7,433 at W2
    (2) Secondary school students – 18,184 at W1; 12,682 at W2
- **Cross-sectional design** (a different sample of students interviewed at each Wave)
- **Counterfactual** or comparison group: None (all students were at schools in On Track areas)
- **Analysis:**
    T-tests for independent samples for scaled variables

    Chi-Squares for differences of proportion

    * or ** or *** indicate levels of statistical significance (95%, 99% and 99.9% confidence levels), measuring differences between samples at W1 & W2

Main strengths of the design

-Large representative samples
-High response rates
-High statistical power to detect changes between Waves
-Three year follow-up period between Waves

Main limitations of the design

-No counterfactual element /comparison group

Full reports on this strand: Bhabra et al (2006a, 2006b)

Box 7.3 Community Profiling study key features

Community Profiling study – secondary analysis of existing official data

- **Time series** data – coverage varied according to indicator : annual rates 2000, 2001; 2002; 2003; 2005
- **Two samples/data levels**:
    (1) On Track local area data
    (2) Wider comparison area data – from wider admin area appropriate to each type of data (e.g. Local Authority, Youth Offending Team, Borough Command Unit, PCT, Social Services dept)
- **Counterfactual** or comparison group : wider administrative area
- **Analysis:**
    Multivariate techniques measuring differences between samples in rate changes over time

Main strengths of the design
-Official data
-Rigorous counterfactual element
-Time series data covering variable periods

Main limitations of the design
-Variable degrees of missing information

Full report on this strand: Bowers et al (2008)

Chapter Eight: Impact at the level of the individual: mixed results

8.1   Measuring risk and protective factors at the individual level

For the purposes of the evaluation, impact at the individual child level was explored in relation to risk and protective factors connected with children's behaviour and attitudes. We measured previous antisocial and offending behaviour (ASB), other related conduct and behaviour problems, and attitudes to antisocial behaviour as risk factors. Happiness and self esteem were measured as examples of protective factors. A combination of indicators was used, including parent and child self reports on 'bespoke' scales, single questions specially designed for the evaluation, and well-known validated instruments including the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire or SDQ (Goodman, 1997), and Rosenberg's (1965) Self Esteem Questionnaire.

8.2   Risk factors – previous antisocial behaviour and offending

Antisocial behaviour at an early age, including offending and substance misuse, is a strong predictor of later more serious and persistent offending. In the *survey of secondary school children*, the total sample of children surveyed in Wave 2 (2004) reported significantly less minor[11] and also significantly less 'more serious' offending[12] on a scale than their counterparts at Wave 1 (2001); both results p<.001; Bhabra et al, 2006(b), p121-122. Thus, at the level of the whole school population, according to children's own reports, ASB had apparently declined over a period more or less corresponding to the first five years of the On Track intervention. Frequent use of alcohol and use to the point of drunkenness had also declined significantly by Wave 2 (both p<.001), though neither use of cannabis or glue, nor smoking in general showed any changes (Bhabra et al, 2006(b), p123-125)

The *cohort study* measured antisocial behaviour using an abbreviated version of a previously validated self-report checklist for primary school-aged children and a somewhat longer list for secondary school aged children[13]. Amongst primary school aged children, though On Track service users reported significantly higher rates than the comparison group at Wave 1 (2004) and the wider group of children living in On

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[11] Defined as: shoplifting, stealing an object, vandalising or spraying graffiti.

[12] Defined as: stealing a vehicle or from a vehicle, breaking and entering, attacking someone to hurt them

[13] For primary school children: taking something from a shop without paying; writing or spraying paint on things; breaking someone's things on purpose; hitting, punching or kicking someone to injure them; missing school when you should be there; being noisy or rude in public so people complain. For secondary school children: trying to avoid paying fare on public transport; taking something from a shop; noisy or rude in public so people complain; neighbour complained about noise or behaviour; spraying graffiti; damaging property on purpose; stealing from school; racial abuse; carrying a weapon; setting fires; riding in a stolen vehicle; stealing from home; breaking and entering; bodily harm or threats of (Both measures adapted from The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime; Smith, McVie, Woodward, Shute, Flint and McAra, 2001. See Aye Maung et al, 2008a, p59).

Track areas, the comparison group and the On Track area residents both 'caught up' by Wave 2 (2005) so that there were no longer significant differences. In other words, though primary school aged On Track service users didn't improve in respect of antisocial behaviour, other groups got worse. Amongst secondary school aged young people, rates for those living in On Track areas in fact got substantially worse over time (from 26% at Wave 1 to 36% at Wave 2), but so did the rates for young people in comparison areas, which in Wave 2 were the highest of all groups (27% at Wave 1 compared to 39% at Wave 2). So, although the cohort study did not indicate reductions in self-reported antisocial behaviour for either primary or secondary school-aged children, On Track residents and service users were neither better nor worse in respect of antisocial behaviour than other children of similar age living in comparison areas (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p59).

Table 8.1 Antisocial behaviour amongst primary school aged children: proportion saying they had taken part in at least one type of ASB (out of 6) over the last year (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user		Booster user
		%	Diff[14]	%	Diff	
W1 (2004)	7	9	1	18	11 **	5
W2 (2005)	12	15	3	17	5	13
Change from W1 to W2	4	6	2	-1	-6	8
Base (unweighted)	128	137		46		39

Notes:
1. Base for all: primary school aged children answering W1 and W2 self-completion by themselves. Base includes 'not stated'.
2. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01;

Table 8.2 Antisocial behaviour amongst secondary school aged children: proportion saying they had taken part in at least one type of ASB (out of 14) over the last year (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		Booster user
		%	Diff	
W1 (2004)	27	26	-1	42
W2 (2005)	39	36	-2	33
Change from W1 to W2	11	10	-2	-8
Base (unweighted)	111	100		24

Notes:
1. Base for all: secondary school aged children answering W1 and W2 self-completion by themselves. Base includes 'not stated'.
2. Figures for On Track user sample not shown as base<20
3. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01;

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[14] Note that figures for differences between samples ('*Diff*') may not add up due to rounding.

8.3　Risk factors – other kinds of bad behaviour and conduct problems

In addition to antisocial behaviour and offending, data were also collected about various other kinds of behaviour problems – often the precursors to actual antisocial behaviour - including 'challenging behaviour' by the youngest children in the study, and emotional and behaviour problems in children as reported by parents on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire in the cohort study.

8.3.1 Disruptive and challenging behaviour by younger children, and getting into trouble by older children

In the *primary schools survey* disruptive behaviour at school[15] had declined at Wave 2, with mean scores on a composite scale at Wave 2 significantly lower that those at Wave 1 (Bhabra et al, 2006(a), p77-78). A composite measure we labelled 'challenging behaviour', which measured children's immature behaviour, also declined significantly[16].

However the *cohort study* asked secondary school children (only) how frequently they '*got into trouble at school*', and whether others saw them as a '*trouble maker*', and the results were less encouraging (and very similar to the results reported by the cohort sample for actual antisocial behaviour). At Wave 1, over half of children (55%) who were On Track users were prone to getting into trouble 'at least once a week' compared to 33% in the matched comparison group, and On Track service users were twice as likely as comparison group young people (39% compared with 19%) to say that other children saw them as troublesome. These rates remained more or less stable over time (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p55); in other words, no improvement was observed.

	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user			Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff		
W1 (2004)	33	37	4	55	22	**	53
W2 (2005)	31	37	5	58	26	**	40
Change from W1 to W2	-1	-1	1	3	4		13
Base (unweighted)	125	126		22			30

Table 8.3 Proportion of secondary school aged children getting into trouble once a week or more
(Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

Notes:
1. Base for all: secondary school aged children answering W1 and W2 self-completion by themselves. Base includes 'not stated'
2. "Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01;

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[15] Ie Being sent home for being naughty, or having a grown-up called to school because of bad behaviour

[16] Defined as: Getting angry easily at home or at school, wanting one's own way whatever the consequences, and being thought of as 'naughty' by peers.

	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user			Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff		
W1 (2004)	19	21	2	39	21	**	33
W2 (2005)	20	23	3	42	22	**	30
Change from W1 to W2	2	3	1	3	1		-3
Base (unweighted)	125	126		22			30

Table 8.4 Proportion of secondary school aged children saying others perceive them as a 'trouble-maker' (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

Notes:
1. Base for all: secondary school aged children answering W1 and W2 self-completion by themselves. Base includes 'not stated'
2. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests);   * p<.05; ** p<.01;

8.3.2 General emotional and behavioural problems

The *cohort study* collected data from parents about one randomly selected child using the parent-rated SDQ, which assesses emotional and behaviour difficulties across a range of dimensions and generates a 'total difficulties score' and scores on a number of sub-scales. The full details are reported in Aye Maung et al, (2008a) pages 43-44. Overall, the percentage of children reported as having a total difficulties score in the 'abnormal' (clinically concerning) range at Wave 1 in 2004 was substantially higher for all 'On Track' samples (ie, On Track area residents, On Track users in general, and the booster sample (of high intensity service users) than in the matched comparison sample. Indeed, total difficulties scores for children in the On Track users sample (29%) were twice that of children in the matched comparison group (15%), and amongst children in the booster sample, rates were almost three times higher (39%). This underlines very starkly the elevated level of need amongst families living in On Track areas and amongst On Track service users. However, although by Wave 2 in 2005 all of the 'On Track' groups were still well above the level of the matched sample, there had been some decline in the overall proportions of children with 'abnormal' scores in the year elapsing between the two Waves (eight percentage points for On Track users in general and five percentage points in the booster sample). Most encouragingly, in one sub-scale (peer problems) the degree of improvement between Waves was statistically significant for children resident in On Track areas, scores having declined by one percentage point in contrast to a rise of three percentage points for children from the comparison group (p<.01). As examination of the Table below reveals, there were a number of noteworthy (though not statistically significant) improvements on many of the subscales for children in the On Track users sample. Moreover, though they could not be tested for significance, rates for booster sample children on the subscales measuring conduct problems, emotional problems and peer problems also showed substantial improvement[17].

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[17] Although on all sub-scales boys' scores were substantially higher than girls' (not shown), the drop in total difficulties score for On Track users was the same (six percentage points) for both boys and girls. Similarly, the drop in total difficulties score for younger children who were On Track users was much the same as for secondary school aged children (eight percentage points compared to nine).

The Table below is reproduced from Aye Maung et al, (2008a), and shows figures for the Total Difficulties score as well as for individual sub-scales.

Table 8.5 Child's emotional health: proportion of children with abnormal scores on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (parental assessments) (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)						
	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user		Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff	
Conduct problems						
W1 (2004)	15	21	6 **	29	13 **	43
W2 (2005)	17	21	4 *	25	8 **	36
Change from W1 to W2	2	0	-2	-3	-5	-6
Base (unweighted)	406	440		126		202
Emotional problems						
W1 (2004)	17	17	0	23	5 **	33
W2 (2005)	17	14	-3	20	3	25
Change from W1 to W2	-1	-3	-3	-3	-2	-8
Base (unweighted)	407	437		124		202
Peer problems						
W1 (2004)	13	17	4 *	21	7 **	34
W2 (2005)	16	16	0	20	4	24
Change from W1 to W2	3	-1	-4 *	0	-3	-9
Base (unweighted)	407	440		126		201
Hyperactivity						
W1 (2004)	18	20	1	34	16 **	33
W2 (2005)	15	19	4 *	29	15 **	33
Change from W1 to W2	-4	-1	3	-5	-1	0
Base (unweighted)	404	433		124		202
Prosocial behaviour						
W1 (2004)	2	4	2	7	5 **	11
W2 (2005)	4	5	1	10	5 **	8
Change from W1 to W2	2	1	-1	2	0	-3
Base (unweighted)	405	441		127		202
Total difficulties score						
W1 (2004)	15	19	3	29	14 **	39
W2 (2005)	14	16	2	21	7 **	34
Change from W1 to W2	-1	-2	-1	-8	-7	-5
Base (unweighted)	408	440		126		202

Notes:
1. Base: main parents answering W1 and W2 self-completion. Sub-scales exclude 'not stated' where fewer than 3 items per sub-scale answered.
2. 'Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01;

8.4   Risk factors – attitudes supportive of antisocial behaviour

Several of the quantitative strands of research explored whether children's attitudes to antisocial behaviour had changed in a positive direction (ie, become less tolerant) during the life of On Track. Results were decidedly mixed.

Primary and secondary school children in the *cohort study* were presented with a list of misdemeanors and asked to judge whether they were 'wrong' (for primary respondents) or how 'serious' they were (for secondary respondents)[18]. At Wave 1, younger children in the On Track resident and user samples were in fact significantly *less* tolerant of misdemeanours than were children living in comparison areas. However, comparison group children got less tolerant of ASB over time so that the rates were more or less equal across all groups by Wave 2 (see Aye Maung et al, 2008a p56).   For older children, although the degree of change over time was not in itself significant, the discouraging result was that children living in On Track areas developed attitudes that were substantially *more* tolerant towards ASB at Wave 2 (whereas children in comparison areas grew less tolerant).

In the *schools surveys*, however, results were more consistent and also more encouraging. Using a similar though not identical model of questioning to the cohort study, in both primary <u>and</u> secondary schools pupils reported a positive change in that views tolerant of antisocial behaviour significantly declined amongst the Wave 2 sample (p<.001), and declined in almost all sub-groups (boys, girls, year groups, different ethnic groups and different household types).

8.5   Protective factors – positive emotional health and self-esteem

Though the relationship between self-esteem and antisocial behaviour is contested (Emler, 2001), research suggests that good mental health and a positive and outgoing disposition may serve to protect children from becoming involved in crime (Prior and Paris, 2005; Rutter et al, 1998). Certainly, in the qualitative and tracking studies, service providers often framed service objectives in terms of 'increasing the self esteem' of vulnerable children and parents (see e.g Dinos et al, 2006 p79). In the *cohort study*, primary school-aged children were asked two simple questions about the extent to which they felt happy in general, and how happy they felt 'with their family' in particular. The Table below shows the proportions reporting they felt 'extremely happy' in general, and how happy they felt with their family. Happiness in general declined in all groups over time. However, happiness 'with family' increased substantially amongst children living in On Track areas and amongst children in the booster sample of high intensity service users (55% at Wave 1 rising to 65% at Wave 2 for the former; 59% rising to 66% for the latter; Aye Maung et al, 2008a

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[18] These misdemeanours were a sub-set of those used in the questions about the involvement of children in antisocial behaviour; see above.

p45-46). Though substantively noteworthy, the increase was not quite large enough to reach statistical significance.

Table 8.6 Child's feelings of happiness: proportion of primary school aged children feeling extremely happy in general and with family (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)						
	Matched % **(adjusted)**	**OT area**		**OT user**		**Booster** **user**
		%	**Diff**	**%**	**Diff**	
Extremely happy in general						
W1 (2004)	51	51	0	52	1	55
W2 (2005)	45	48	4	41	-4	47
Change from W1 to W2	-6	-2	3	-11	-5	-8
Base (unweighted)	169	196		64		73
Extremely happy with family						
W1 (2004)	59	55	-4	60	1	59
W2 (2005)	60	65	5	62	2	66
Change from W1 to W2	1	10	9	2	1	7
Base (unweighted)	169	196		64		73

Notes:
1. Base: primary school aged children answering W1 and W2 interviews. Base includes 'not stated'.
2. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01;

However, self-reports by older children in the cohort study of levels of self esteem using a validated instrument (modified from Rosenberg's Self Esteem questionnaire[19]) suggested that starting levels in On Track areas[20] were very similar to those for same aged children in matched comparison areas, and that changes over time between the two waves of the study were negligible (see Table 8.7). Thus it appeared that by Wave Two, younger children were more likely to show signs of increased contentment with family and home life, but there was no change amongst older children.

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[19] The six statements measuring this construct were: 'I like myself'; 'I am able to do things well'; 'I feel I have a number of good qualities'; 'I often wish I was someone else'; 'I have a low opinion of myself'; 'There are lots of things about myself I would like to change'. They were taken from the Edinburgh Survey of Youth Transitions and Crime (Smith et al, 2001). These had in turn been adapted from the ten-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg 1965).
[20] Numbers in cells for On Track users and Booster sample children were insufficient for analysis and are not shown.

Table 8.7 Child's self-esteem: mean score on self-esteem scale for secondary children (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area	
		%	**Diff**
W1 (2004)	16.9	16.2	-0.7
W2 (2005)	17.2	16.2	-1.0
Change from W1 to W2	0.3	0.0	-0.3
Base (unweighted)	97	102	

Notes:
1. Base: secondary school aged children answering W1 and W2 interviews. Excludes 'not stated'
2. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01;

8.6 Qualitative strand findings

Though the findings of the survey strands were mixed on the issue of whether positive change was evident in children's behaviour at the individual level, the qualitative data were generally much more consistently positive in this respect. In the *study of service users*, some families and children using On Track services were able to provide detailed descriptions of how On Track services had resulted in observable improvements, especially when it came to changes in difficult child behaviour. Not only did children and parents remark that behaviour had improved as a result of the service, they also described how and why the service was effective. For example, some children mentioned that the *'red, amber, green'* technique taught to them by On Track workers was helpful in calming themselves down and warning parents that they were frustrated[21]. Such strategies were also effective in helping children to avoid fights. For example, one parent described how it had stopped her child bullying other children at school:

> *It was …to do with On Track. ….they were doing different things (to show him) how he could control his anger. Like … … one week they'd collect (pictures of) …traffic lights … red, amber, green. And … he coloured them in …and (so) he's stopped, thought about it and then he's done it (controlled himself). And he loved it, he really … you could see the change in him. So … I tried to carry on (at home) with the work what she [On Track worker] was doing with him.*

> *[Parent, On Track service user]*

School staff and On Track staff participating in the *study of service providers* were even more positive about the impact of On Track services on individual families, providing numerous examples of positive behavioural changes that took place within the classroom and elsewhere. In one instance, a young person who was

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[21] The 'red, amber, green traffic light' system to manage behavioural issues helps children self-categorise behaviour and feelings. Green = situations in which child normally feels calm and relaxed; Amber = situations in which child can recognise a build-up of anger: Red = situations which normally result in an angry outburst. The purpose of this exercise is to encourage the pupil to use already-recognised cues to monitor and deal with angry feelings.

originally involved in frequent fights with peers improved his behaviour over time as he learned how to manage his anger and improved his self-confidence:

> *He was another one that just…he used to just fight… all he ever wanted to do was fight with everybody. He was quite … [aggressive] … to the other children so he was called names and that used to trigger him off. But he started accessing the Saturday morning soccer. And he didn't have particularly much confidence….(but) because he was a good footballer they used to say, 'go on, be on our team, can you be the captain' and so on, and [child] just loved it, didn't he? He became…the focal point of Saturday soccer, you know, everybody liked him! - which he wasn't used to. And he…just played football with a smile on his face for 1½ hours every Saturday morning. …I mean, we did (have to) work with him a long time, with this anger and his behaviour - but it did seem to sort of happen …(in the end).*
>
> *[On Track worker]*

In another case, a boy who had a history of setting fires was reported to have desisted for over a year after intensive family therapy provided by an On Track project. The worker commented:

> *The Junior YIP* [Youth Inclusion Panel, an On Track partnership agency] *set up something a bit more intensive because they were quite concerned about this habitual fire-setting really. And YIP were involved in looking at diversionary activities…..He was very, very responsive to the one-to-one (work). I mean it's months and months since he's lit fires, and I think they've discharged him from the Junior YIP now. But his behaviour's settled down, the fire setting's stopped. He's not wandering out on his own at night. He's …attending school and …the behaviour's certainly improved at school.*
>
> *[On Track worker]*

In this instance, the service worker attributed these positive behavioural changes to a targeted On Track intervention, because, as another project worker observed, targeted interventions provided the time and individual attention required to teach strategies for anger management and impulse control effectively. Other positive changes were also reported in relation to attitudes and thinking skills. For example, one service provider commented on a complex case in which she felt that a great deal of progress had been made, where there was a sense that the boy concerned "*can now think a bit. Whereas before I'd say he couldn't think at all, he just reacted. …For me, just the fact he can think [is an achievement]. When you can think, that leads to an awful lot of other possibilities…*"

Parents and service providers also reported that On Track services were instrumental in improving their children's self-esteem and many believed that this had a positive knock-on effect in other areas of their lives. For example, a number of parents said that improvements in their children's self-esteem had resulted in them becoming more assertive, which in turn, kept others from bullying them. Service providers also reported that greater self-esteem resulted in improved relations with peers,

greater confidence in the classroom and increased participation in group activities. As one head teacher who participated in the *schools perspectives* study recalled:

> *We had a girl who ….had a lot of issues at home. Her mum was an alcoholic, and so [child] was like the main carer (for the family). She was always just really sad… always (had her) head down when she was at school. And then …one of the teachers said that… she was actually... she was actually speaking (now). Before she was always focused down, (but) she actually keeps her head up now when she speaks and all that, and she actually has started participating during class discussion. So before she would never, ever say anything in class. But now she's putting her hand up all the time, asking a question. And she never actually used to speak to her teacher, and she's actually started talking to the teacher a lot, telling her things. So, yeah, (she's) coming out of herself…*
>
> *[Head Teacher, primary school in On Track area]*

8.7   Conclusions: The impact of On Track on risk and protective factors at the individual level – a mixed picture

To what extent can we conclude that the presence or use of On Track services was effective in reducing risks and improving protective factors associated with positive changes at the individual level? Table 8.8 provides a summary of the quantitative strand findings in terms of where change was (and was not) detected. Statistically significant findings are shown in large, bold type face, with asterisks denoting the level of significance; see Chapter Seven). As previously discussed in Chapter Two there were analytic difficulties associated with reduced statistical power in the cohort study, due to small sample sizes in On Track user groups. For this reason, findings from that study that were substantively noteworthy though of insufficient magnitude to reach statistical significance are also shown where relevant. This helps to illuminate general trends in the data and identify the direction of change (ie, positive change or negative change). These 'noteworthy but not significant' findings are indicated by light grey type face. In this and the other summary tables that follow in later chapters, the status of the findings is shown as positive or negative. 'Positive' means that a risk factor diminished or a protective factor strengthened – ie, things improved. 'Negative' means the reverse (things got worse).

As Table 8.8 suggests, there were few consistent results when the schools surveys and cohort study findings are set side by side. In relation to **risk factors**, the results of the *schools survey* suggest positive changes for both primary and secondary students, in that wherever risk factors at this level were measured, the results indicated positive change over time. However, the findings from the *cohort study* suggest only one unequivocal positive change for either age group (parental reports of fewer peer problems on the SDQ), though as the Table shows, there were a number of non-significant but noteworthy findings running in a positive direction. When considering **protective factors**, there is relatively less data available from

quantitative strands. The evidence that we do have suggests that primary school children participating in the *cohort study* were somewhat happier with their families (although not happier in general) at Wave 2 than at Wave 1, though this change was not quite large enough to reach statistical significance.

Table 8.8 Summary: change over time at the individual level				
	Status of significant or noteworthy findings positive (✓) or negative (X)			
	Schools Surveys		Cohort Study	
	Primary	Secondary	On Track area	On Track users
Risk factors				
Previous ASB	-	✓***	*not significant*	*not significant*
Disruptive behaviour and Challenging behaviour	✓*	-	-	-
Getting into trouble and Being seen as troublesome by peers	-	-	*not significant*	*not significant*
Emotional and behavioural problems (SDQ scores)	-	-	✓* (peer probs) ✓ (emotional probs)	✓ (peer probs) ✓ (conduct probs) ✓ (emotional probs) ✓ (total difficulties)
Attitudes to ASB	✓*	✓***	X	*not significant*
Protective factors				
Happiness with family (primary only)	-	-	✓	*not significant*
Self esteem (secondary only)	-	-	*not significant*	-

Note: n/s = non significant finding; (-) = not measured
All ✓ or **X** findings in bold were statistically significant: * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001
All ✓ or X findings in light type face were non-significant but substantively noteworthy.

Overall, on the basis of the data set out in this chapter we would have to conclude that the evidence for positive changes at the level of individual children was mixed. Although the school surveys produced some positive evidence of improvement, there were only weak signs of positive improvement in the cohort study. Individual reports gathered from the *qualitative* strands do suggest, however, that On Track services resulted in improvements in some children's well-being, with service users and providers both providing strong examples of how services were thought to have improved some children's self-confidence, self-control and self-esteem[22].

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[22] Note that the *Tracking study* results (as reported in Dinos et al, 2006 p79) were also positive in this regard, and showed that for 40% of child users of targeted services (over 3,000 children), service workers felt they had 'improved child behaviour'.

Chapter Nine: Impact at the level of the family – promising results

9.1 Measuring risk and protective factors at the family level

For the purposes of the evaluation, a number of family level risk factors were explored in both the cohort study and schools survey. These included parental mental and emotional health, and various aspects of parenting skills and practices including monitoring and supervision and discipline. Important aspects of the parent-child relationship including parental criticism and hostility were also measured, in addition to key protective factors including the extent to which parents praised their children and the quality of their communication. The cohort study also considered parents' commitment to their children's education, their self-assessed ability to cope with parenting problems, and their social support networks. Measures included parent and child self-report, again using a combination of bespoke measures as well as instruments widely used and validated in previous research including the Malaise Inventory (Rutter, Tizard and Whitmore 1970) and a shortened version of the Misbehaviour Response Scale (Creighton et al, 2003).

9.2 Risk factors - Mental and emotional health of parents

Poor parental mental health is perhaps one of the most serious risk factors for poor child outcomes. In the *cohort study*, parent mental and emotional health status was measured at both waves by parent self-report using the Malaise Inventory (Rutter, Tizard and Whitmore 1970), a 24-item check list that indicates risk of depression. At Wave 1, although not reaching statistical significance all three 'On Track samples' (residents, self-identified users and project-identified high intensity service users in the booster sample) had higher mean scores on the Malaise Inventory than parents in matched comparison areas, again providing evidence that On Track was successfully being targeted at higher need families. In fact, as Table 9.1 shows, there was a steady gradient of need at Wave 1 running from comparison group parents (with a mean score of 4.1) to booster sample parents whose mean score was more than one whole point higher at 5.3. (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p25). Over time, there were no changes of significance, however, although it was also the case that the On Track area and booster samples reduced their scores by Wave 2 whilst scores for comparison parents went up. This suggests that at least things were not getting worse for families in On Track areas, even if they were not getting measurably better.

Table 9.1 Emotional health of main parent: mean scores on Malaise inventory (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)						
	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user		Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff	
W1 (2004)	4.1	4.5	0.4	4.9	0.8	5.3
W2 (2005)	4.3	4.4	0.1	5.0	0.7	5.0
Change from W1 to W2	0.2	0.0	-0.3	0.1	-0.1	-0.3
Base (unweighted)	405	428		124		196

Notes:
1. Base for all: main parents answering W1 and W2 (second) self-completion. Base includes 'not stated'.
2. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

9.3   Risk factors – Poor parent-child relationship

9.3.1 Hostility and criticism from parents

In the *cohort study* parents were asked a number of questions concerning the quality of their relationship with their child. One aspect of the parent-child relationship that was measured in this context was hostile or critical parenting, a known risk factor for a host of poor outcomes for children[23]. As Table 9.2 shows, just under two-thirds of those resident in On Track areas (64%) and just over two thirds of self-identified On Track users reported relationships with children characterised by low levels of hostility and criticism. But while On Track area residents reported no change between Wave 1 and Wave 2, the proportion of On Track users reporting low hostility increased significantly over time when compared to parents in the comparison area. Furthermore, the degree of change over time was significant, showing that by Wave 2, 73% of parents using On Track reported a relationship with their child characterised by low hostility (up from 69% at Wave 1, p<.05; Aye Maung et al, 2008a p29). This suggests a positive change associated with On Track use.

Table 9.2 Parental hostility and criticism: proportion of parents characterising relationship with child as having low hostility (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)							
	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user			Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff		
W1 (2004)	64	64	-1	69	4		69
W2 (2005)	61	64	3	73	11	**	66
Change from W1 to W2	-3	1	4	4	7	*	-2
Base (unweighted)	408	440		127			202

Notes:
1. Base for all: main parents answering W1 and W2 self-completion.
2. 'Low hostility comprises 'average' and 'below average' scores on the Hostility and Criticism scale. Excludes 'not stated'.
3. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

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[23] Two statements were combined into a scale measuring hostility and criticism: 'I often feel angry with him/her; and 'I find I am constantly nagging, criticising or telling him/her off'. Parents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed and how strongly. Parents were classified into groups according to their scores on the scale: average or below average hostility ('low hostility') and above average ('high hostility').

9.4 Risk factors – Poor parenting skills

9.4.1 Monitoring, supervision and consistency of discipline

A lack of supervision and monitoring by parents is highly correlated with antisocial behaviour in young people (Rutter et al, 1998). In the *schools surveys*, secondary school children answered nine questions that when combined, enabled us to calculate an overall 'supervision and monitoring' score (see Bhabra et al, 2006b p37-40)[24]. Scores on this scale went up a small but significant degree over the two waves of the study, indicating that children in the Wave 2 sample in 2004 reported generally better supervision and monitoring by parents than those in Wave 1 in 2001 (p<.001; Bhabra et al, 2006b p113). The increase was noticeably driven by boys: girls' levels of supervision started and remained high, but boys reported increased supervision over time. In the primary schools survey, children at Wave 2 (this time both boys and girls) also reported significantly higher levels of monitoring and consistent discipline than at Wave 1 (p<.05; Bhabra et al, 2006a p72-73)[25].

In the *cohort study*, parents at both waves rated themselves highly in terms of monitoring levels, with no change between the two waves on a scale comprising four items (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p27). Indeed, rates reported at Wave 1 were so high, there was little room for improvement at Wave 2.

9.4.2 Physical discipline

The *cohort study* suggested that there were significant positive changes over time in relation to parenting skills and behaviours associated with disciplinary practices. A large body of research demonstrates a consistent link between harsh or inconsistent disciplinary practices and poor outcomes for children (see Ghate, 2000 for a brief review). Though there is debate about the extent to which milder forms of physical discipline harm children, there is very little evidence suggesting that the use of physical force is an effective disciplinary strategy in the longer term, and numerous studies have showed that frequent or harsh physical discipline is implicated in poor outcomes for children. For this reason, the *cohort study* measured the extent to which parents engaged in physically aggressive disciplinary practices using a condensed version of the Misbehaviour Response Scale (Creighton et al, 2003), which measures the use of 'minor' physical responses to misbehaviour (smacking or slapping on hand, arms, legs or bottom) and severe physical responses (smacking on face or head, hitting with objects) in the context of a range of physical and non-physical discipline.

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[24] The scale included questions on adult knowledge of young people's whereabouts and activities, consistency and clarity of rules at home, and likely responses to transgressions.
[25] Two statements were combined into a scale: 'When I'm not at home, a grown-up always knows where I am', and 'when the grown-ups in my home say no, they mean it'.

As Table 9.3 shows, at Wave 1 parents using On Track services in both the general user sample and the booster sample reported more use in the previous 12 months of 'minor' physical responses to perceived misbehaviour than parents in the matched comparison sample (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p27). At Wave 2, however, results showed that parents in all samples decreased their use of minor physical discipline. While parents in all groups including the matched comparison sample reported decreasing use of physical discipline, the decrease was especially marked (24 percentage points) among parents in the self-identified On Track user sample. This represents a significant degree of positive change over time for the On Track user group when compared to the matched sample (p<.01). It was also encouraging that parents in the booster sample significantly decreased their use of more severe physical responses to misbehaviour by four percentage points between the two waves.

Table 9.3 Physical discipline used by parents: proportions of parents using minor and severe physical responses to misbehaviour (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)						
	Matched % **(adjusted)**	**OT area**		**OT user**		**Booster** **user**
		%	**Diff**	**%**	**Diff**	
Minor physical response						
W1 (2004)	42	40	-2	55	14 **	53
W2 (2005)	32	29	-3	32	0	41
Change from W1 to W2	-10	-11	0	-24	-14 **	-12
Base (unweighted)	394	419		117		190
Severe physical response						
W1 (2004)	8	8	0	13	5 **	12
W2 (2005)	8	8	0	12	5 **	8
Change from W1 to W2	0	0	0	-1	-1	-4
Base (unweighted)	401	427		119		194

Notes:
1. Base for all: main parents answering W1 and W2 self-completion. Excludes 'not stated'.
2. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01
3. Minor physical response comprises: Smacked or slapped him/her on hands, arms or legs; Smacked his/her bottom. Severe physical response comprises: Smacked or slapped him/her on face, head or ears; Hit him/her with something like a slipper, belt, hairbrush or other hard object.

9.5   Protective factors – Positive parent-child relationship

9.5.1 Parental warmth and involvement

Parenting characterised by high warmth (positive regard and affection), praise, and a high level of parent involvement (ie taking an interest in the child's activities and doing things together with the child) has been identified as an important protective factor, especially for children otherwise exposed to multiple risk factors (e.g. Rutter et al, 1998). The *cohort study* measure of parental warmth indicated that between 40

and 50 per cent of parents in all groups at Wave 1 rated their relationships as having above-average levels of warmth (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p28)[26]. As Table 9.4 illustrates, levels declined slightly (but non-significantly) by Wave 2 for all groups except the booster sample, probably reflecting the increasing complexity of parent-child relationships as children grow older[27]. It is interesting, however, that booster sample parents did not conform to this trend. Although the change over time in this group was slight (from 45% to 47%), there is a hint that On Track services may have been associated with increasing levels of warmth among this high need group.

Table 9.4 Parental warmth and involvement: proportion of parents characterising relationship with child as having high warmth (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user		Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff	
W1 (2004)	44	46	2	40	-4	45
W2 (2005)	40	41	1	36	-4	47
Change from W1 to W2	-4	-5	-1	-3	0	2
Base (unweighted)	409	441		127		201

Notes:
1. Base for all: main parents answering W1 and W2 self-completion.
2. 'High warmth' comprises 'average' and 'above average' scores on the Warmth and Involvement scale. Excludes 'not stated'
3. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

Praise is an important component of warmth in the parent-child relationship, and the *cohort study* also explored children's reports of how often they were praised as opposed to told off at home. Here the findings were consistent with a picture of increasingly good relationships in families in the On Track areas, especially among those using On Track services. The positive results were, however, chiefly driven by changes in relationships between primary school-aged children and their parents. Table 9.5 below shows that the primary school-aged children of residents and service users in On Track areas reported lower rates of frequent praise and infrequent telling off at Wave 1 than those in the comparison areas. However, the position reversed itself by Wave 2, with On Track samples reporting significantly increased rates of praise, whilst the rates decreased for the comparison groups. Change over time was significant (p<.01; Aye Maung et al, 2008a p31).

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[26] Three statements were combined into a scale measuring warmth and involvement: 'We have a warm and affectionate relationship', 'I take lots of interest in what he/she is doing', and 'I am always finding reasons to praise him/her'. Parents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed and how strongly. Parents were classified into groups according to their scores on the scale: average or above average warmth ('high warmth') and below average ('low warmth').

[27] The cohort study data also showed that the older the child, the lower the levels of warmth on our scaled measure.

Table 9.5 Praise and admonition: proportion of primary or secondary school aged children saying they are frequently praised and infrequently told off (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)						
	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user		Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff	
***Primary and secondary* school aged children**						
W1 (2004)	54	46	-7 *	35	-19 **	41
W2 (2005)	47	46	-1	41	-6	54
Change from W1 to W2	-7	0	7	6	13 **	13
Base (unweighted)	239	236		61		63
***Primary* school aged children**						
W1 (2004)	52	41	-11 **	34	-18 *	44
W2 (2005)	45	48	3	47	2	59
Change from W1 to W2	-8	6	14 *	13	20 **	15
Base (unweighted)	128	136		46		39
***Secondary* school aged children**						
W1 (2004)	56	55	-1	n.s.	n.s.	56
W2 (2005)	50	43	-7	n.s.	n.s.	50
Change from W1 to W2	-6	-12	-6	n.s.	n.s.	-6
Base (unweighted)	111	100		n.s.		111

Notes:
1. Base for all: primary or secondary school aged children answering W1 and W2 self-completion by themselves. Base includes 'not stated'.
2. Figures for secondary school children in On Track user sample not shown as base<20.
3. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

Self-reports by children in the *schools surveys* suggested even more consistently that there had been an improvement in parent-child relationships over the two waves of the surveys – possibly because the cross-sectional (independent) samples in these surveys were not affected by the confounding effects of age, unlike the cohort sample[28] (Bhabra et al, 2006a p72, 2006b p112-114). In the Wave 2 *primary schools survey*, children reported significantly more parental warmth and involvement measured by three simple questions (p<.05)[29]. In the *secondary schools survey*, pupils were asked a larger number of questions about their parents' warmth and involvement, which were combined into a scaled measure. Looking at change between Wave 1 and 2, children at Wave 2 reported significantly more parental warmth and involvement at Wave 2 (p<.05; Bhabra et al, 2006b p112)

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[28] I.e. children got older during the period of the cohort study, and survey measures of parental warmth generally show a decline with child's increasing age.

[29] Grown ups in my home often tell me they are proud of me, do lots of fun things with me, chat with me a lot.

9.5.2 Communication

Another particularly encouraging finding in respect of parent-child relationships came from the *cohort study*, where children were asked to report whether they often '*talked to their parents about friends or about school*'. Children in the matched comparison group reported the lowest rates of talking often with their parents at both Wave 1 and Wave 2, with a 5 percentage point decrease over the two Waves. By contrast, rates of talking often with parents were significantly higher at Wave 2 among primary school-aged children in the On Track user sample, rising by 13 percentage points (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p30). Overall, the change over time for those in the On Track user sample was statistically significant (p<.05; see Table 9.6), with results again driven by changes for primary school-aged children (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p30).

Table 9.6 Talking to parents: proportion of primary or secondary school aged children talking with main parent about school or friends 'often' (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)						
	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user		Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff	
Primary and secondary school aged children						
W1 (2004)	61	63	3	62	2	67
W2 (2005)	56	63	7	71	16 **	62
Change from W1 to W2	-5	0	5	9	14 *	-5
Base (unweighted)	239	236		60		63

Notes:
1. Base for all: primary or secondary school aged children answering W1 and W2 self-completion by themselves. Base includes 'not stated'.
2. Figures for secondary school children in On Track user sample not shown as base<20.
3. 'Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

In the *primary schools survey*, children were also asked to indicate whether '*grown ups in my home chat with me a lot*'. Although the overall change between the Waves was not significant for all school year groups, the proportion of Year Three children (seven to eight year olds) saying 'yes' had increased significantly from 72% in Wave 1 to 75% in Wave 2 (p<.05).

9.6   Protective factors – Parental commitment to school and academic achievement

9.6.1 Contact with school

'At home support' for learning has been shown in recent research to be a key predictor of good longer-term academic outcomes for children (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2004). In the *cohort study*, parents were asked several questions about their involvement with their child's education and contact with the school. Nearly all parents said they had gone to at least one parents' evening or similar event in the last year, and the level remained high at both waves. But it was noteworthy that the proportion of parents who reported going to parents' evenings in the last year

dropped in the matched comparison areas, while rates in the sample of On Track residents and On Track service users remained significantly higher (p<.01; see Table 9.7 below; Aye Maung et al, 2008a p32). Although the figures are not shown, it is also worth noting that these results were mainly driven by greater involvement, at both Waves of the study, by parents of primary school children when compared to parents of secondary school children.

Table 9.7 Involvement with child's education: proportion of parents attending parents evenings or similar events in last year (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

Primary and secondary school aged children	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user		Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff	
W1 (2004)	93	92	-1	91	-2	91
W2 (2005)	88	91	3	91	4 *	89
Change from W1 to W2	-5	-1	4 *	0	5 **	-1
Base (unweighted)	419	459		133		208

Notes:
1. Base for all: main parents answering W1 and W2 interviews, for those children currently attending school. Base includes 'not stated'.
2. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

Apart from attendance at parents' evenings, the *cohort study* also asked parents to report on how frequently in the past year they had had special '*discussions about their child's behaviour or progress with a teacher or someone else at school'*. Over time, On Track service users in particular reported higher levels of this kind of contact with school, so that rates went up from 63% at Wave 1 to 69% at Wave 2, a rate significantly higher (p<.01) than the rate reported by parents in matched comparison areas at Wave 2; see Table 9.8. Parents of primary school aged children again reported higher levels of contact and somewhat greater change over time than parents of older pupils, and booster sample parents (who were likely to be from high need families) reported the highest rates of all: 80% at Wave 1 and 82% at Wave 2.
 (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p33). Though the net degree of change over time did not quite reach statistical significance, the trend was notably positive.

Table 9.8 Progress or behaviour at school: proportion of parents having special discussions with teachers at school in the past year (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

Primary and secondary school aged children	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user		Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff	
W1 (2004)	59	55	-4	63	5	80
W2 (2005)	58	59	2	69	11 **	82
Change from W1 to W2	-1	4	5	6	7	2
Base (unweighted)	419	459		133		208

Notes:
1. 1 Base for all: main parents answering W1 and W2 interviews, for those children currently attending school. Base includes 'not stated'.
2. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

9.6.2 Feeling involved in school life

As Table 9.9 below shows, there was also a substantial increase in the proportions of parents who reported feeling 'very involved' in their child's school life between the two waves of the *cohort study*. At Wave 1, there was little difference between On Track residents or users and parents in comparison areas, with around a third of parents in all groups feeling 'very involved'. But by Wave 2, On Track residents and, especially, On Track users were substantially more likely to feel this than comparison parents (p<01; Aye Maung et al, 2008a p32-33). Moreover, booster sample parents reported particularly high rates of involvement at Wave 1 when compared to the other groups, and though this had declined by Wave 2, the booster sample parents were still reporting levels of involvement well above the levels reported by those in the matched comparison areas. Again, the significant results were mainly driven by changes in the reported involvement of parents with primary school-aged children.

Table 9.9 Involvement with child's education: proportion of parents feeling 'very involved' in child's school life (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)						
Primary and secondary school aged children	**Matched % (adjusted)**	**OT area**		**OT user**		**Booster user**
		%	**Diff**	**%**	**Diff**	
W1 (2004)	34	32	-2	35	0	46
W2 (2005)	34	41	6 *	44	10 **	41
Change from W1 to W2	0	8	8 **	10	10 **	-4
Base (unweighted)	419	459		133		208

Notes:
1. Base for all: main parents answering W1 and W2 interviews, for those children currently attending school. Base includes 'Not stated'.
2. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

9.6.3 Reading at home with younger children

Lastly, there were encouraging signs from the *primary schools survey* that over time, parents of children in On Track area schools were increasing the frequency with which they read together with their child at home. Children in the survey were asked to indicate whether '*grown ups in my home often read with me*'. At Wave 2, nearly half (49%) of children said 'yes' to this question. This showed a substantial and significant increase from 44% in Wave 1 (p<.001).

9.7 Protective factors - Coping with parenting

In the *cohort study*, parents in On Track areas and using On Track services reported a number of encouraging improvements in relation to their ability to cope. When asked how well they were '*coping with being a parent*' at Wave 1, residents in On Track areas, On Track service users in general and high intensity service users in the booster sample reported coping less well than parents in the comparison areas. By Wave 2, even though their rates of coping were still lower than those of matched area parents, the differences were no longer significant (see Table 9.10). The degree of

change between Waves (a five percentage point increase among residents of On Track areas and On Track service users saying they were 'coping pretty well') was statistically significant when compared to a slight *decline* in coping reported by parents in the comparison areas (p<.05). Although On Track parents still had substantively lower scores than those in the matched areas, they were, in effect, 'catching up' with parents in the other areas (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p24). Since parents' perceptions of how well they are coping have been associated in other studies with a host of risk factors for poor child outcomes (see e.g Ghate and Hazel, 2002), this is an important and encouraging result.

Table 9.10 Coping with parenting: proportion of parents coping 'pretty well' with being a parent
(Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user		Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff	
W1 (2004)	50	41	-8 **	33	-17 **	32
W2 (2005)	48	46	-2	38	-10	34
Change from W1 to W2	-2	5	6 *	5	7 *	2
Base (unweighted)	409	441		127		202

Notes:
1. Base for all: main parents answering W1 and W2 self-completion. Base includes 'not stated'
2. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

To illustrate further, Figure 9.1 provides an alternative view of how the four groups in the cohort study fared between the two Waves of data collection, showing the clear upward trend for the On Track samples against the decline for the comparison parents.

Figure 9.1 Coping with parenting: proportion of parents coping 'pretty well' with being a parent
(Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)
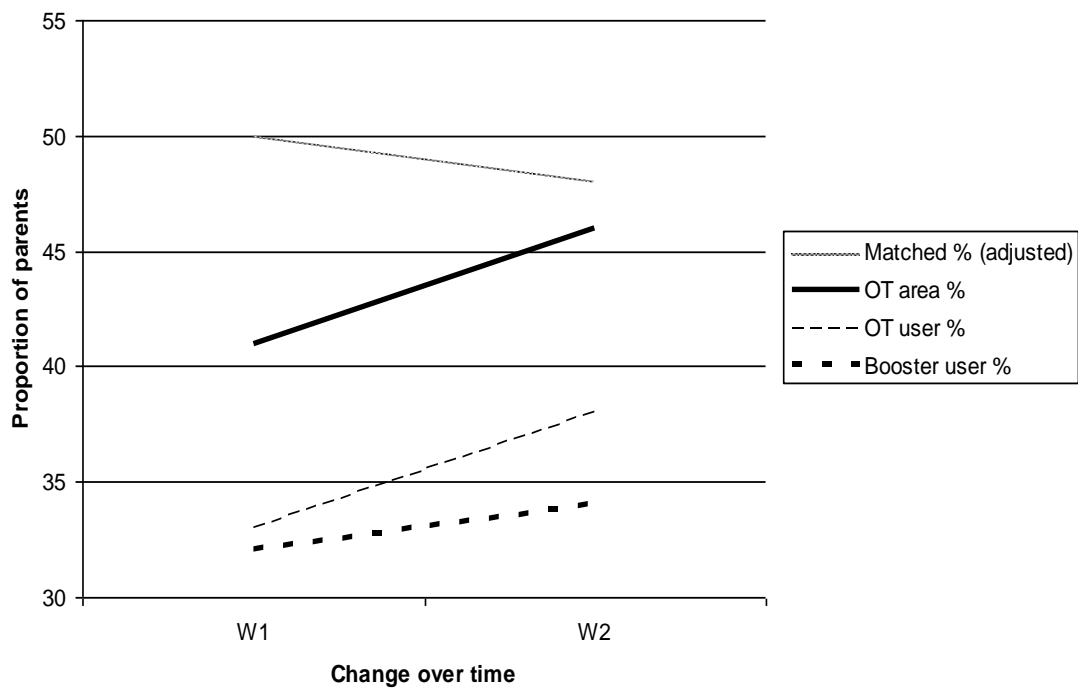
9.8 Protective factors – Parents' social support networks

Research studies on both sides of the Atlantic have clearly shown that where social support is lacking, rates of family and parenting difficulties, child care problems, child maltreatment and child and youth conduct problems within the community are often high. For this reason, the *cohort study* measured access to support by asking parents whether they felt able to talk to others if they had '*problems with children or with parenting*'. Parents were also asked to identify semi-formal and formal support that was available to them from a list that included teachers and nursery/school staff, work colleagues, childminders, doctors, health visitors, police and general support services, and informal support sources such as partners, ex-partners, other family members and friends. Results showed that across all groups, approximately 9 out of 10 parents felt that they had access to some kind of support. Informal sources of support were the most commonly cited, but between two fifths and half of all parents mentioned more formal sources.

Differences with respect to informal support were negligible between Wave 1 and Wave 2 for all of the samples. However, as Table 9.11 shows, there was a clear and significant increase over time among the sample of self-identified On Track service users in respect of formal support when compared to the other samples (p<.01). Note, also, that perceived access to support services was significantly lower at Wave 1 among parents residing in the On Track areas, but that a decline among

comparison area parents meant the difference between the two was no longer significant by Wave 2 (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p22).

Table 9.11 Support with children or parenting: proportion of parents able to talk to someone about problems with children or parenting (formal and informal sources) (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)						
	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user		Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff	
Formal or informal sources						
W1 (2004)	88	87	-1	87	-1	90
W2 (2005)	87	85	-2	87	-1	90
Change from W1 to W2	-1	-2	-1	0	0	0
Formal sources						
W1 (2004)	52	44	-8 *	48	-4	54
W2 (2005)	46	44	-2	53	7	55
Change from W1 to W2	-6	0	6	5	11 **	1
Informal sources						
W1 (2004)	80	80	0	80	-1	81
W2 (2005)	81	79	-2	81	0	79
Change from W1 to W2	1	-1	-1	2	1	-1
Base (unweighted)	460	423		133		213

Notes:
1. Base for all: main parents answering W1 and W2 interviews. Base includes 'not stated'.
2. "Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

Social support for parents was also measured in the *cohort study* in relation to regular help with childcare. Parents were asked about formal and semi-formal sources including nurseries, schools, playgroups, child minders and out of school clubs. Informal sources included partners, ex-partners, grandparents, children's older siblings and other adult relatives or friends. As summarised in Table 9.12, about half of parents in all groups were getting regular help with childcare, predominantly from informal sources. As might be expected, however, those in the high-intensity booster sample cited more use of formal and semi-formal help. While all groups of parents reported some increase in their use of informal help over time, parents in the 'On Track' samples reported greater increases than those in the comparison group, with a massive 21 percentage point increase for self-identified On Track users being especially noteworthy (p<.01). This suggests that for many families, use of On Track services was associated with a widening *informal* network – or else increased willingness to call on informal support sources for help with child care. (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p23).

The picture was reversed in relation to formal and semi-formal help with childcare. All groups reported stable or declining help between the survey Waves. For On Track area residents, the decrease over time was substantial enough to reach statistical significance ($p<.05$). However, On Track users reported significantly more use of formal/semi-formal help with childcare at Wave 1 than comparison area parents, and their rate remained more or less stable over time.

Table 9.12 Support with childcare: proportion of parents having regular help with childcare (formal and informal sources) (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)						
	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user		Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff	
All kinds of help						
W1 (2004)	49	48	0	50	1	61
W2 (2005)	53	54	2	66	13 **	61
Change from W1 to W2	4	6	2	16	12 **	0
Formal/semi-formal help						
W1 (2004)	13	13	1	19	7 **	26
W2 (2005)	13	11	-3 *	18	4	21
Change from W1 to W2	1	-3	-4 *	-2	-3	-6
Informal help						
W1 (2004)	43	41	-2	37	-7	49
W2 (2005)	46	49	3	58	11 **	53
Change from W1 to W2	3	8	5	21	18 **	4
Base (unweighted)	423	460		133		213

Notes:
1. Base for all: main parents answering W1 and W2 interviews. Base includes 'not stated'.
2. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$

9.9 Qualitative strand findings

9.9.1 Service users' perspectives

Providing some confirmation of the survey findings reported above, the *qualitative study of users* (Grewal et al, 2008) provided rich examples of the ways in which On Track services had improved their parenting skills and confidence, particularly those related to child discipline and parent-child communication. Specific examples included parents saying that they had replaced smacking with other non-violent means of discouraging unwanted behaviour, such as withholding privileges, like pocket money or use of a toy. Several parents also reported that they now '*asked*' rather than '*told*' their child to do something. In some instances, participation in On Track services led to even more dramatic changes, where parents adopted new, more child-centred philosophies about parenting. As one mother put it, '*you have to earn children's respect*' - which was a view contrary to the beliefs her own parents had held

during her upbringing. Some examples illustrated how levels of hostility and criticism directed at children had reduced:

I said 'Smacking them, it's over and done with, the punishment's over.' (Now) I work it out: now is where I do totally different ways. I don't hit them. I actually take their favourite toy off them. Now, she's got a doll that's upstairs that looks like a real baby and I paid £80 for it. And that is her favourite thing. His favourite thing is his PlayStation. So if I remove that item off him and that item off her …

[Parent, On Track service user]

….after being around [female On Track worker] and [male On Track worker] and seeing them talking to the children in the after-school club and all that, I just thought rather than look at the negative side of things, I could look at the positive side. And we're a lot better off. I'm not so... I don't shout... I wouldn't say I shouted at them (before), but I was more cross. I could see the bad points more than I could see the good points. I was always on their backs whereas now we just wait…and say that was wrong, we'll go and do something else now…… We'll all have a chat. [Son] will come in and we'll have a talk or if he sees me in school, he'll stop and talk. [Daughter] will come in and she'll have her whinge and she'll have her say and whatever but.... Like I say, compared to what it used to be, well we didn't talk we'd always shout. We're a lot better.

[Parent, On Track service user]

And as one mother remarked,

. . .I actually do things with the kids now. Whereas one time I used to just sit here, watch the telly and I couldn't be arsed with them. But I actually take them out, I play with them, I talk to them, I let them run round the house. …. (Before) … as soon as I opened my mouth they'd be like "She's going to shout at us again! - you know what I mean? And their hands'd be up by their faces because they think I'm going to hit them. But they don't do that no more. So they have actually changed in a big way. ….

Critically, some parents stressed the positive benefits of feeling more confident and more in control of events as a result of help given by services, even when child behaviour proved difficult to change quickly.

It's made a difference to me because it's taught me how to deal with them better and how to handle situations better. . . .. Which is why we're trying to look at other (ways of modifying child's behaviour). But it's definitely helped with me, because they've [On Track workers] given me ideas on how to deal with situations, bad situations…….I'm a bit more in control and I've got a lot more patience….. I feel that I can handle it a bit better, but it doesn't stop things from happening.

[Parent, On Track service user]

During the interviews, parents also described how their confidence had improved. They often observed that the realisation that they were *'not alone'* helped them to feel

more confident and also more supported. As one parent explained: '*whereas before I didn't know who I could go and see… they've sort of opened my eyes, as in there are people that you can see*'.

Findings suggested that a warm and supportive environment within services created the context within which parents developed their confidence and learned important parenting skills. Parents took comfort in the fact that they could 'offload' their concerns with other parents or On Track workers. In particular, parents valued gaining understanding that their difficulties were '*not all their fault*'. Parents also valued the chance to have someone '*who listens and doesn't judge*'. For some this had been the first opportunity that they had ever had to speak about their life in this way. This, for example, was the case for a parent who said that she had always '*kept everything bottled up*' because she had nobody to talk with. Parents participating in group activities also remarked that they also valued the opportunity On Track provided to form new friendships and build emotional, practical and social networks.

This quote typifies the empowering feeling that supportive services could instil. It provides hints of how benefits of programmes like On Track might be sustained into the future:

> *I am more confident now with this baby compared to what I was with [older child].*
>
> *[Parent, On Track service user]*

9.9.2 Service providers' perspectives

The service providers also provided positive examples of how On Track services had helped parents gain more confidence and improve their parenting skills (Graham et al, 2006). They also observed that a warm and supportive environment was a key part of ensuring that parents would benefit. Practitioners maintained that initiatives to boost parenting skills and family relationships had also produced positive outcomes at community level as parents found new social and support networks within their local neighbourhoods. One service provider related how a parent felt she had found '*a whole new family*' through attending a parenting group. In another project, a provider running a fathers' group expressed surprise and delight that fathers had taken to phoning each other for mutual support.

The service providers also gave numerous examples of ways that parental support services had improved home-school relationships. This, in turn, had assisted work in school with children who exhibited behaviour problems:

> *One family ….at first the way that the Head Teacher viewed the mother was in a negative way. (She was) not very proactive and I, to be honest, didn't have a lot to do there in terms of the work with the mum. The boy's behaviour was getting very intense and I did a lot of work with him and talked to him about different strategies and things and I think it's got to the point where I think she felt that, okay a lot of people are doing*

things here with him and… she (mother) was giving the school a lot more …. She'd come down if something did go wrong out of the blue, she would make sure she was hands on there to take care of it and the Head Teacher describes her in a completely different way now. I think she's more confident as well and the boy actually has settled down.

<div align="right">*[On Track services co-ordinator]*</div>

Findings from the *qualitative research on schools' perspectives* confirmed that many primary school personnel considered that On Track activities within their school had made an important and palpable difference to home-school engagement and home-school partnership. School staff in areas where good relations with On Track projects had been established spoke enthusiastically about this aspect of the work. For example, one head teacher noted that parents were now 'self-referring' to special sessions at school designed to help parents whose children were struggling, even though things had taken a while to show improvement. She felt that some parents' views of school had changed as a result:

I think it's [On Track] made a big difference, in that parents maybe at the outset didn't actually self-refer, but the impact must have been there through the (On Track) activities, because now parents are self-referring. So we must have reached out to the parents in some form or another, and by delivering services to the children… and parents… who probably previously didn't feel supported …by the school, or actually didn't even want to walk through the school doors and had a very negative view of the school, now see the school as much wider than just a purely academic establishment...

<div align="right">*[Head teacher, Primary School]*</div>

Other typical comments included:

The …relationship, between parent and school, has certainly developed because you know, we've had parents have come up and shout at us, and have been quite abusive, and that's been reduced drastically, actually.

<div align="right">*[Head teacher, Primary School]*</div>

The one big impact [of On Track] is…on the families or the parents. It's that they get involved. I mean [speaking to Deputy Head, also in discussion group], *we just think of that one parent that came in last week to speak us, you know? We think there's a massive change in her demeanour. This is the one who ran out of the office when we had the first meeting many years ago. Just ran out, because she couldn't cope with what was going on and here she is (now).... I mean things were sheer bother at home and no sort of support or anything, and …now she is very calm, very tuned-in and speaks at a sort of level that we could never have reached a few years ago.*

<div align="right">*[Head teacher, Primary School]*</div>

9.10 Conclusions: the impact of On Track on risk and protective factors at the family level – an encouraging picture

Overall, as Table 9.13 indicates, findings from the quantitative strands of the evaluation consistently indicate that participation in On Track services was linked to various improvements over time at the level of the family and parenting. A number of important **risk factors** diminished, including hostile and critical parent-child relationships, and the use of physical discipline. Monitoring and supervision also improved (according to young people). Almost all the **protective factors** that were measured showed some evidence of positive increase. Significant changes over time were reported by both children and by parents, in parent-child relationships, parenting skills and practices, and in an overall measure of 'coping'. Changes over time in parents' involvement and engagement with schools, especially for parents of primary school children, were especially encouraging, given On Track's focus on home-school partnerships and the fact that the programme was working most actively in primary schools. Use of social support, both formal and informal, also increased over time amongst users of On Track Services.

In respect of social support for parents, results were also very encouraging. The cohort study showed that for On Track users, there was a significant increase in access to formal or semi-formal access to 'someone to talk to' about problems with childcare or with parenting. On Track service users also reported a significant increase in calling on informal sources (friends, family etc) of 'regular help with childcare' between the two waves of the survey. Qualitative data also suggested that one of the most valued aspects of participating in On Track services from parents' point of view was the opportunity to meet new people and form new networks - a finding that has been replicated in many other studies of parenting support services and their benefits to families (e.g. Ghate and Ramella, 2002).

The accounts of parents, service providers and schools who took part in qualitative research also suggest that participation in On Track services was generally a positive experience with multiple benefits for many individual families. Of course, we cannot say that the On Track services 'caused' this effect – there are many other factors that we did not measure that would have to be assessed before we could definitively say this – but the consistency of the results was nevertheless striking and encouraging. Overall, we would say on the basis of the evidence presented in this chapter that there were promising indications in respect of On Track's impact on risk and protective factors located at the parenting and family level.

Table 9.13 Summary: change over time at the family level				
	Status of significant or noteworthy findings for change over time: positive (✓) or negative (X)			
	Schools Survey		**Cohort Study**	
	Primary	**Secondary**	**On Track area**	**On Track users**
Risk factors				
Poor parental mental health	-	-	*not significant*	*not significant*
Hostility and criticism	-	-	*not significant*	✓*
Physical discipline	-	-	*not significant*	✓**
Monitoring and supervision	✓*	✓***	*not significant*	*not significant*
Protective factors				
Warmth and involvement	✓*	✓*	*not significant*	*not significant*
Praise	-	-	✓*(primary)	✓**(primary)
Communication	✓*(Year 3)	-	*not significant*	✓*(primary)
Attending parents' evenings	-	-	✓*	✓**
Special contact with staff at school	-	-	✓	✓
Feeling involved in child's school life	-	-	✓**	✓**
Reading at home	✓**	-	-	-
Coping with parenting	-	-	✓*	✓*
Social support for parents – someone to talk to	-	-	*not significant*	✓** (formal sources)
Social support for parents – help with childcare	-	-	✓* (formal sources)	✓* (informal sources)

Note: n/s = non significant finding; (-) = not measured
All ✓ or **X** findings in bold were statistically significant: * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001
All ✓ or **X** findings in light type face were non-significant but substantively noteworthy.

Chapter Ten: Impact at the level of the peer group and school - mixed results

In this chapter we combine discussion of findings on impact in relation to two levels – that of the peer group (for which relatively few measures were taken), and at the level of school, where relatively more data were collected.

10.1 Measuring risk and protective factors at the level of the peer group

Peer group influences (for example, association with other young people who are behaving badly) are amongst the most strongly predictive factors for later antisocial behaviour in young people. Previous research suggests that young offenders tend to commit antisocial acts in small groups rather than alone (Reiss, 1988), and peer influence on antisocial behaviour appears to be particularly strong during adolescence (Thornberry and Krohn, 1997). For this reason, the evaluation included measurement of peer factors to trace potential changes over time. As we showed in Chapter Six, many of On Track's services were universal, directed at all children (or families) in the local community, irrespective of their particular individual levels of need, and indeed many interventions in schools were of this type. Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect to detect positive changes amongst the wider group of children, including fewer negative peer influences and more pro-social peer group behaviour. Overall, fewer factors were measured at this level than at other ecological levels. However a key **risk factor** that was explored was peer group and sibling involvement in antisocial behaviour, and key **protective factors** included the extensiveness of children's social networks, and friendships and relationships with other children.

10.2 Risk factors – antisocial peer behaviour

The *secondary schools surveys* asked a number of questions about antisocial behaviour by peers and siblings[30]. Interestingly, boys reported substantially more antisocial behaviour by siblings than girls, which statistically speaking seems a puzzling finding and suggests either that boys are more likely to take a negative view of other family members' behaviour, or that girls know about (or notice) less bad behaviour amongst brothers and sisters than boys. However, setting this intriguing finding aside, the results indicated that children at Wave 2 (in 2004) reported substantially and significantly less sibling antisocial behaviour (p<.001) than their counterparts at Wave 1 in 2001 (Bhabra et al, 2006b p117). In the *primary schools survey*, problematic sibling behaviour did not however show a reported decrease between the two Waves, and indeed for some sub-groups, substantially worse sibling behaviour was reported at Wave 2 (Bhabra et al, 2006a p74).

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[30] The questions ranged from drinking alcohol below the age of 18 to taking drugs and carrying weapons.

Table 10.1 Peers' antisocial behaviour for primary school aged children: proportion saying peers had ever taken part in at least one type (out of 6) (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user		Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff	
W1 (2004)	54	57	3	57	3	59
W2 (2005)	50	51	1	49	0	44
Change from W1 to W2	-4	-6	-2	-8	-3	-15
Base (unweighted)	128	137		46		39

Notes:
1. Base for all: primary school aged children answering W1 and W2 self-completion by themselves. Base includes 'not stated'.
2. Antisocial behaviour comprises: Taking something from a shop without paying; Writing or spraying paint on someone's things; Breaking someone's things on purpose; Hitting punching or kicking someone to injure; Missing school when you should be there; Being noisy/rude in public so people complain.
3. "Diff" = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

The same patterns held for peers (friends): secondary school pupils reported substantially less antisocial behaviour amongst peers at Wave 2 (p<.001), but primary school children reported no change over the two waves.[31]

Patterns were different in the *cohort study*, though none of the differences reached statistical significance. Children were asked to indicate if any of their friends had been involved in one or more activities on a list of bad or antisocial behaviours, modified from questions developed for the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime (Smith et al, 2001; see Chapter Eight, Section 8.2). Encouragingly, primary school aged children in all samples reported decreasing levels of bad peer behaviour over time. As the Table 10.1 above shows, results for children in On Track areas showed a larger decrease than those in matched comparison areas – four percentage points for comparison children (from 54% at Wave 1 to 50% at Wave 2), six percentage points for On Track areas residents (from 57% to 51%), and eight percentage points for On Track service users (from 57% to 49%). Children in the booster sample of high intensity service users showed the most substantial change, with 59% reporting having antisocial peers at Wave 1 and only 44% have these one year later, a 15 percentage point decrease. Note, however, that the overall numbers in the On Track user sample and in the booster sample in particular were very small, preventing the differences reaching statistical significance.

Results for secondary school-aged children (Table 10.2), who responded to a much longer list of antisocial and offending behaviours, followed a similar pattern in the booster sample only. However among On Track area residents in general and in matched areas the trend was in the opposite direction: discouragingly, children reported somewhat *more* peer antisocial behaviour at Wave 2 than they had in Wave 1 (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p57).

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[31] The questions included whether friends had been sent home from school for naughtiness, stealing, smoking and being in trouble with the police.

Table 10.2 Peers' antisocial behaviour for secondary school aged children: proportion saying peers had ever taken part in at least one type (out of 19) over the last year (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)				
	Matched % **(adjusted)**	**OT area**		**Booster** **user**
		%	**Diff**	
W1 (2004)	65	66	1	59
W2 (2005)	69	73	4	44
Change from W1 to W2	3	6	3	-15
Base (unweighted)	111	100		39

Notes:
1   Base for all: secondary school aged children answering W1 and W2 self-completion by themselves. Base includes 'not stated'.
2   Figures for On Track user sample not shown as base<20
3   Antisocial behaviour comprises: Skipped or skived school; Hit, kicked or punched someone on purpose to injure; Broken into car or van to steal something out of it; Sold drugs; Tried to avoid paying correct fare on bus or train; Taken something from a shop without paying for it; Noisy or rude in public so people complained; Had a neighbour complain of behaviour or noise; Written or sprayed paint on something shouldn't have; Damaged someone else's property on purpose; Taken money or something else from school; Attacked, threatened, rude due to skin, race, religion; Carried a knife or weapon for protection in case needed; Set fire or tried to set fire to property or building; Ridden in/on stolen car, van, motorbike, scooter; Taken money/something from home; Broken into a house or building to steal something; Used, force, threats, weapon to get money/something.
4   ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

10.3   Protective factors – pro-social disposition and good peer relationships

According to the *cohort study*, neither primary school nor secondary school children using On Track services increased their friendship networks over time to a statistically significant degree, though the numbers did go up. As Table 10.3 shows, children in the On Track samples – and especially the children in the booster sample – reported notably lower numbers of friends at both waves compared to children in the matched sample. These differences were statistically significant for secondary school-aged young people in the On Track area sample, although the changes over time were not.

	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user		Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff	
Table 10.3 Child's relationships with peers: average number of all friends (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)						
Primary or secondary school aged children						
W1 (2004)	12.3	11.0	-1.2 **	11.5	-0.8	10.3
W2 (2005)	12.3	11.7	-0.6	11.9	-0.4	11.4
Change from W1 to W2	0.1	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	1.1
Base (unweighted)	295	324		86		103
Primary school aged children						
W1	11.6	10.6	-1.0	11.3	-0.3	10.1
W2	11.8	11.5	-0.3	12.0	0.2	10.8
Change from W1 to W2	0.2	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.7
Base (unweighted)	167	196		64		73
Secondary school aged children						
W1 (2004)	13.5	11.9	-1.5 **	11.9	-1.6	10.8
W2 (2005)	13.4	12.2	-1.1 *	11.6	-1.7	12.8
Change from W1 to W2	-0.1	0.3	0.4	-0.3	-0.1	2
Base (unweighted)	128	128		22		30

Notes:
1. Base: primary or secondary school aged children answering W1 and W2 interviews. Excludes 'not stated'.
2. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$

Children in the Booster sample, tellingly, reported the smallest numbers of friends in general at both waves, but also the greatest proportionate increase over time. These were equivalent to one extra friend for primary school aged children and two extra friends gained between the survey waves for the small group of secondary school children (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p42). Booster sample children, it will be recalled from Table 8.5 in Chapter Eight also reported a large (nine percentage point) decrease in scores on the SDQ 'peer problems' sub scale. Though we were not able to test these results for statistical significance, collectively, these results suggest that for the children in the booster group there were noteworthy improvements in peer relationships.

10.4 Qualitative strand findings

In the *qualitative strands* of the evaluation, improved social skills and improved ability to make peer relationships were reported by respondents, linked to participation in On Track services. Both On Track service users and providers felt that the leisure activities provided by many projects directly improved social skills by providing a supportive environment where children could engage positively with one another. Examples of non-academic activities that supported positive social interaction included universal interventions, such as massage in schools (children

were taught to massage each other's hands), as well as more targeted activities, such as play opportunities created by specially hired play workers that encouraged respectful and considerate participation, as well as greater inclusion, amongst children who otherwise had difficulty engaging positively with one another. For example, one service provider described how schools where On Track was working had reported a decrease in the children listed for disciplinary difficulties during break time.

One On Track service co-ordinator of an intervention that used in-school volunteers in a 'club' format to work with children who were shy or vulnerable reported that school staff were similarly impressed, reporting 'amazing transformations' (Graham et al, 2006):

> *I had a teacher that said (to me), "What is it that your volunteers actually did?!" to a particular child. (The teacher) was saying that… this particular child had actually stood up to a bully, someone that was bullying him, so he actually wanted to know what it was that the volunteers had done (in the Club). Yeah! And so I just explained about (how) it's just simple things like arts and crafts, games, circle time [talking together]……..And the teacher said that [child] now had friends. He had people that he was going round with, and [teacher] thinks that was what made him more confident to actually stand up to someone…because he had people around him, and he wasn't all alone any more. It was friends that he made within the Club …(and) that continued with the other children.*

The worker continued:

> *In that same school…there is a girl, she's a twin, and she's actually one... she's the quieter of the twins. And she attended the club without her sister, it was deliberate that it would be just her. So it was an opportunity for her to be able to speak for herself, 'cos the other sister does a lot of the talking for her. (She was) very quiet in the first couple of sessions, and as the weeks went on she was just talking more and more. At the end of the club, the mum really thanked the pool of volunteers 'cos she said that her child was just completely different, talking all the time, always telling her about everything she did at the Club. And the teacher said at the end that.... her transformation was just amazing, she was like a completely different child. And in the teacher's words, she said that she'd completely blossomed. And this child was in one of the lower sets in maths, and she actually went up a set, and so the teacher was saying that, she can't say for definite, but she thinks that it was due to the Club.*

> *[On Track service worker]*

Families and children participating in the qualitative service users' study also regarded these kinds of interventions in a positive light. Children themselves reported that On Track services, such as leisure-based activities, before and after school clubs, and schemes like massage at school facilitated involvement with other children. Through these activities children reported that they '*made new friends*',

developed their social skills, which they used to form friendships in and outside school. Parents described children becoming '*more sociable*' and emphasised how some of the activities, such as massage, had broken down barriers between children and enabled them to make friends. This was particularly welcomed by parents who said that their children usually spent their time with other family members, and that On Track had provided an opportunity to broaden their network of friends. Another impact of participating in these activities was that children had acquired a new interest or skill, such as learning how to fish, cook, or do massage (Grewal et al, 2008).

10. 5   Conclusions: The impact of On Track on risk and protective factors at the peer level – mixed results

Table 10.4 provides a summary of the findings from the quantitative strands regarding risk and protective factors at the peer group level.

Table 10.4 Summary: change over time at the peer level				
	Status of significant or noteworthy findings for change over time : positive (✓) or negative (X)			
	Schools Survey		**Cohort Study**	
	Primary	**Secondary**	**On Track area**	**On Track users**
Risk factors				
ASB by peers and siblings	*not significant*	✓***	*not significant*	✓ (users) ✓ (booster group)
Protective factors				
Pro-social disposition and good peer relations	-	-	*not significant*	*not significant* ✓ (booster group)

All ✓ or **X** findings in bold were statistically significant: * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001
Note: n/s = non significant finding; (-) = not measured
All ✓ or X findings in light type face were non-significant but substantively noteworthy.

As the findings in Table 10.4 suggest, relatively few strong signs of impact at the peer-group level were detected. However it was also true that relatively few peer-related risk and protective factors were measured in the schools surveys or in the cohort study, and small sample sizes for the *cohort study* substantially reduced the likelihood of obtaining statistically significant results – especially when the analyses considered trends for primary and secondary school-age children separately.

Nevertheless, some positive trends were observed. In respect of **risk factors**, secondary school-aged children participating in the *schools survey* and the *cohort study* booster sample reported substantially less sibling and peer antisocial behaviour over time. Primary school children in the *cohort study* also reported consistent decreases in antisocial behaviour by peers in all the On Track samples, though none were large

enough to be statistically significant when compared to the matched comparison group. However, primary school-aged children taking part in the *schools survey* reported no decreases in peer antisocial behaviour over time.

In relation to **protective factors**, findings from the *cohort study* also suggested that children's friendship networks – whether at primary or secondary school-age – were generally smaller among the On Track samples than they were in the comparison sample. Although this tells us nothing about the quality of relationships, it does suggest less positive peer relations in the On Track areas. It was encouraging, therefore, that all the On Track samples (residents, service users and booster sample) reported greater increases in the number of friends at Wave 2 than those in the comparison groups – even though these changes were not significant. Moreover, booster sample children reported the biggest increases in their overall number of friends over time. When seen in the context of a significant decrease in peer problems as measured on the SDQ, this finding suggests that children in the highest need sample experienced an improvement in peer relationships between the two waves of the survey.

Qualitative data and case examples of the work undertaken with high-need groups of children provide further insight into how these trends may have related to On Track services. On Track workers, school staff, parents and children themselves all perceived positive impacts from the interventions. Both universal and targeted services were considered to be achieving particularly good results in boosting protective factors such as pro-social peer relationships. Thus, in individual cases, On Track services did appear to improve peer related outcomes.

10.6   Measuring risk and protective factors at the level of the school

A number of risk and protective factors manifested at the school level are known to be strongly associated with the development of antisocial behaviour. School level impacts were therefore of close interest to the evaluation, becoming more so as the research progressed and it became apparent that On Track was evolving into a substantially if not wholly school-based initiative (Bowers et al, 2008; McKeown and Ghate, 2004; Parsons et al, 2006). For example, by 2005 the tracking study returns showed that around one third of all On Track services were classified as home-school partnership interventions, aimed at engaging families and parents with school activities (Dinos et al, 2006). Positive results for risk and protective factors at this level would therefore have encouraging implications for crime prevention, and would also indicate that school life in general was improving in the deprived areas in which On Track was operating.

For this reason both the *cohort study* and *the schools survey* considered risk factors that included truancy, school exclusion, low attainment, bullying and behaviour at school from the perspectives of children (*schools survey*) and parents (*cohort study*). The schools survey and the cohort study also considered protective factors, which included children's satisfaction with or attachment to school in both studies, as well

as involvement and participation at school and understanding of school rules in the secondary schools survey.

10. 7   Risk factors – truancy and exclusions

Numerous studies have identified truancy as a major risk factor for offending and antisocial behaviour (e.g. Farrington, 1996; Graham and Bowling, 1995; Rutter et al, 1998). To explore the extent to which students in On Track areas were truanting, children participating in both the *schools surveys* and the *cohort study* were asked whether they had skipped school for an entire day (or more) over the past year. Results were mixed: pupils taking part in the *secondary schools survey* reported a significant and substantial *decrease* in their rates of truancy between both waves (p<.001). Among *primary school children*, however, self-reported truancy rates *increased* significantly between the two waves (p < .01; Bhabra et al, 2006a p77).

In the *cohort study*, by contrast, opposite results – though equally mixed - were obtained; see Tables 10.5 and 10.6 below. Primary school-aged children reported a decline in their own truanting between Wave 1 and Wave 2, but secondary school aged children living in On Track areas reported rather large increases (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p51). None of the changes between waves reached statistical significance, however.

Table 10.5 Truancy by primary school aged children: proportion playing truant over last school year (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		Booster user
		%	Diff	
W1 (2004)	8	5	-2	10
W2 (2005)	2	3	2	3
Change from W1 to W2	-6	-2	4	-7
Base (unweighted)	169	196		64

Notes:
1.   Base for all: primary school aged children answering W1 and W2 interviews. Base includes 'not stated'
2.   ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

Table 10.6 Truancy by secondary school aged children: proportion playing truant over last school year (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user			Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff		
W1 (2004)	11	10	0	0	-11	**	13
W2 (2005)	14	20	6	21	7	*	7
Change from W1 to W2	4	10	6	21	18		-7
Base (unweighted)	125	126		22			30

Notes:
1.   Base for all: secondary school aged children answering W1 and W2 self-completion. Base includes 'not stated'
2.   ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

Rates of temporary exclusions as reported by parents about their children in the *cohort study* were notably higher at both waves of the survey in the On Track self-identified users and booster samples when compared to the matched comparison sample. As the Table below shows, this was a substantial problem in On Track areas at Wave 1 particularly for On Track service users and the high intensity service users in the booster sample, again confirming a now familiar picture of high need in On Track areas, and that On Track as a programme was reaching the most at risk children in the local community. Encouragingly, differences between On Track and the matched comparison areas were less dramatic by Wave 2, due to decreases in exclusions among all of the On Track samples. This was particularly true for primary school-aged children in the On Track user group, where there was a statistically significant five percentage point decrease in exclusions (p<.05; Aye Maung et al, 2008a, p52). An even more substantial drop (10 percentage points) was observed among secondary school students in the booster sample (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p55).

Table 10.7 Temporary exclusions from school: proportions temporarily excluded over last school year (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user		Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff	
All ages:						
W1 (2004)	5	5	0	11	6 **	15
W2 (2005)	6	6	0	7	1	11
Change from W1 to W2	1	0	-1	-3	-4 *	-4
Base (unweighted)	423	460		133		213
5-6 year olds						
W1 (2004)	0	7	7 ##	12	12 ##	7
W2 (2005)	3	5	2	12	9 **	1
Change from W1 to W2	3	-2	-5	0	-3	-6
Base (unweighted)	86	94		33		69
Primary school aged children						
W1 (2004)	3	4	2	9	6 **	14
W2 (2005)	5	4	-1	4	-1	14
Change from W1 to W2	2	0	-2	-5	-7 *	0
Base (unweighted)	183	226		74		104
Secondary school aged children						
W1 (2004)	12	6	-6 **	15	3	28
W2 (2005)	10	9	-1	13	2	18
Change from W1 to W2	-2	3	5	-3	-1	-10
Base (unweighted)	154	140		26		40

Notes:
1. Base for all: main parents answering W1 and W2 interview. Base includes 'not stated'.
2. ## = as there were no 5-6 year olds in the Matched area sample who were temporarily excluded, it was not possible to formally test the difference at wave 1, but the difference is generally of an order that would reach statistical significance.
3. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

In the *secondary schools survey*, an encouraging finding was a significant drop from 18% at Wave 1 to 17% at Wave 2 in the numbers of students self-reporting they had ever been excluded from school (p<.05; Bhabra et al, 2006b, p129)

10.8 Risk factors – low attainment and performance

Poor academic performance has been consistently linked to later antisocial and offending behaviour (Loeber and Farrington, 1998). In this section we report data drawn from children's and parents' reports of how children were doing at school.

Unfortunately, the *schools survey* was not able to consider changes over time in children's own ratings of school performance, because this information was not available in the data from Wave 1 of the evaluation. However, at Wave 2, five percent of the young people participating in the *secondary school survey* rated their performance at school as 'poor'.

The *cohort study* measured children's perceptions of their performance at school by asking secondary school students to rate how good they thought they were at mathematics, English and sports. Primary school-aged children were asked to rate their performance in reading, writing and mathematics. As Table 10.8 illustrates, most children rated themselves favourably at Wave 1, although On Track users and those in the booster sample were more likely than comparison area children to rate themselves poorly at Wave 1. Encouragingly, by Wave 2 primary school-aged children in the On Track user group were less likely to rate themselves as '*not very good*' in two or more subjects, with this rate falling by a factor of three (from 9% to 3%; Aye Maung et al, 2008a, p39), though not reaching statistical significance. Less encouragingly, there was an increase from 0 to 12% between the waves among the small sample of secondary school-aged On Track users reporting that they were '*not very good*' at two or more subjects. When compared with the matched sample, this change reached statistical significance. Note that this was also the group who reported greatly increased rates of truanting over time, so perhaps these results are not surprising (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p39).

Table 10.8   Primary and secondary school aged children's rating of academic performance: proportion '*not very good*' at two or more subjects (reading, writing or maths for primary school; reading, writing or maths for secondary school) (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user			Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff		
Primary school aged children							
W1 (2004)	6	4	-2	9	3		11
W2 (2005)	6	7	1	3	-4	*	5
Change from W1 to W2	0	3	3	-6	-7		-5
Base (unweighted)	169	196		64			73
Secondary school aged children							
W1 (2004)	7	7	0	0	-7		3
W2 (2005)	6	10	5	12	6	*	0
Change from W1 to W2	-1	3	5	12	13	**	-3
Base (unweighted)	129	130		22			30

Notes:
1. Base for all: primary and secondary school aged children answering W1 and W2 interviews. Base includes 'not stated'.
2. 'Diff' = Difference in scores between groups or between waves; used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

In the *cohort study*, parents were also asked to rate their children's academic performance, and generally speaking parents' ratings were consistently more negative than those of their children, though they followed the same broad pattern. At Wave 1, parents in households using On Track services were significantly more likely than the comparison group to rate their children's academic performance as '*below average*' (16% compared to 10%), and over one fifth of booster sample parents rated their child like this (22%).   Amongst On Track area residents, the parents of 5-6 year olds and the parents of secondary school aged children were also significantly more likely to rate their children as not doing well at Wave 1. But at Wave 2, parents of 5-6 year old children in On Track areas had become substantially more positive (p<.01). In the Booster sample there were also encouraging results especially amongst secondary school children, where a substantial positive change of 25 percentage points was reported (Aye Maung et al, 2008a, p40). However, amongst the parents of the small group of secondary school-aged On Track users, things again looked very negative, with rates of lower than average performance running at 23% at Wave 2, unchanged from Wave 1.

Table 10.9 Parental rating of academic performance: proportion of children rated by parents as 'below average' at school (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)						
	Matched % **(adjusted)**	**OT area**		**OT user**		**Booster** **user**
		%	**Diff**	**%**	**Diff**	
All children:						
W1 (2004)	10	10	0	16	6 **	22
W2 (2005)	10	9	-1	15	4 **	16
Change from W1 to W2	0	-1	-1	-2	-2	-5
Base (unweighted)	419	459		133		208
5-6 year olds						
W1 (2004)	6	12	6 *	12	6	9
W2 (2005)	14	8	-7 **	12	-2	19
Change from W1 to W2	8	-5	-13 **	0	-8 **	9
Base (unweighted)	82	93		33		64
Primary school aged children						
W1 (2004)	12	8	-5 **	16	4	24
W2 (2005)	10	9	-1	13	3	17
Change from W1 to W2	-3	2	4	-3	0	-7
Base (unweighted)	183	226		74		104
Secondary school aged children						
W1 (2004)	9	14	5 **	23	14 **	35
W2 (2005)	8	11	3	23	15 **	10
Change from W1 to W2	-1	-2	-2	0	1	-25
Base (unweighted)	154	140		26		40

Notes:
1. Base for all: main parents answering W1 and W2 interviews, for those children currently attending school. Base includes 'not stated'.
2. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$

10.9   Risk factors - Bullying and being bullied

10.9.1 Bullying others

Research consistently links bullying behaviour to an increased risk of offending and violent behaviour (Farrington, 1993a). The *cohort study* measured change in children's self-reported rates as perpetrators of bullying. As Table 10.10 suggests, the results for primary school-aged children were generally encouraging. At Wave 1, children in On Track areas, including those using On Track services, reported higher rates of bullying others (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p54). By Wave 2, however, all samples reported lower levels of involvement in bullying and in the On Track samples these had fallen back to those of the comparison group (8%, 7% and 8% respectively) and the difference ceased to be significant. The only exception was among the 73 booster sample children, whose reported rate of bullying others at Wave 1 had risen at Wave 2 (15%).

Table 10.10 Bullying by primary school aged children: proportion saying they have bullied other children over last school year (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)						
	Matched % **(adjusted)**	**OT area**		**OT user**		**Booster** **user**
		%	**Diff**	**%**	**Diff**	
W1 (2004)	10	12	2	16	6 *	12
W2 (2005)	8	7	-1	8	0	15
Change from W1 to W2	-2	-5	-3	-8	-6	3
Base (unweighted)	169	196		64		73

Notes:
1.   Base for all: primary school aged children answering W1 and W2 interviews. Base includes 'not stated'.
2.   'Diff' = Difference in scores between groups or between waves; used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

Among secondary school-aged respondents (Table 10.11), the pattern at Wave 1 was similar. On Track residents, including service users, reported significantly higher rates at Wave 1 of bullying others than students in the comparison areas (comparison children reported a rate of 12%, compared to 18% for On Track area residents, 24% of On Track service users, and 17% in the Booster sample). At Wave 2, On Track service users' rate had dropped substantially to 15% - the same level as students in the comparison areas. However, rates among students in the wider On Track area increased to 23% (making them significantly more likely to report involvement in bullying than the comparison group). Rates in the booster sample of high-intensity service users had also risen substantially (from 17 %to 27%). However, the changes between the two waves were not statistically significant.

Table 10.11 Bullying by secondary school aged children: proportion saying they have bullied other children over last school year (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)						
	Matched % **(adjusted)**	**OT area**		**OT user**		**Booster** **user**
		%	**Diff**	**%**	**Diff**	
W1 (2004)	12	18	6 *	24	13 **	17
W2 (2005)	15	23	8 **	15	0	27
Change from W1 to W2	3	5	2	-9	-12	10
Base (unweighted)	125	126		22		30

Notes:
1.   Base for all: secondary school aged children answering W1 and W2 self-completion. Base includes 'not stated'.
2.   ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

Just under a third of students participating in the *secondary schools survey* at Wave 2 admitted to ever having bullied someone from school (30%), but data were unavailable from Wave 1 to allow us to test if this rate had changed over time; (Bhabra et al, 2006b p86).

10.9.2   Being bullied

Children participating in the *schools surveys* and *cohort study* were also asked how often they had been victims of bullying. Data from the *school surveys* showed that primary school students' reports of being bullied or victimised in the past week

remained at the same level at both waves. (Data for secondary school children were not available at Wave 1, however).

The *cohort study* invited children to self-report whether they had ever been bullied in the past (a measure of prevalence) and, at Wave 2, whether this had happened in the previous year (a measure of incidence). Table 10.12 below shows that while On Track service users reported significantly higher rates of having been bullied than the other groups at Wave 1, (Aye Maung et al, 2008a, p47), at Wave 2 these differences were no longer significant. Though we cannot directly compare prevalence and incidence rates, this pattern of results, with large differentials at one Wave but not at the next, suggests that there may have been a decline in bullying experienced by children in On Track areas and children who were On Track users relative to children in comparison areas.

Table 10.12 Experiences of being bullied: proportion of primary and secondary school aged children bullied (i) ever up to W1 interview and (ii) since W1 interview (Aye Maung et al, 2008a)						
	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area		OT user		Booster user
		%	Diff	%	Diff	
Primary school aged children						
W1 (2004) ever bullied	58	63	5	80	21 **	63
W2 (2005) bullied in past year	43	39	-4	42	-1	52
Base (unweighted)	169	196		64		
Secondary school aged children						
W1 (2004) ever bullied	34	43	8 *	61	26 **	47
W2 (2005) bullied in past year	21	26	5	27	7	23
Base (unweighted)	125	126		22		

Notes:
1. Base: primary school aged children answering W1 and W2 interviews and secondary school aged children answering W1 and W2 self-completion.
2. Figures for primary and secondary school children cannot be combined as questions asked via different completion methods.
3. ''Diff' = Difference in scores between On Track area/user group and comparison group, used as basis for significance tests (T-tests); * p<.05; ** p<.01

10.10 Risk factors - Misbehaviour at school

Primary school children in the *primary schools survey* were asked three questions specifically relating to bad or disruptive behaviour at school, including *being sent home from school for being naughty* and *having a parent summoned to school because of bad behaviour*. Combining these results into a scale, overall there was a significant reduction in reported levels of bad behaviour between the two waves of the survey (p<.05; Dinos et al, 2006a p78).

10.11 Protective factors – Satisfaction with school

Given the positive role schools can play in integrating children into society and equipping them with a sense of achievement, it is not surprising that children who feel alienated from school are at increased risk of involvement in crime and other antisocial behaviour (Anderson, Beinart, Farrington, Langman, Sturgis and Utting, 2005; Graham, 1988). To measure overall satisfaction with school, the *secondary schools survey* used a scale that combined questions about interest in school subjects, views on the importance of school work for later life, and effort and enjoyment (or dislike) of school. Comparisons between the two waves showed a significant increase in school satisfaction for all students (p<.001; Dinos et al, 2006b p132).

In the *primary schools survey*, a similar scale measuring enjoyment at school and perceptions of safety, discipline and good relations with teachers showed comparable results, including substantially higher levels of satisfaction reported by children who took part in Wave 2 (p<.05; Dinos et al, 2006a p76). Moreover, children in schools with high levels of On Track provision (defined as schools where eight or more On Track services or activities were located) reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction than those in schools with less or no provision (p<.01; Dinos et al, 2006a p64-66).

However, in the *cohort study*, both age groups were asked how much they liked going to school and the number of teachers they liked as a way of gauging children's 'attachment' to school. Combining these items produced scaled scores that showed remarkable similarity between the On Track areas and matched sample across both waves of the survey (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p38), with no significant changes over time.

10.12 Protective factors - involvement and participation at school

School involvement and participation are also factors that are thought to protect children against the risks associated with antisocial behaviour. (Anderson et al, 2005). Levels of school involvement were not assessed in the cohort study, but they were considered in the *secondary schools survey* using a scale that included questions about opportunities to participate in school activities and decision-making, and access to teachers for one-to-one support. Responses between the two waves showed significantly higher levels of school involvement in the Wave 2 survey (p<.05), although some sub-group comparisons were less consistently positive (e.g. girls, who reported *less* school involvement at Wave 2; Bhabra et al, 2006b p129-130).

10.13 Protective factors - Positive school ethos and approach

Aspects of the 'whole school' environment have been shown in various research studies to be associated with outcomes for young people (Anderson et al, 2005). For example, inconsistent enforcement of school rules has been associated with a high

proportion of young offenders, high rates of truancy and disruption and poor relations between pupils and staff (Graham, 1988). As a partial measure of positive school ethos, the *secondary schools survey* asked pupils to report on the clarity of school rules, particularly with regard to late attendance, truancy, and exclusion. This proved to be one of the few protective factors that showed a negative change over time, with pupils in the second wave of the survey reporting significantly lower levels of clarity than those in Wave 1 (p<.001; Bhabra et al, 2006b p131).

10.14   Qualitative strand findings

10.14.1 Service users' perspectives

Some parents participating in the *qualitative study of services users* spoke enthusiastically about their child's participation in On Track services offered at school (Grewal et al, 2008).   For example, parents described how participation in an On Track service improved their children's ability to concentrate:

> *(In) the drama club they have to memorise lots of words - they have to know their words and it … definitely would help them with their reading skills because they have to read faster…. (and) standing on the stage in front of all those people, they (get so that) they have no fear whatsoever.*

> *[Parent, On Track service user]*

On a more practical level, some On Track services played an important role in combating attendance problems:

> *[On Track worker] organised transport to pick [my son] up in the morning and fetch him home …otherwise he'd never have been in school. He would have ended up in [special] school as he would have missed so much – and I'd have been in prison (for not sending him to school).*

> *[Parent, On Track service user]*

Many parents also expressed enthusiasm for On Track's before and after-school activities, describing how this enabled them to work longer, or provide better care for their other children.

10.14.2   Service providers' perspectives

Despite the mixed findings reported by children and parents in the cohort and schools surveys in relation to attendance at school, both On Track staff and school staff in the *qualitative study of service providers* and the *qualitative study of schools perspectives* confirmed a view that On Track services had improved school attendance and reduced school exclusions. A number of schools also felt that On Track services would have the potential to improve school attainment as services became more embedded. A number of workers and managers regarded support for individuals in their mainstream school environment as a key short-term aim of the programme, particularly where children were at risk of being permanently excluded from school.

> *I think with some of the kids, without On Track... they could have ended up excluded from school …. There was one boy that [worker] and I worked with in the Transition Group and we did some work outside the group with him as well. And then, quite by chance, about two years later, [another worker] is running a mentoring programme…a buddies programme, to enable them to support On Track kids…Some children applied to be mentors and this boy... he ended up being selected for that… he was settled enough in secondary school to be doing things like that…(And) he could've gone down a totally different route, because his older brother was in prison…*
>
> *[Senior social work practitioner]*

Indeed, many school personnel in the *study of schools' perspectives* were adamant that On Track had improved attendance in their schools, despite the mixed results in the schools and cohort studies:

> *I suppose the main thing that we do with On Track is it's a real boost to behaviour and attendance within the school. So particularly in attendance and the lady who is our On Track manager does a lot of chasing of attendances. For example we ring all the parents ……..we do that every morning and we find that really effective.*
>
> *In my school, services are better for the children and parent. (We've seen a) huge improvement in our children's attendance regarding contribution from the parents.*
>
> *…..We've had the best attendance for the last four years this year. And we're now in line with national expectations for unauthorised absence. And that's been incredible really.*
>
> *If you didn't have On Track some children would probably be excluded, because it's very limited what help you can get from a local authority. You might get some short term (help) but not enough to turn it round……Two years we topped the exclusions league …now we are right down the bottom.*
>
> *[Head Teachers, primary schools in On Track areas]*

On Track project managers also felt On Track had offered schools an alternative approach for dealing with children at risk of exclusion and that On Track had encouraged some schools to introduce new approaches for tackling antisocial behaviour. Instead of dealing with these children through disciplinary measures, On Track had helped '*put another option in there*' through referrals to alternative support services. Exclusion was not averted in every case, but On Track workers still felt the projects were making a real difference (Graham et al, 2006 p85).

Service providers also cited cases where they considered On Track services had resulted in improved school attainment. For example, a high-risk child was reported to have raised his SAT scores by one whole level, and the worker attributed this to

support from an On Track learning mentor. Another practitioner believed that children's concentration had improved as a result of On Track's implementation of initiatives in the classroom. For example, hand massage in the classroom had been used as a way of promoting a calmer, more attentive learning environment (Graham et al, 2006 p86). Head teachers gave fewer examples of increased attainment that they attributed to On Track. However, there were a number of positive comments that suggested schools were optimistic that improvements might be seen in future and that services provided through On Track were '*going in the right direction*':

> *I really do think that it's key that if we can support the families early it does affect that child's chances. You know, they come to school more ready to learn and I am sure that (colleague) and I would say the same thing: what's important… is this raft of extra things that we got [through On Track] that are actually making the difference. So all of these people that we're suddenly able to take on- the mental health worker and the behaviour support worker - have such an impact in our schools that educationally now, you know, things are on the move and the standards are getting better.*
> *[Head Teacher and Deputy, primary school in On Track areas]*

And one head noted:

> *From my point of view I know that if On Track hadn't been involved, behaviour in my school would still be a big issue, which would have impacted on the teaching, and my ability to move the school forward would have been hampered. So as far as standards go, in our school, I'm not saying it's solely due to On Track, but On Track definitely helped. We've gone from 'E' [low] band ….up to about a band C, band B. So,(there's been) a big impact on standards in the classroom as well.*
>
> *[Head Teacher, primary school in On Track area]*

Participants in the *qualitative study of service providers* also reported an increase in children's enjoyment of lessons. School-based mentors described how this might happen where a problem between a teacher and a child was resolved for the child, or the child had received additional support with learning. In other cases, it was reported that children seemed to enjoy school more when their own self-confidence had increased as a result of small group or one-to-one work. They believed this confidence, in turn, improved children's overall academic achievement (Graham et al, 2006 p86). In one example, a service provider described how home visits and one-to-one work with a vulnerable child improved a boy's attitude to such an extent that he "*expressed ambitions to his support worker to 'do OK'' in his upcoming exams – something he'd seen as 'not mattering' previously*" (Graham et al, 2006 p87).

10.15 Conclusions: The impact of On Track on risk and protective factors at the school level – mixed results, but encouraging at the primary school level

Overall, the findings regarding school-level impacts were mixed. Although the experiences of service users and providers in the qualitative studies suggested that the initiative facilitated a number of positive child outcomes, the reports by children and parents in the quantitative survey strands produced inconsistent results. Table 10.13 provides an overview of statistically significant and non-significant but substantively noteworthy changes detected in the *schools surveys* and in the *cohort study*.

Table 10.13 Summary: change over time at the school level				
	Status of significant or noteworthy findings: positive (✓) or negative (X)			
	Schools Survey		Cohort Study	
	Primary	**Secondary**	**On Track area**	**On Track users**
Risk factors				
Truancy	**X***	**✓***	X (secondary)	X (secondary)
Exclusions	**-**	**✓***	*not significant*	**✓***(primary)
Low attainment and performance – children's ratings	**-**	**-**	*not significant*	**X** (secondary) ✓ (primary)
Low attainment and performance – parents' ratings	**-**	**-**	**✓** (primary)	**✓**(primary)
Bullying others	*not significant*	**-**	*not significant*	✓ (primary)
Being bullied	*not significant*	**-**	✓ (secondary)	✓ (primary)
Misbehaviour at school	**✓***	**-**	**-**	**-**
Protective factors				
Satisfaction with school	**✓*** (all) **✓** (schools w/high OT activity)	**✓**	*not significant*	*not significant*
Involvement and participation at school	**-**	**✓***	**-**	**-**
Positive school ethos and approach	**-**	**X***	**-**	**-**

Note: n/s = non significant finding; (-) = not measured
All ✓ or **X** findings in bold were statistically significant: * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001
All ✓ or X findings in light type face were non-significant but substantively noteworthy.

On the whole, the findings are more encouraging in respect of changes detected through the *schools surveys*. In respect of both **risk** and **protective factors**, positive

significant changes were found for all but one of the variables that were measured, with the balance of findings being positive, and positive results found at both the primary and secondary school levels. There was also some intriguing evidence that greater numbers of On Track services present in primary schools were associated with greater levels of satisfaction at school. However, the schools surveys also detected some negative changes: a significant increase in truancies reported by primary school-aged children and a significant decrease in secondary school students' understanding of their school's rules. Findings from the *cohort study* were less consistent, revealing a significant decrease in the number of temporary exclusions reported by primary school-aged children, but significant improvements in secondary school students' and primary school parents' ratings of performance at school.

To the extent that there was consistency across the studies, overall, there were generally more positive results in relation to exclusions and attitudes and participation at school and in performance at school for primary children. For secondary school students findings were more likely to be negative, especially in the cohort study. The exception was in relation to children's self-reported truancy, which, with the striking exception of self-report by children in the secondary schools survey, seemed to have got worse over time despite qualitative results that suggested schools believed attendance was improving.

Chapter Eleven: Impact at the level of the community – mixed results

11.1   Measuring risk and protective factors at the community level

Numerous studies suggest that areas characterised by social disorganisation, high levels of crime and deprivation, weak social control, and weak support networks where offending behaviour goes unchallenged and families go unsupported create an environment in which antisocial behaviour or offending is more likely. Although On Track was an area-based initiative, and some projects took an approach to service design and delivery that emphasised community building and community empowerment, the bulk of On Track services were aimed at individual, family and school-level outcomes. To what extent, therefore, was it plausible to expect to detect impact at the level of the community?

The evaluation considered risk and protective factors at the community level from different standpoints. In terms of risk factors, neighbourhood rates of youth offending were measured in the *community profiling study*, where data from the police and local Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) in On Track areas were compared to data for wider comparison areas. Young people's perceptions of the quality of their local neighbourhood were also measured in the *schools surveys*. Protective factors that were explored included social support for youth and community connectedness and surveillance (for example, whether youth and adults in the community had good relations), and opportunities for constructive use of leisure time (both explored in the *schools surveys*). Community-wide rates of uptake of child and family support services were also measured in the *community profiling study* using data collected from local authorities and Primary Care Trusts, and in the *cohort study* using parent self-report data.

11.2   Risk factors – Neighbourhood youth offending

In this section we consider the impact on youth offending at the area level, as measured in the *community profiling* strand of the research. The central aim of this analysis was to see if, following the set-up of the On Track intervention, there was a difference in the rates of youth offending relative to the patterns observed in wider 'comparison areas', which were demographically similar to On Track areas but where the programme was not operating.

Inspection of the (limited) data available on youth offending at the area level revealed that rates in the sub-set of On Track areas for which data were available differed significantly from the rates in comparison areas. Figure 11.1 shows the data on the average reported rate of offences committed by young people aged 10-17 in 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 in three groupings: (1) data from local YOTs for the specific

geographic areas covered by On Track projects, only available for 13 of the 23 projects (shown as *'OT average'* in the Figure); (2) data for the wider YOT areas in which On Track projects were situated, which were available for all areas and were used for comparison purposes, shown as *'YOT-OT average'* in the Figure below; and (3) data on national YOT averages across England and Wales, obtained from the Youth Justice Board. As the Figure shows, the general trend over time appears to suggest an increase in youth offending in the On Track areas, whilst the rate in the comparison areas remains fairly stable. However, there are various reasons why it is unclear whether this is a reliable indicator of what was happening in all On Track areas during the years over which the programme was operating. These include: data only being available for a small sub-set of On Track areas (13/23); considerable variability even with in these areas; and finally that YOT data only cover reported offences, which may of course not be reflective of actual rates of youth crime. (See Bowers et al, 2008 for further discussion).

Figure 11.1 Rate of offences by youths per 1000 youths (Youth Offending Team data)
(Source: Bowers et al, 2008)

[T-shaped lines above bars indicate standard errors]
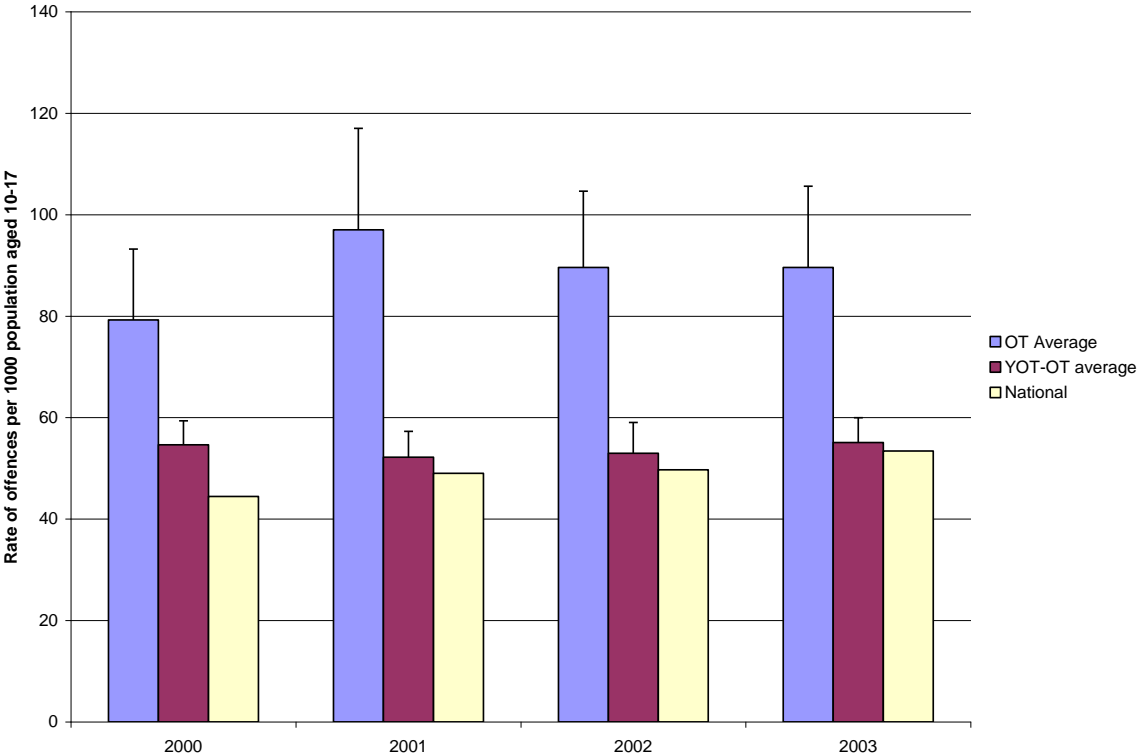
11.3 Risk factors – Negative perceptions of the neighbourhood

Living in a poor neighbourhood does not necessarily imply a complete absence of positive attributes within the community, and families may still feel a strong sense of attachment to and pride in their local area. However, recent research in Britain has also demonstrated that living in a severely impoverished neighbourhood is a definite

risk factor for coping with parenting (Ghate and Hazel, 2002). For this reason, we explored children and young people's attitudes towards their neighbourhood in the *schools surveys*. The questions included general views about the quality of the local area, perceptions about the extent of fighting and drug selling locally as well as pupils' perceptions about 'social cohesion' (e.g. *people move in and out of my neighbourhood quite a lot*), and were combined into scaled measures.

In the *secondary schools survey*, results for the overall sample showed that pupils in Wave 2 in 2004 expressed more negative perceptions about their neighbourhood than pupils in Wave 1 in 2001. This difference was statistically significant (p<.001), suggesting that at least from the adolescent perspective, neighbourhoods had become worse over time; (Bhabra et al, 2006b p135). In the *primary schools survey*, on the other hand, children appeared quite positive about their local neighbourhood at both waves, and on a composite scale it was found that at Wave 2 pupils were significantly *more* positive about their local neighbourhood than their Wave 1 counterparts; (p<.001, Bhabra et al, 2006a p81). Moreover, echoing results reported in the previous section on satisfaction with school, in primary schools with a high level of On Track activity (defined as eight or more services or interventions attached to or present in the school), perceptions of the quality of the neighbourhood were significantly more positive at Wave 2 than in schools with lower or no level of On Track activity (p<.001).

11.4   Protective factors - Social support for youth in the neighbourhood

Informal social support in the community and good relationships between young people and adults in the neighbourhood has been shown to protect children who would otherwise be at high risk of offending and substance misuse (e.g. Catalano and Hawkins, 1996) both by supporting youth and by enhancing natural surveillance of youth within the community. In the *secondary schools survey* (only), questions were put to young people about whether they felt there were adults in the neighbourhood (apart from family) who were *proud* of them *when they did something well*, *encouraged them to do their best* and who *they could talk to*.

Overall, no change on this measure was detected. Average scores in Wave 2 did not show any significant shift from Wave 1. However, a 'ceiling effect' may have been operating in that young people in Wave 1 were already fairly positive in their perceptions about social support in their neighbourhood.

11.5   Protective factors – Opportunities for constructive use of leisure time

The *cohort study* measured how young people used their out-of-school time by asking primary and secondary school children to report whether they engaged in any of a

list of eleven activities in the few weeks before the interview. Scores were compared between On Track and matched comparison area samples and between Waves 1 and 2. On this measure, leisure activities showed very little variation between the two waves of data collection, with an average of five to six activities being reported for all groups. There was no apparent association between leisure activities and On Track service use or residency in an On Track area; (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p41).

In the *primary schools survey* similar results were obtained. Primary school pupils (only) were also asked to report on the number and type of out-of-school activities in which they generally engaged, choosing from a list of fifteen activities, and reported an average of 6.3 activities at Wave 1 and slightly fewer (6.2) at Wave 2 (a negative change that was statistically significant; p<.001; Bhabra et al, 2006a p82). However, cross-comparisons (involving Wave 2 data only)[32] revealed that in primary schools with higher than average levels of On Track activities (defined as eight or more On Track services in or connected with the school), children reported significantly more out-of-school activities (p<.001; Bhabra et al, 2006a p66).

Overall, then, there was no evidence that the presence of On Track was associated with increased participation in out-of-school activities for the population of young people as a whole. However, data from Wave 2 of the schools survey suggested the presence of an active On Track project linked with a school was associated with more constructive use of out-of-school time amongst primary school aged children.

11.6   Protective factors – Uptake of family support services

11.6.1 General availability and uptake

At the community level, availability of child and family support services is generally thought to be a protective factor, although rates of uptake and any changes in these over time are always difficult to interpret. For example, an increase in uptake over time could signify an increase in the underlying level of need, an increase in the willingness of families to use services, an improvement in identification of need and referral processes, or all three. Similarly, a decrease in service uptake might be a good thing (reduction in underlying level of need), or a bad thing (decreased accessibility of services for those who need them).

It was not part of the remit of the evaluation to assess the degree to which On Track had actively increased the overall level of available services in the areas in which it was present, which is in any case a very difficult thing to do given the remarkable degree of change and growth of provision of family support services in Britain over the past few years. However, we did attempt to measure service uptake amongst

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[32] Wave 1 data could not be linked at the case level to individual schools due to lack of identifying data.

families in the *cohort study* and families in the community more generally in the *community profiling study*, albeit with mixed results.

In the *community profiling study*, data on four types of children's services - statementing of children with Special Education Needs (SEN); social services data for Looked After children and children on the Child Protection Register (CPR); and lastly child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) - were monitored to explore change in case loads over the period of the On Track initiative's development (or partial period; see Bowers et al, 2008 for fuller details of the time frames for each variable). Analysis of SEN data collected from local education authorities for primary schools showed that compared to the national trend, up to 2003 On Track areas were statementing fewer children than average, but that these rates had been increasing over time (Bowers et al, 2008). Since the generally high levels of need and deprivation in On Track areas would not lead us to expect to encounter fewer children with SEN than the national average, this result seems to indicate a positive trend for On Track areas to be gradually making up a shortfall or backlog in statementing activity over time. However, since the data show that the beginning of this trend predated the introduction of On Track, On Track itself cannot be held responsible for this positive sign of increasing response to SEN.

Data for seven On Track areas only indicated that overall there was an increase in the numbers of looked after children over time compared with comparison areas. For children on the CPR, data were available for nine On Track areas. Again, the trend in On Track areas was for increasing numbers of registrations, compared with mixed results in the wider comparison areas and a generally downwards trend nationally. Both of these results are subject to interpretation. They may indicate a worsening of need amongst the child population, or they may be indicative of increased response by local authorities to need. Given that we might expect the presence of an initiative such as On Track to result in increased scrutiny of families and increased awareness of need, the latter conclusion seems very plausible.

Data on CAMHS referrals provided through Primary Care Trusts followed a different pattern, however. Relative to comparison areas, data for seven On Track areas showed a fall in referrals over time. It is unlikely that this result indicates a fall in need in the On Track areas, given that national trends show increasing child mental health problems across the country as a whole (Nuffield Foundation, 2004). Since, as indicated above, we hypothesise that there would be increased scrutiny of families and children in On Track areas as a result of the initiative and we would therefore expect increased referrals to services, our conclusion here is that On Track services may have been picking up some of the caseload that formerly would have been referred to mainstream CAMHS.[33]

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[33] This hypothesis is supported by the clear contrast, for example, in the London Borough of Brent (see Bowers et al, 2008) where in the On Track area referrals to CAMHS show a clear downward

In terms of families' own reports of service uptake, the *cohort study* found that at Wave 1, amongst 780 parents in On Track areas 43% reported having used any kind of child of family support service in the past year (Finch et al, 2006 p106). At Wave 2, the figure stood at 49% of 468 parents, a modest increase of 6% (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p63). In the matched comparison areas, the comparable figures were 48% of 736 parents at Wave 1 and 45% of 426 parents at Wave 2, a small decrease of 3%. At Wave 1, only 13% of parents reported using On Track services, but at Wave 2, this proportion rose to 20%. However, in further multivariate analysis, controlling for other factors that might be associated with service use such as age, sex and the needs of the child, most of these differences disappeared, leading us to conclude that generally speaking, the availability of On Track services in the local areas had not resulted in any net increase in service uptake in the project areas relative to matched comparison areas.

11.6.2 Uptake of support services amongst 'hard to reach' groups

In terms of other changes in the availability or access to support services over time, the *cohort study* was also able to compare the profile of service users between the two waves of the study to explore whether certain types of families were more or less likely to access On Track services (Aye Maung et al, 2008a p69- 76). These figures should be seen as complementary to those set out in Chapter Six that were collected direct from project records, but will not generate exactly the same findings due to differences in sampling.

As expected, rates of On Track service use were reported to rise over time in On Track areas, most substantially for families of primary school aged children (an 8 percentage point increase from 15% to 23%. Rates of service use rose more sharply in households where the main language was not English (and/or Welsh in the Welsh areas) from 3% to 14%. Even so, by Wave 2 they were still running at only three quarters of the rate of usage of English speakers. This suggests that though On Track services had clearly made great progress in engaging families from minority backgrounds, rates of engagement were at Wave 2 still not quite equivalent.

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trend between 1999/2000 and 2004, in contrast to the rates in the wider comparison area where rates rose steadily over the same period. Brent On Track project provided a number of child mental and emotional health interventions, and in qualitative interviews providers suggested that these services were indeed reducing the need for referrals to mainstream CAMHS, especially for children with needs at the less serious end of the CAMHS spectrum.

Table 11.1 Service use by household language: proportion of families using any service (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

Number of services	On Track services		All services#	
	English /Welsh	Other	English /Welsh	Other
	%	%	%	%
W1 (2004)	15	3	45	35
W2 (2005)	20	14	51	33
Change from W1 to W2	5	11	6	-2
Base (unweighted)	403	31	403	31

Notes:
[1]Base:All parents answering W1 and W2 questions.
[2]# All services including On Track services.
[3] Excludes households where language type classed as bilingual.

Service use had also gone up substantially amongst families where parents rated their child's performance at school as 'below average', and significantly so amongst families with children with 'abnormal' (clinically concerning) total difficulties scores on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.

Table 11.2 Service use by school performance at Wave 1: proportion of families using any service (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

	On Track services		
	Better than average	About average	Below average
	%	%	%
W1 (2004)	13	12	24
W2 (2005)	16	20	34
Change from W1 to W2	3	8	10
Base (unweighted)	240	167	53

Notes:
[1]Base:All parents in On Track areas answering W1 and W2 questions.

Table 11.3 Service use by child's Total SDQ score at Wave 1: proportion of families using any service
 (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)

	On Track services		
	Normal	Borderline	Abnormal
	%	%	%
W1 (2004)	12	13	26
W2 (2005)	17	12	34
Change from W1 to W2	5	-1	8
Base (unweighted)	318	53	82

Notes:
[1]Base:All parents in On Track areas answering W1 and W2 questions.

Service use was also much higher at both waves (significantly so) for families where children reported any antisocial behaviour at Wave 1, though the rates of increase over time did not vary; see Table 11.4 below.

Table 11.4 Service use by child's antisocial behaviour at Wave 1: proportion of families using any service (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)		
	On Track services	
	No ASB at W1	**ASB at W1**
	%	**%**
W1 (2004)	11	26
W2 (2005)	16	31
Change from W1 to W2	5	5
Base (unweighted):	260	53

Notes:
[1]Base: All parents in On Track areas answering W1 and W2 questions.

Similar patterns were visible for parents who reported they were coping less than well at the first wave; see Table 11.5 .

Table 11.5: Service use by levels of coping at Wave 1: proportion of families using any service (Source: Aye Maung et al, 2008a)		
	On Track services	
	Coping well at W1	**Coping less well W1**
	%	**%**
W1 (2004)	10	17
W2 (2005)	16	23
Change from W1 to W2	6	6
Base (unweighted):	193	275

[1]Base:All parents in On Track areas answering W1 and W2 questions.

Overall, then, On Track services were certainly more likely, at both waves of the cohort survey, to reach the families and children with highest levels of need. In some cases they also achieved an increase in levels of engagement of such families relative to other families in the area.

11.7 Qualitative strand findings

Although we did not measure change in parents' views of the neighbourhood over time, in the *qualitative study of service users* parents expressed some positive views about their neighbourhood (Grewal et al, 2008). In particular, some On Track service users described the local area as perhaps feeling safer, related to the increasing provision of recreational and sport facilities, which meant that older children in particular had places to spend their leisure time in a constructive way rather than *'hang around street corners'*.

Perhaps related to the increased social support networks that both quantitative and qualitative data suggested had resulted from the presence of On Track, parents also noted that friendships formed at parenting groups had helped to develop social and support networks in the community. Usually parents spoke quite generally, for example, about recognising people from their group and *'just stopping and having a chat'*. However, there were more exceptional reports of On Track having a more specific impact of helping to bring people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds together within the local community. Parenting group sessions especially had enabled people from different languages and cultures to meet, share views and learn from, and about, each other.

Community-level change was considered more explicitly at 'validation meetings' with On Track project managers that took place in the final months of the evaluation, designed to seek feedback on emerging conclusion from the evaluation. In one meeting, managers reported a number of positive community-level changes within their local areas, remarking that while the area originally may have been highly deprived, that overall levels of deprivation had improved because of the presence of On Track, as well as other initiatives, such as Sure Start and the Children's Fund. As one manager put it *"What was interesting for me was how we'd moved on - and now other areas have become the 'crime areas' - and is it because of On Track? Now ask me and I'll tell you this. It is, yes."*

11.8   Conclusions: The impact of On Track on risk and protective factors at the community level – a mixed picture

Overall, signs of impact of On Track at the community level were relatively weak. Risk factors at the community level tended not to diminish, and relatively few protective factors showed signs of having been positively affected by the presence of the initiative. In terms of **risk factors** the *community profiling study* data from a sample of YOTs showed youth crime appeared to have increased in On Track areas – though there is no evidence to attribute this to the On Track programme itself and data were partial. However, it was encouraging that children's perceptions of their local areas were significantly less negative in the *primary schools survey* in schools with high levels of On Track activity.

In terms of **protective factors**, neither the *schools surveys* nor the *cohort study* showed measurable improvements over time in social support for youth or constructive use of leisure time, though for *primary schools* with high levels of On Track activity, there was some evidence that children engaged in a wider range of out-of-school activities. The *cohort study* also seemed to indicate that although high need groups had increased their uptake of On Track services over time, there had been little overall expansion in uptake of support services in general. One possible explanation for this is that On Track services were in fact themselves absorbing some of the case load of children and families who might previously have used other more mainstream

services. *Community profiling* data on service uptake also suggested that there had been a reduction in CAMHS referrals in On Track areas, supporting the contention that On Track services themselves may have been absorbing some of the case load formerly attributable to mainstream services. Case loads for Looked After children and registrations on the child protection register had increased, as had statementing, suggesting an effect of increased scrutiny as a result of On Track and increased response by statutory services. Table 11.6 below summarises the status of findings (positive, negative, non-significant) at this level:

Table 11.6 Summary: change over time at the community level					
	Status of significant or noteworthy findings: positive (✓) or negative (X)				
	Schools Survey		**Cohort Study**		**Community Profiling study**
	Primary	**Secondary**	**On Track area**	**On Track users**	**On Track area**
Risk factors					
Youth crime	-	-	-	-	**X***
Negative perceptions of neighbourhood	**✓*** (all) **✓*** (schools with high levels of On Track activity)	**X***	-	-	-
Protective factors					
Social support for youth	*not significant*	-	-	-	-
Opportunities for constructive use of leisure time	**✓*** (schools with high levels of On Track activity)	*not significant*	*not significant*	*not significant*	-
Uptake of family support services – general	-	-	*not significant*	-	**X*** (CP Registrations) **X*** (Looked After children) **✓*** (CAMHS)
Uptake of family support services – high need and hard-to-reach families	-	-	✓	-	-

Note: n/s = non significant finding; (-) = not measured
All ✓ or **X** findings in bold were statistically significant: * p<.05; ** p<.01; *** p<.001
All ✓ or X findings in light type face were non-significant but substantively noteworthy.

However, as our earlier chapters suggested, and as the logic model in Chapter One (Figure 1.1) indicated, the likelihood of finding measurable impact at the community level was always considered fairly minimal. For one thing, community level impacts – even if they occur - are expected to occur in the longer term, and not in the early years of an intervention programme. Second, the period of data collection and

analysis was even shorter – at most four years – and again, this may be too short a time frame to capture macro, community-level changes. Overall, our conclusion is that it was at other levels – principally at the family and school levels – that On Track achieved its best results.

Chapter Twelve: The impact of On Track: summary and conclusions

12.1 Introduction

This chapter has reviewed and attempted to synthesise the findings from a number of different studies that formed the National Evaluation of On Track in its second phase of operation (2003-2006). Specifically, the chapter compares findings from three quantitative strands of research (the *schools survey*, the *cohort study* and the *community profiling study*) within each of five ecological levels as a way of considering where the findings support one another and where they do not. Qualitative data drawn from three studies provide additional detail on how the programme operated and how different stakeholders perceived the benefits. Together, the studies provide data on the potential impacts of the programme at five theoretically relevant ecological levels: individual, family and parenting, peer group, school and the wider community.

The studies provide both quantitative and qualitative data, collected by a variety of means and from a variety of sources, including self-identified and project-identified parents and children using On Track services; workers in On Track services; pupils from local schools; professionals from local schools and other agencies; and secondary data held locally and nationally. Two studies used quasi-experimental methods and incorporated a robust counterfactual (comparison) group against which to compare results for those living in On Track areas and for those using On Track services. In addition, three studies collected data at two points in time, providing a longitudinal view of change over time. Each of the studies had different strengths and weaknesses, discussed in more detail in Chapters Two and Seven, and we have tried to weigh these as carefully as possible in drawing some overarching conclusions. As the earlier parts of this chapter showed, though there were some variables for which all or most of the variety of data pointed in a consistent direction, other questions yielded different answers from different studies. Assessing the meaning of the various findings is therefore an inherently subjective process and a matter of professional judgment, though we have tried to be scientific and systematic in drawing inferences. It should also be remembered that the term 'impact' should be interpreted with a degree of caution. Generally, what we are weighing here is the strength of *associations between variables*, not definitive evidence that On Track caused various changes. However, the quasi-experimental elements in the evaluation, the longitudinal datasets, and the considerable degree of triangulation of findings that is possible within such a complex evaluation design do permit us to identify consistent trends and patterns across time and across datasets and samples. Because of this, when we do find recurrent or similar results, we are able to be more confident that these are reasonably likely to be associated with On Track rather than to have occurred at random or due to some other extraneous factor. Thus, we have used the term 'impact' intentionally, when we think it appropriate, but always in full

acknowledgment of the possibility that some other factor or factors, unmeasured or un-revealed by our research, might also have been influential in affecting the results.

Below, we present a summary of the major findings grouped according to the five ecological levels (individual, family, peer, school and community). Where we attribute an impact to the presence of On Track, or to the use of On Track services, quantitative findings conformed to one or more of the following conditions:

- statistically significantly discriminated between On Track area residents and comparison area residents, or between On Track service users and comparison area residents (*cohort study*),
- showed statistically significant changes over time for children attending schools in On Track areas (*schools surveys*)
- statistically significantly discriminated between On Track areas and comparison areas (*community profiling study*).
- showed a number of substantial ('noteworthy') differences between groups but were not statistically significant due to small numbers in samples, or because tests of significance were not appropriate (*cohort study*, often applies to Booster sample),

12.2 Impact at the level of individual children

At the outset, the main aim of On Track as a programme was to reduce the propensity for youth offending – ie, to reduce risk factors associated with the development of antisocial behaviour by young people, and at the same time strengthen protective factors to boost resilience and good outcomes for young people across a range of dimensions. Reducing youth crime *per se* was not the aim of On Track, at least not in the short to medium term. Thus the programme was targeted primarily at younger children and young adolescents (four to twelve year olds), who had not yet reached the peak age for offending, with a special focus on targeting those most at risk as well as providing universal services for all children and families in the local areas.

12.2.1 Youth offending and antisocial behaviour

Not unexpectedly, in the time frame of the evaluation we did not find clear evidence of a decrease in offending by children and young people in On Track areas, particularly in the studies that had a comparison group. In fact, one strand of the evaluation showed that community-wide rates of youth offending appeared to have gone up relative to comparison areas, and another showed that rates in both On Track and comparison samples overall went up. Only the schools surveys told a different story: here, both primary school aged and secondary school aged pupils in Wave 2 (2004) reported less antisocial and offending behaviour than their counterparts at Wave 1 (2001). In reconciling these contradictory findings we need to bear in mind that the two experimentally designed studies ended up with smaller than ideal samples in the On Track areas, and substantial changes in rates over time

were required to register as 'significant' in statistical terms. Conversely, the schools survey involved many thousands of children in On Track areas and would find even very small shifts in rates statistically significant. However, there was no comparison group against which to weigh the results. Overall, then, we have concluded that the impact of On Track on youth crime and antisocial behaviour was mixed at best, and tended towards a negative interpretation at worst.

12.2.2 Precursors to youth crime

In respect of other attitudes, conduct and behaviours associated with youth offending – the attitudinal and behavioural precursors to youth crime – the results were more promising, especially where younger (primary school aged) children were concerned. Most importantly, in the cohort study a validated instrument for measuring children's general emotional and behavioural problems, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, showed a decline in difficulties across the board for children in On Track areas and for children using On Track services, so that even though by Wave 2, children in the On Track samples still had higher rates than those in comparison areas, they were no longer statistically significantly different. Moreover, the change over time reached statistically significant levels for one subscale (peer problems). Over time, primary school aged children in On Track areas also reported increased rates of 'happiness' with family life, although for older children there was no evidence of a similar increase in self esteem, as measured by a validated instrument. Attitudes to bad behaviour also grew markedly less tolerant over time amongst primary school children. Overall, we concluded there were promising indications of reduction in risk factors and a corresponding increase in protective factors associated with attitudes and behaviours that are precursors to youth offending. This was especially, though not exclusively, the case for primary school aged children.

12.3   Impact at the family level

Some of the strongest evidence of impact was found at the level of the family. Impacts were detected in relation to parents' attitudes and practices, and were especially notable in relation to interactions between home and school.

12.3.1   Parenting attitudes, skills and behaviours

In relation to protective factors, though parents' own self-reported mental health in On Track user groups did not improve significantly over time, it also did not decline – unlike the trend in the comparison group. Other protective factors such as parents' assessments of how well they coped with parenting showed strong signs of strengthening over time. And in respect of one very important aspect of parenting practice that is known to increase the risk of development of conduct problems – reliance on physical discipline - there was some consistent evidence that parents had benefited from On Track service use. The most substantial indicator here was a marked decline of 24 percentage points amongst self-identified On Track service

users responding to the cohort study in the use of minor forms of physical punishment (smacking, slapping) between Wave 1 and Wave 2. Qualitative data collected from parents added more detail to this picture, showing how parents had learned to use other disciplinary strategies apart from hitting. Children in the schools surveys also reported marked increases in levels of parental supervision and monitoring, another important covariate of youth antisocial behaviour. Thus, both parenting attitudes and selected parenting practices (behaviours) showed consistent signs of positive impact associated with living in an On Track area and using On Track services.

12.3.2   Parent-child relationships, home-school interaction, and social support

There was evidence from several sources that parent-child relationships had improved over time. Children in On Track areas and those using On Track services reported increasing warmth and praise from parents (and conversely decreasing hostility and criticism), with primary school aged children especially likely to report this. In the primary school age range, both children and their parents reported increased communication (talking often together) over time. In the schools survey there were very encouraging reports by children of 'reading often' with parents significantly more at Wave 2 compared to Wave 1.

Perhaps the most consistent results at this level were, however, in the area of parents' involvement with their children's schools. For parents in On Track areas (both residents in general, and self-identified users of On Track services), there were significant differences at Wave 2 of the cohort study when compared to parents in non-On Track areas, in relation to attending parents' evenings, 'feeling involved' in children's school life, and having special discussions with school staff. This was especially the case for parents of primary school children. Social support for parents also seemed to have increased in On Track areas, according to the cohort study. On Track service users reported increasing use of formal and semi-formal sources of support for advice and 'someone to talk to', and increasing use of informal sources of regular help with childcare – a finding that was supported by qualitative data. In the qualitative study on service users, parents reported widening personal networks and diminishing sense of isolation as a result of the social benefits of participating in parenting support services provided by On Track projects.

Overall, then, our conclusion was that protective factors at the family level – including coping, home-school interaction, relationships and involvement with children, and use of both formal and informal sources of social support – showed strong and consistent evidence of change that appeared to be associated with the presence of On Track. This was especially true for families with primary school children.

12.4   Impact at the peer group level

12.4.1   Peer antisocial behaviour

Peer group impacts, like impacts at the level of individual children, showed mixed results. Secondary school age children in the schools survey reported decreases over time in the level of antisocial behaviour by siblings and peers, as did primary school aged children in the cohort study, though in the latter the changes were not large enough to reach statistical significance. However, in some studies/groups there were some notably negative findings that suggested there had been *increased* antisocial behaviour by peers over time (for example, the older children in the cohort study). However, negative findings were not confined to On Track samples: older children in the cohort study comparison sample also reported increased antisocial behaviour by peers over time.

12.4.2   Peer networks and relationships

More positively, there was some evidence that the extent and quality of children's own peer networks and relationships had improved where they were resident in On Track areas or were users of On Track services. Peer problems as measured by the SDQ diminished substantially. Tellingly, children in the 'booster' cohort of high intensity services users (i.e., the highest need children) reported the greatest substantive increases of any group and also gained the highest number of new friends over time (having started with the smallest networks). Qualitative data supported these findings. Overall, then, we concluded that although the impact of On Track on peer group behaviours was unproven, the evidence for improvement in children's peer relationships was encouraging. On Track did seem to have helped children in the highest need groups in particular to make new friends and to have more positive relationships with other children.

12.5   Impact at the level of the school

Much of On Track's work took place at, or was carried out in partnership with, schools – increasingly so as the programme matured over time. Reductions in risk factors or increases in positive factors at the school level would therefore be an encouraging sign of the positive influence of the initiative, as well as having wider benefits for local children and their communities. Overall, there were positive changes at the school-level in a number of dimensions, especially in relation to protective factors, although data on risk factors were subject to substantial inconsistencies.

12.5. 1 Truancy and exclusions, and attainment and performance

Findings in relation to truancy and exclusions - important correlates of poor outcomes for young people and strongly associated with youth antisocial behaviour

and offending - were mixed (in much the same way as the findings on antisocial behaviour itself). Overall, the evidence was not strong for an impact on truancy – which is perhaps not surprising when we consider the national trend in recent years (which has been upwards for unauthorised absences, especially for primary school children; DfES, 2005). Exclusions followed a similar pattern, though there were stronger indications from the cohort study that for primary school children and for children and young people in the booster sample of high-need families at least, temporary exclusions had dropped substantially over time.

Self-assessed attainment and performance at school showed positive changes for primary school children, but not for young people in secondary school.

12.5.2 Bad behaviour at school

Results here were also mixed. Primary school children taking part in the schools survey self-reported a substantial decrease in bad behaviour at school, and self-reports in the cohort study of bullying other children dropped in both On Track area and On Track user samples (though they rose amongst children in the booster group). Rates of being bullied however showed no decline over time in the schools survey for either age group, though they did decline in the cohort study. Qualitative data included observations by professionals that general behaviour and levels of concentration in class had improved in some primary schools following On Track services being established.

Overall, our conclusions were that the evidence for impact of On Track on school level risk factors remained largely inconclusive, with positive results mainly confined to primary schools.

12.5.3 School ethos, and satisfaction and involvement with school

School level protective factors showed a much more encouraging picture, however. Measured mostly through the vehicle of the school surveys, the only factor that showed a negative movement over time was how secondary school pupils rated the clarity of school rules, which was used as an indicator of school 'ethos' and approach. On the other hand, older children's attachment to and enjoyment of school showed substantial and significant positive changes between Wave 1 and Wave 2, as did secondary school pupils' reports of levels of involvement and participation at school. Primary school aged children also reported substantial increases on a measure of satisfaction at school, and very interestingly, these rates were also statistically significantly higher in schools with a 'high' level of On Track activity (defined as eight or more On Track services or activities based at or associated with the school). Qualitative data from a range of sources supported these findings, and overall, we concluded that protective factors connected with school life showed promising evidence of improvement as the On Track programme matured.

12.6 Impact at the level of the community or neighbourhood

The 'logic model' for the On Track programme suggested at the outset of the research that we would be unlikely to find community level impacts so soon into the life of the programme. What we found is that community level risk factors did not generally improve, but some of the protective factors that were measured did in fact show positive movement over time.

12.6.1 Community-wide youth crime rates

Community-wide rates for youth offending did not reduce in On Track areas compared to comparison areas. In fact they may even have gone up, though the findings are inconclusive due to missing data for many areas.

12.6.2 Youth views of the neighbourhood, social support for youth, and out of school activities

Youth views of the local neighbourhood improved for primary school children and especially so for children at schools with high levels of On Track activity, but the same was not found for secondary school aged children, who in fact got *more* negative about their local area over time (consistent, perhaps with the findings that youth crime may have increased). Correspondingly it was not surprising to find that secondary school aged pupils did not report increasing levels of social support for youth within their wider community.

On the protective side of the equation, participation in out of school activities, perhaps contrary to expectations, did not show an increase over time for children in general in either the schools or the cohort surveys. However, in primary schools with a high level of On Track activity, children reported statistically significantly higher levels of this kind of activity compared to those in other schools.

12.6.3 Service uptake

Service uptake at the area level showed mixed results, but generally the pattern was for increased agency activity over time, with the exception of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), which may indicate that On Track projects were absorbing some referrals that formerly would have gone into the CAMHS case load. On the other hand, uptake by families participating in the cohort study did not generally increase over the two waves of the survey for families *resident* in On Track areas, but did increase for those who self-identified at Wave 1 as On Track *service users*. There were signs that increases in service use had been especially sharp amongst households where the main language was other than English, where children's school performance was rated by parents as poor, or where children had abnormal levels of emotional and behavioural problems. These findings are good indicators that On Track projects were successfully reaching out to parents and

children in higher need groups, though to the extent that levels of absolute service use at Wave 2 were not equivalent for all groups, there was still some way to go.

Overall however, we would say that the community level was not where On Track had its greatest impact. Community level risk factors did not tend to diminish, though some of the social isolation common to parents struggling to cope in disadvantaged communities may have been ameliorated by On Track service use. Protective factors did show clear evidence of positive improvement, however. Overall, area-wide levels of agency activity also seemed to have gone up in On Track areas when compared with comparison areas, although the cohort study suggested increases in service uptake at the level of individual families was mainly in relation to those already using On Track services (as opposed to those who merely lived in the On Track areas). Children in schools with high levels of On Track activity also appeared to increase their levels of constructive use of leisure time as compared to others.

12.7   Concluding remarks

Overall, the findings in relation to the impact of On Track, insofar as we were able to measure it, constituted a mixed bag. Perhaps the most strikingly positive results were found at the level of families, and specifically, in relation to parenting factors. These included impacts on parents' self-assessed levels of coping; on parenting practices including discipline; on parent-child relationships; and on levels of home-school interactions. School factors also seemed to have changed for the better in a number of ways, and there are hints that the presence of On Track was a key influence in this. For example, for several factors there were significant differences between primary schools with higher levels of On Track activity compared with those with lower or no On Track activity.

Overall, the least impact was found, as expected, at the level of the wider community, and also at the level of individual child behaviour risk factors. Some child behaviours such as youth offending, truancy and poor performance at school appeared to have improved in some studies but had remained stable or even got worse in others.

In addition to these overall findings, three other important aspects of impact are worthy of discussion.

12.7.1   Impacts on primary school aged children

In the analysis presented in Chapters Eight to Eleven, it was apparent that often, results were more positive and more consistent for younger, primary school aged children than for older, secondary school aged children. Indeed, the overall picture for primary school aged children was generally a positive one. Firstly, there was a general pattern of improvement indicated by significant changes between the two

waves of the *schools survey*. Within this set of findings, there were improvements in primary school children's reports of bad behaviour, their tolerance of other people's antisocial behaviour, the supervision and monitoring they received at home, the quality of relationship with their parents, their satisfaction with school, and their perceptions of the local neighbourhood. Although these results were not consistently supported by findings from the *cohort study,* non-significant ('noteworthy') trends among primary school aged respondents suggested similar improvements in the cohort at Wave 2 for many of the variables measured, including fewer reports of antisocial behaviour, better peer relationships, a greater sense of happiness with family, less truancy, and fewer exclusions, and improvements in self-assessed school performance, amongst other things. By contrast, the picture was much more mixed for older children. Though secondary schools survey results were reasonably positive, the cohort study results were generally not so. Thus, the overall thrust of the findings was that where the On Track programme was associated with positive improvements in risk and protective factors, it was much more consistently so amongst primary school children than secondary school aged young people.

Of course, it was the case that many of the negative trends observed in the cohort study were found within an extremely small group (n22) of secondary school aged On Track users. It may be that this group was particularly extreme, and perhaps unrepresentative of children using On Track services in general – something that is always a risk when numbers of respondents are low. But even discounting this possibility, the pattern of results according to child age is not really surprising if we consider the basic remit of the programme. Although some On Track services were provided within secondary schools, and although some services were directed at parents with older children as well as those with young ones, generally speaking On Track was an early intervention programme, aimed at children who had not yet reached the peak age for antisocial behaviour and offending. Relatively few children aged over twelve would have been 'exposed' to the programme at the points at which data were collected for the evaluation, and so if On Track were to result in any positive changes within the community of children, we would expect to see these amongst younger children rather than older ones. Though as researchers we were asked to explore potential impacts for children of all ages, the logic of the programme and its delivery led us to expect that if we found signs of positive impact at this stage in the programme's lifespan, they would more likely be for younger children, for whom the services were mainly intended. The fact that this is indeed what we found may give us some confidence that changes we measured were associated with On Track, even if not solely 'caused' by it.

12.7.2   The booster sample of high intensity On Track service users

Sampling procedures for accessing the so-called 'booster' sample of high intensity service users in the cohort study were non-random, and for that reason may have been subject to a degree of selection bias that we cannot quantify. Because of this, for the purposes of statistical analysis results from this group cannot directly be tested against those from the comparison group. Where results for the booster sample were

distinctive this has been noted in the main part of this chapter, but it has not been possible to give this special group – the closest we have to a sample of high need, 'high dosage' service users – the analytic attention they perhaps deserved. Inspection of the full cohort study results variable by variable does, however, suggest that this group in many ways showed the most dramatic results. Children and families in this group almost without exception had substantially higher levels of problems and lower levels of protective factors at the first wave of the study, and also frequently remained more disadvantaged at Wave 2, one year down the line. However, in spite of this they also often reported the greatest levels of positive change over time. We interpret this as a promising indication that for this most high-need group, On Track was a positive force for change in their lives.

12.7.3 Was it living in an On Track area, or using an On Track service, that made the difference?

This is a complex question, but a valid one to ask since On Track not only offered services on a targeted basis to those most in need, but also intended to extend preventive services to all young children and parents in their catchment areas through the medium of universal, open-access services. To an extent, all families living within On Track areas are expected to benefit from the programme, irrespective of whether they actually used the services[34].

The suite of studies that together made up the evaluation of On Track in Phase Two each took somewhat different approaches to exploring the impact of the programme. In the community profiling study, data for entire 'On Track areas' are compared with data from a comparison area (generally, the wider geographical area in which the On Track areas were situated). The schools surveys explored change over time for two cross-sectional (independent) samples of children attending schools in On Track areas. The cohort study explored change over time in a panel of individuals who used On Track services, and in families who lived in On Track areas (but were not necessarily using services). It compared the results with a 'matched' panel sample of families who lived in carefully selected comparison areas, chosen for their demographic similarities. The cohort study also collected data from a separately selected group of high-intensity service users, the so-called 'booster' sample. In the qualitative studies, data were collected from On Track staff, from service users, and from personnel from schools in On Track areas. Therefore some of the data allow us to identify impacts for individual or grouped service users, whilst others explore impact at a larger unit of analysis (ie the school, or the catchment area). Positive results, when we found them, varied as to whether they were attached to service use, or simply to living in an On Track area. Overall, therefore, it is not possible to fully disaggregate the results to understand what precise value was attached to living in the general area of an On Track project, or attending an 'On Track school' as opposed to being an actual service user. Numbers of identified service users are relatively small in all the studies, and in addition, it is known that some people were

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[34] This is sometimes described as an 'intention to treat' model in the literature.

misclassified because they failed to identify themselves as an On Track service user (see Aye Maung et al, 2008a, 2008b).

What we *can* say is that the schools surveys suggested that over time, children in schools in On Track areas generally reported positive change over time, and on some indicators, children in schools with high numbers of On Track services attached to them were doing better than others. This can be taken as tentative evidence that it was beneficial for children to attend a school in an On Track area, and, since we know the sample to be representative of all children in all school in those areas (Bhabra et al, 2006a, 2006b), it is evidence of positive benefit for all children living in On Track areas. However, there is an element of uncertainty here because we cannot compare the results against a sample of non-On Track schools over the same period. Many initiatives have been underway during the same time frame as On Track, and it is possible that these, and not On Track, were implicated in the results we obtained. Alternatively, it may be that the *combination* of On Track and other initiatives was beneficial.

We can also see from the cohort study that on many indicators, there was a gradient of need, and a gradient of positive change, running upwards from comparison group through On Track area sample to On Track service user sample to booster sample. It was often, though not infallibly, the case that there appeared to be positive results associated with simply being resident in an On Track area *as well as* benefits associated with actual service use. If we consider this in terms of 'dosage' (ie, the level of exposure to the On Track intervention, using an analogy from the science of clinical drug trials), we can discern an interesting pattern. Often, where there were positive results relative to the matched sample, these were strongest for the booster group, who could be regarded as a 'high dosage' sample of service users; slightly less strong for the On Track service user groups (who approximate to a 'medium dosage' sample, using a range of On Track services but none of them at a very high level of frequency or intensity); and less strong again for the On Track area residents' sample, who can be regarded as a 'low dose' group (indeed, most of these people may never have used an On Track service, but just lived in the catchment area). Looked at this way, we can tentatively suggest that there were indeed sometimes benefits for the wider population of residents in On Track areas, although generally, these were not as substantial for those who actually used an On Track service.

Overall then, where do the results of this chapter lead us? The answer depends, to some extent, on our perspective and the degree to which we trust the broad pattern of findings rather than scrutinising the detail of individual results and individual studies. Depending on where we stand, we might view the On Track 'glass' as half full, or half empty. The 'half full' perspective would emphasise the heartening volume of positive findings. In our view, there was certainly evidence that the use of On Track services was associated with some positive change in the lives of children

and parents. Even where quantitative measures failed to find evidence of change for the better amongst the sample as a whole, qualitative data showed that sometimes quite profound changes were achieved for some children and families. Positive changes at the family and parenting levels, especially in important measures such as self-assessed coping with parenting, suggest that something was changing for the better in local families, and it might well have been related to the services provided by On Track projects. These findings are also noteworthy in that they are consistent with results from evaluations of similar initiatives, such as Sure Start in the UK (NESS, 2005) and Head Start in the US (Love, Kisker, Ross, Schochet, Brooks-Gunn, Paulsell, Boller, Constantine, Vogel, Fuligni and Brady-Smith , 2002). Ongoing evaluation findings from both of these programmes show that parents are often the first to benefit from area-based initiatives, especially when it comes to improvements in parental confidence and discipline, as well as their knowledge of child development. Furthermore, it is likely that parental improvements in these domains are beneficial for children as well. As Zigler (founder of Head Start) and Muenchow, (1992) observed, parents are the most influential figures in the lives of their children, since they moderate their environments on a daily basis. For this reason, improvements in parenting skills and well-being are likely to translate quickly into improvements in child behaviours and learning outcomes. Impressive results such as the quantifiable increase over time in levels of home-school engagement also give cause for optimism, especially as On Track focused to such a large degree on this aspect of prevention and the largest single group of services (33%) were classified as connected to home-school partnership by the end of the data collection period. The fact that schools themselves endorsed these findings with their own observations also adds strength. As we have already said, logic leads us to expect that if the programme were effective, at this stage in the lifespan of the initiative this would be demonstrated most clearly for the younger children: and this is indeed what we found.

The 'half empty' perspective would, however, sound a note of caution. An altogether more sceptical viewpoint, it would stress the various methodological shortcomings in the quantitative strands of the research, which are almost always limiting factors in analysis of impact in community-based initiatives. Without randomised allocation to 'control' and 'treatment' groups (the randomised control trial, or RCT), other 'quasi-experimental' methods for selecting comparison groups are almost always subject to some problems, no matter how carefully procedures are followed[35]. In this evaluation, as in many others, the service-using groups were, in spite of careful matching, often found to have higher levels of needs at the baseline point than the comparison group. This might have reduced the chances of finding significant differences between the groups. The small and perhaps unrepresentative numbers in some of the sub-groups, the problems of lack of statistical power in the cohort study, and the sometimes confusing inconsistencies amongst the different data sources all raise questions about the extent to which we can regard the findings as robust. The lack of a comparison group for the schools surveys means we cannot know if the

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[35] However, RCTs are not without their detractors; see for example the 40 pages of heated correspondence on this subject in *Child Abuse and Neglect* 29 (2005) 209 – 249.

generally positive changes observed in this strand might have happened anyway, irrespective of the presence of On Track in the local areas. The sceptical view would also remind us that the views of the service users might over-represent those who felt positive about On Track (because those who felt negative might have been more likely to refuse to participate), and that the views of service providers were generally likely to be positive, reflecting commitment and belief in the value of their work.

The real picture probably lies somewhere between the two extremes. One thing is certainly clear, however. On Track was a not a 'silver bullet' for behaviour problems such as youth crime, truancy, low attainment and bullying at school. On these sorts of indicators the results were much more mixed and to the extent that the studies supported one another, the tendency was usually towards neutral (no change over time) or even worsening results. On Track was almost certainly not responsible for this: in most cases where On Track areas failed to show encouraging change over time it was the case that the national trend was similarly bad. Youth crime, as noted many times already, was not expected to change in the short time over which we measured it. But it is perhaps disappointing that problems such as truancy remained high in many On Track area schools. However, this just underlines how very difficult these problems are to shift. It will be remembered from Chapter One that the 'crime prevention' focus of On Track as a programme became, to some extent, diluted or diverted over time, towards more general 'child wellbeing' objectives. It is also true that On Track was spreading its net very wide in terms of objectives. As we have noted, there was not 'one On Track' but 'many On Tracks', all doing different things in different ways. So, it may be that to tackle these most challenging youth behaviour problems, a more narrowly focused programme is required.

Chapter Thirteen: The 'multi-modal' intervention: aspirations, practice and effectiveness

13.1   Introduction

As discussed in Chapter One, On Track was originally envisioned as a 'multi-modal' intervention, offering multiple services to users with multiple needs to provide a more comprehensive package of support. Although no specific guidance was offered regarding who might be eligible for the different kinds of services, the descriptions provided in initial Home Office Guidance at the outset in 1999 implied that some of the six intervention categories (such as preschool education, for example) were more universal in nature, whereas others, such as family therapy, were more targeted and aimed at those who were at greater risk. As the introductory letter to potential On Track projects (Hine, 2005) from the Home Office suggested:

> … a range of co-ordinated interventions available at critical points through the child's early life will be much more effective than single interventions…. The idea will be to develop a continuum of care in which children at risk are tracked through their development…
>
> [Home Office, December 1999]

Implicit in this message was the notion that most children aged 5 -12 living within each On Track catchment area would receive at least one intervention, and that some children – especially those who were more vulnerable – would likely receive two, three or more interventions, depending upon their need. In addition, it was understood that the projects would require systems for assessing the needs of vulnerable children, so that the appropriate services could be offered to them. To this end, the Home Office advised projects to develop systems for identifying needs and targeting services appropriately, as well as to specify whether they would be using any formal risk assessment tools.

In this Chapter, we consider the ways in which projects interpreted the multi-modal remit, and the extent to which they put it into practice. We also discuss the evidence from the national evaluation regarding the degree to which 'multi-modality' was (or was not) associated with better outcomes for children and families. We do this first by considering the extent to which service provision within each of the Home Office categories was related to positive changes in the risk and protective factors measured by quantitative strands of the evaluation. We then follow this with a discussion exploring the extent to which the individual projects were able to offer a constellation of services to high need individuals, and the degree to which these users may have benefited.

13.1.1 Variation in Home Office category service provision

As described earlier, the Home Office advised On Track projects to develop services within five core intervention categories and a sixth 'specialist' category reserved for

services offered by specialist practitioners (such as counselling or speech and language therapy). However, the projects were not provided with any specific guidance as to how to translate these categories into actual delivery packages. This resulted in a high degree of variability between the projects in terms of their interpretation of the remit and the way they put this into practice. As the findings presented in Chapter Six suggest, projects differed substantially in terms of the number of services they offered, the kinds of services offered and the number of service users reached. Large differences also existed between the projects in terms of their *throughput* or *reach* - in other words, the proportion of parents and children living within On Track area boundaries who actually received On Track services. With respect to this, the projects differed dramatically, with one project reaching 94% of its target population and others reaching as few as 3%.

This variability in service shape, content, and the number of users reached in the local population will have certainly contributed to the difficulties of detecting clear evidence of impact in the quantitative strands of the national evaluation, as discussed in Chapters Seven to Twelve. For example, two 'home visiting' services similarly labelled in two areas might have operated in quite different ways, offering differing levels of intensity of delivery (or differing levels of 'treatment dosage' as it might be called in the clinical sciences). At lower levels of 'dosage', impact might be limited, not because the service itself was poor, but because users did not receive enough of it to make a difference that could be detected through evaluation measures. Equally, it might be difficult to detect impact in a community sample if relatively few users were reached by the service. Indeed, it is rather unlikely that positive change <u>would</u> be detected in communities where only 3% of the population was reached, especially in an evaluation that used a community-based sampling strategy (as we did). Thus, when considering the impact of On Track across the 23 areas in aggregate, it is possible that a lack of significant results observed in low-reach or low-throughout areas might have 'washed out' or diluted stronger effects that would otherwise have been discernible in the higher-throughput areas. In other words, the aggregation of low-reach and high-reach areas inevitably reduces the overall likelihood of detecting significant change in studies of this kind.

Bearing this in mind, in this Chapter we take a somewhat different approach to investigating impact than the one taken in previous Chapters, where we explored aggregated national findings. In this Chapter, using only the *schools survey* data for reasons of greater statistical power[36], we explore the relationship between project reach or throughput, and the incidence of risk and protective factors amongst students as measured at Wave 2 of that survey. We also explore the relationship of risk and protective factors with throughput by different Home Office categories of intervention.

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[36] The number of cases in each project area was too few in the cohort survey to serve in these analyses.

In the following sections, we consider whether higher levels of throughput at the project level are independently associated with lower levels of risk factors and higher levels of protective factors in the schools survey. We also explore the ways in which service throughput within the individual Home Office categories are associated with various risk and protective factors. For example, we might expect greater home-school partnership throughput to be associated with more positive child attitudes towards school, but family therapy or home visiting throughput to be associated with positive changes in parenting beliefs and practices. Box 13.1 shows how throughput was calculated and the analyses used to consider the extent to which it was related to indicators of risk and protective factors in the schools survey.

In considering the findings related to throughput, it is important to note that in these analyses we only use schools survey data gathered at Wave 2 of the survey (in 2004). We were unable to ascertain which cases in the Wave 1 data set derived from which schools/On Track project areas because no marker was contained in the data set. Thus it was not possible to explore change over time within specific project areas using the schools survey data. However, remembering that the Wave 2 data were collected in 2004, three years after the Wave 1 survey and at a point when OT was very much in its 'mature' phase, the Wave 2 scores on risk and protective factors do at least give us a picture of the situation in different project areas in the advanced phase of the programme. These could be considered as 'outcome' measures of sorts, albeit cross-sectional rather than longitudinal.

Box 13.1   Defining and calculating 'throughput' and data analytic procedures using a measure of throughput

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Measures of throughput used in the study

Throughput was calculated at two levels, taking the most up-to-date cumulative figures from the final tracking study data returns delivered to the National Evaluation team in July 2005.

1. Project throughput – the proportion of children reached by each local On Track project, including both universal and targeted services, as a percentage of all children between the ages of 5 and 14 living within the Census Output Areas (OAs) covered by the project, using Census 2001 data. This is an approximation of the actual figure for 'reach' for two reasons: (i) though On Track aimed to reach children aged 4-12, census data was only available for the 5-14 year age bracket, (ii) OAs do not always map neatly onto On Track areas.

2. Home Office intervention category throughput – the proportion of children reached by each of five Home Office service types (home-school partnership, specialist, home visiting, family therapy and parent support and training), for each of the 23 local projects, including both targeted services and universal services. Pre-school services were excluded from the analysis due to the very low throughput numbers in most areas. (Note: Throughput for family therapy was skewed due to the disproportionate number of cases seen in one project area, which otherwise had very low throughput (Kerrier; see Chapter Six, Table 6.7). However, checks were carried out by removing this 'outlier' from the analysis. This did not change the broad pattern of findings, and hence data from all projects were included in the analysis for this chapter).

Once calculated, throughput scores were entered for all cases in the schools survey Wave 2 data set to enable analyses to be carried out. In analytic terms, throughput at each of the three levels was used as an 'independent variable', and its relationship to various 'dependent' variables (risk and protective factors) was scrutinised.

Box 13.1 continued

Note that only data from the Wave 2 survey (collected in 2004) was used, since we were unable to ascertain which cases in the Wave 1 data set derived from which schools/On Track project areas (no marker was contained in the data set). Thus, schools survey data could only be analysed cross-sectionally – that is as a snapshot of the relationship between throughput and risk and protective factors as they were reported by children taking part in the Wave 2 survey.

Data analysis

Correlations and multiple regression techniques were used to analyse the relationship between project throughput and risk and protective factors in the various data sets described above. A **simple correlation** (also referred to as a 'zero-order' or 'unadjusted' correlation) considers the extent to which two factors are statistically related to each other, and indicates the direction of the relationship (positive, or negative/inverse). Correlation analysis generates a statistic known as the correlation coefficent ('r'), and when r=1.00 this means the two variables are perfectly related. For example, age and height in children are strongly positively correlated – as age increases, so does height – but are not perfectly related because many other factors can also affect height (such as sex, diet, genetic factors etc). Highly correlated variables tend to reach statistical significance (for small samples) at r = 0.30 or higher, meaning that there is a less than 5% probability that this relationship would occur by chance. In larger samples, smaller 'r's may be significant.

Regression analyses allow us to control for the overlap between multiple highly related variables. When various different 'independent' (or 'predictor') variables are entered into a mathematical model that shows their relationship to a single dependent (or 'outcome') variable, a regression analysis can indicate the extent to which each independent variable is associated with the outcome variable *over and above* its relationship to other predictors in the model. Thus for example a regression analysis is able to consider the ways in which both age and sex influence height in adolescence, independently of one another.

Correlations and regressions are not tests of causality. They do, however, verify the extent to which one factor is associated or 'covaries' with another, as well as create the context for understanding the relationship between a set of independent variables. By carrying out sequential analyses, correlations and multiple regressions are used in this chapter to unpick the relationship between throughput and a range of possible variables. First, simple correlations are used to consider the relationship between *project throughput* (the independent variable) and a number of risk and protective factors within each of the ecological levels. In instances where a significant relationship between throughput and a risk or protective variable is present, additional multiple regressions were then conducted in a 'step-wise' manner (also called 'hierarchical' regression), in order to account for or *control* for other factors that may be significantly related to the various risk and protective factors. For instance, it is already established that both age and sex are significantly correlated with antisocial behaviour. Thus, in all instances, age (as measured by school year) and sex of the child were the first independent variables put into the regression model to understand the degree to which they predict each risk and protective factor. Next*, Home Office category throughput* was added to the model to observe whether this significantly contributed to the degree of risk and protection *above and beyond* sex and age.

13.1.2 The relationship between overall project throughput and risk and protective factors

Table 13.1 overleaf summarises the pattern of simple correlations between throughput and risk and protective factors as measured in the Wave 2 schools survey for primary and secondary school aged children. Overall, we found generally consistent evidence that project-wide throughput was associated with lower levels of

risk factors and higher levels of protective factors in the Wave 2 schools surveys, especially where secondary school-aged children were concerned. Within this group, ten of the thirteen tests proved to be significant and nine of these were in the 'desirable' direction; ie, throughput was inversely correlated with risk factors and positively correlated with protective factors. In other words, generally speaking, where project throughput was higher, protective factors were higher and risk factors were lower at Wave 2 of the schools survey.

However, for primary school children, there were fewer significant relationships between project throughput and risk and protective factors. In this set of analyses, only five of the nine tests conducted reached statistical significance, and within this group, three indicated a significant positive relationship with project throughput and two suggested a significant negative relationship. In particular, self-reports of parental warmth and school satisfaction were significantly higher in areas where there was greater throughput, and reports of bullying victimisation were significantly lower. Conversely, greater project level throughput was associated with more negative perceptions of the local neighbourhood and less parental supervision among primary school students.

Table 13.1   Summary of correlation results between overall project throughput and risk and protective factors in the schools surveys at Wave 2

	Status of finding : positive (✓) or negative (X)	
Risk factors	**Primary school aged children**	**Secondary school aged children**
Challenging behaviour	Not significant	(
Offending	-	Not significant
Child's tolerance of antisocial behaviour	Not significant	(
Substance misuse	-	(
Truancy	Not significant	(
Antisocial peers	Not significant	(
Being bullied	(	Not significant
Bullying others	-	X
Negative perceptions of local area	X	(
Protective factors		
Parental supervision	**X**	✓
Parental warmth	✓	✓
School satisfaction	✓	✓
School involvement	-	*Not significant*
School ethos and approach	-	✓

Note: (-) denotes not measured.   All ✓ or **X** findings significant at p<.05 or higher

13.1.3 The relationship between intervention category throughput and risk and protective factors

In order to understand the ways in which services within each of the Home Office categories were related to schools survey responses at Wave 2, a set of regression analyses[37] were conducted comparing throughput within each individual Home Office service category to each of the risk and protective factors that already showed significant relationships with throughput as shown in Table 13.1. Summary tables including all of these analyses are provided in Appendix 4, and a summary of the overall findings is provided in Table 13.2 (see overleaf). This Table summarises the relationship between Home Office intervention category throughput and the various risk and protective factors shown in the previous Table, after controlling for the age and sex of children. Sex and age were controlled for in analysis as a large body of research suggests that these factors are independently correlated with various risk and protective factors in children and young people. For example, boys tend to report more antisocial behaviour than girls, as do older children when compared with the very young. For this reason, sex of child and school year of child were statistically 'controlled for' (held constant in analysis) before the relationship between throughput and the individual risk and protective factors was considered.

Table 13.2 shows where findings were significantly positive (lower risk/higher protection), significantly negative (higher risk/lower protection), non significant, or not measured.

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[37] Using step-wise entry of independent factors.

Table 13.2 Summary of relationships between Home Office intervention category throughput and risk and protective factors in the schools surveys										
	Status of finding : positive (✓) or negative (X)									
Risk factors	Primary school aged children					Secondary school aged children				
	Family therapy	Home visiting	Home-School partnership	Specialist	Parenting support	Family therapy	Home visiting	Home-School partnership	Specialist	Parenting support
Challenging behaviour (primary**)/offending** (secondary)	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s	**X**	n/s	n/s	✓	✓
Child's tolerance of ASB	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s	**X**	n/s	✓	✓	n/s
Substance misuse	-	-	-	-	-	**X**	n/s	n/s	✓	n/s
Truancy	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s
Antisocial peers	n/s	**X**	n/s	n/s	✓	**X**	**X**	n/s	✓	n/s
Being bullied	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s	**X**	n/s	n/s	n/s	✓
Bullying others	-	-	-	-	**-**	n/s	n/s	**X**	n/s	✓
Negative perceptions of local area	n/s	**X**	**X**	n/s	n/s	n/s	✓	n/s	✓	n/s
Protective factors										
Parental supervision	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s	n/s	**X**	n/s	✓	n/s	n/s
Parental warmth	n/s	n/s	✓	n/s	n/s	**X**	n/s	✓	n/s	n/s
School satisfaction	n/s	n/s	✓	✓	n/s	**X**	n/s	✓	✓	✓
School involvement	-	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**X**	**X**	✓	n/s	n/s
School ethos and approach	-	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**X**	**X**	n/s	✓	n/s

Note: n/s = non significant finding; (-) = not measured; All ✓ or **X** findings significant at p<.05 or higher

Family therapy services

Family therapy services, which accounted for 6% of all services in Phase Two of the programme, stood out as non-significantly associated with risk and protective factors for primary school children, but consistently significantly positively related to risk factors and negatively related to protective factors for secondary school children. In other words, the more people using family therapy, the higher the degree of risk and the lower the degree of protective factors amongst older children. Although this might indicate that family therapy services were in some way leading to poor outcomes, we doubted that this was the explanation. As discussed in Chapters One and Six, family therapy was amongst the most intensively targeted, high-dosage, resource-intensive of all services offered by On Track projects, and as result would have been offered very selectively to a relatively small proportion of the local population (an average across all projects of 15 users per thousand child population aged 5-14; see Table 6.7). What these results most probably suggest is that family therapy services were offered in areas where child difficulties were most apparent at the secondary school level.

Home visiting services

Home visiting services also accounted for 6% of all On Track services in Phase Two, and on average reached 18 children per thousand population aged 5-14. Perhaps the most consistent finding in respect of home visiting throughput was a lack of significant relationships with risk and protective factors for the primary school age group and mostly negative or non-significant relationships for the secondary school age group. For those in primary schools, home-visiting throughput was negatively associated with higher levels of antisocial peers, and lower (less positive) ratings of the local neighbourhood. For secondary school students, higher levels of home-visiting throughput were negatively associated with involvement in school and a self-reported understanding of school rules, a proxy measure of positive school ethos. However, there was a significant positive relationship between throughput and secondary school pupils' ratings of their local area.

Specialist services

So-called 'specialist' services were a mixed group. As described in Chapter Six, these services did include those offered by trained specialists, but some projects also used the category as a way of including services that did not fall clearly under any of the other categories. Figure 6.3 in Chapter Six shows that there were at least ten distinct types of services categorised as specialist across all projects during Phase Two, including services concerned with sports, health, transition to secondary school, learning support and drama. However, two fifths (39%) were classified as therapeutic one-to-one services, which is reasonably close to the Home Office's original intention for this category. Overall, specialist services were the most numerous category of service offered by On Track projects, accounting for 494 services, 45% of the total in Phase Two. The average throughput of these services across all areas was calculated to be 113 per thousand children aged 5-14.

Because of the variability in this category of service provision, it is difficult to interpret the results of analyses comparing throughput and levels of risk and protective factors. It was striking that specialist service throughput was associated with only one positive result for primary school aged children. However there were more positive outcomes (lower levels of risk, greater levels of protective factors) for secondary school aged children. Of the 13 factors measured, seven were significantly positively correlated with specialist throughput and none was significantly negatively correlated. Thus, throughput within the specialist category was predominantly associated with positive outcomes for secondary school students.

Home-school partnerships

Home-school partnerships were the next most numerous type of service delivered by On Track projects after specialist services, accounting for 33% of all services, equivalent to 362 services in total. On average, these services reached 121 children per thousand population aged 5-14, and included universal open-access services as well as targeted interventions. Home-school partnership throughput was associated with a fairly large number of positive results at Wave 2 of the schools survey, especially for older children, including both lower levels of risk factors and higher levels of protective factors. Once again the findings were more consistent for secondary school students than for primary school students.

Parenting and family support services

Parenting support and training services accounted for 9% of all service offered by projects in Phase Two (n99) and reached on average across all areas 25 children per thousand population aged 5-14. They were of a somewhat different nature to the other service types, in that they were mainly working with parents rather than children. Parenting support services throughput was distinguished by being the only type of throughput for whom significant associations with risk or protective factors, where found, were exclusively positive.

13.1.4   Conclusions regarding user throughput and risk and protective factors

These findings do not tell us about outcomes for individual On Track users, nor do they provide us with information regarding how well services were targeted. They do, nevertheless provide some general support for the findings presented the previous chapters by showing that some important risk and protective factors, as measured towards the end of the national evaluation, were associated with greater project throughput. Inspection of Table 13.2, in addition, reveals that with the notable exception of family therapy, where throughput was significantly associated with risk and protective factors the direction of the relationship was generally in a desirable direction - ie lower levels of risk and higher levels of protection. In addition, the patterns revealed by this analysis suggested certain types of services were more likely to be associated with certain outcomes.

The fact that the children who were 'exposed' to On Track services in each area were not necessarily the same children who provided data to the schools surveys makes the findings even more interesting, in that it suggests that there was an association between On Track service reach in general, and school-wide changes in On Track areas. Furthermore, if throughput is considered a measure of the *intensity* of On Track delivery, then we can say that where On Track was most intense, results were often more positive. In a similar vein, throughput could be a measure of the *success* of implementation, to the extent that the more families reached, the more 'successful' the project. In this interpretation, the more successfully On Track was implemented, the better the results.

While these findings thus clearly suggest that higher levels of throughput are related to lower levels of risk, they also demonstrate the reverse: that lower levels of throughput are related to higher levels of risk. This trend may account for the fact that higher levels of family therapy throughput were consistently linked to less favourable risk and protective outcomes. One interpretation of this finding might assume then that areas with relatively high levels of need may have responded with fewer, more expensive services that were targeted at highly vulnerable children and families. Although we do not have data regarding the outcomes for individuals accessing family therapy services, below we consider the extent to which projects adopted a more focussed, multi-modal approach towards their service delivery and the extent to which this may have been beneficial for individual users.

13.2   Delivering 'multi-modal' care to On Track users

13.2.1   Multi-modality from the On Track projects' perspective

Not only did the 23 projects differ in terms of the kinds of services they offered and the percentage of children reached, the projects also differed in the extent to which they were able to match a specific constellation of services to individual, high risk children. The methods used for assessing need are discussed in-depth in the next section, but the evaluation data suggests that in many if not most projects, it was often left to individual professionals or families themselves to decide which and how many services were received. This is evidenced by the proportion of referrals to services that were ascribed to the 'self referral' route (see Figure 6.5 in Chapter Six) and confirmed by Regional Assessment Team reports for which, in one project for example, stated that *"contact with families in need [in Project] is often triggered by a self-referral rather than through formal referral routes."* Overall, the tracking study (Dinos et al, 2006 p58) showed that just under half of the users of targeted services (46%) were using more than one On Track service, while 54% were using just one service.

For the national programme as a whole, therefore, there was evidence of a substantial degree of 'multi-modal activity'; however, it was also true that for the majority of users of targeted services, only a single service was being used. Why might have this occurred? The relative lack of multiple service use may have had to do with projects' understanding of what 'multi-modal' meant in the first instance.

When project managers were asked how they interpreted the multi-modal directive of the initiative during the telephone 'exit' interview conducted by the evaluation team in 2006, many said that they believed that it meant developing *'a range of services from a range of agencies.'* Other interpretations included *'meeting with more than one member of the family,' 'shared referral systems'* and *'working with child and adolescent mental health services.'* In fact, only six of the 15 managers participating in the exit telephone interviews explicitly described a tiered and targeted approach to intervention whereby children with multiple needs received more than one service. It is likely that this is why relatively few projects actually offered a 'multi-modal' constellation of services in the way that was originally envisioned by the Home Office. As the next sections suggest, many On Track projects offered a wide range of interventions, but relatively few had any systematic mechanism for ensuring that the most at-risk children did, in fact, receive the appropriate combination of services.

13.2.2 Services offered and the extent of 'multi-modality'

As described in Chapter Six, there was wide variation in the number of different services offered by the 23 projects ranging from as many as 106 to as few as 13. The majority of services were offered through the 'specialist' intervention category (45% of all services), followed by home-school partnership (33%), parent support and training (9%), family therapy (6%) home-visiting (6%) and pre-school education (2%). Figure 13.1 provides an illustration of how one project with many services distributed them across the six intervention categories.

Figure 13.1 Distribution of services by intervention category (example 1)
(Source: Graham et al, 2006**)**
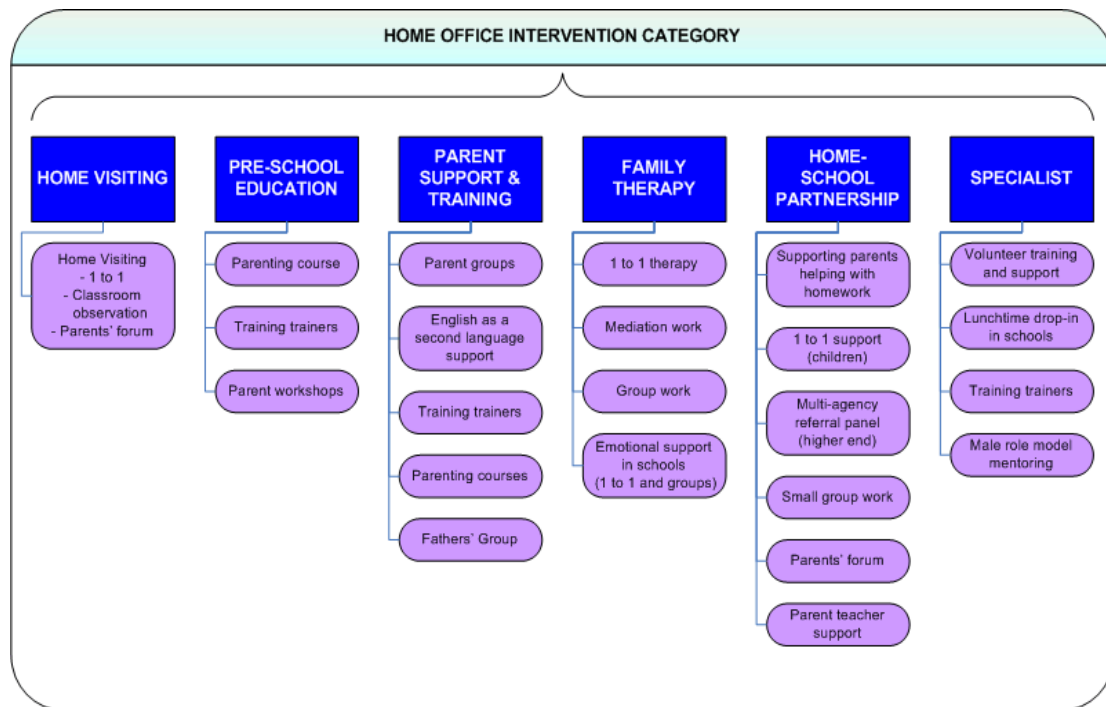
Figure 13.2 provides an example of how a project with fewer services distributed them across the Home Office categories.

Figure 13.2 Distribution of services by intervention category (example 2)
(Source: Graham et al, 2006)
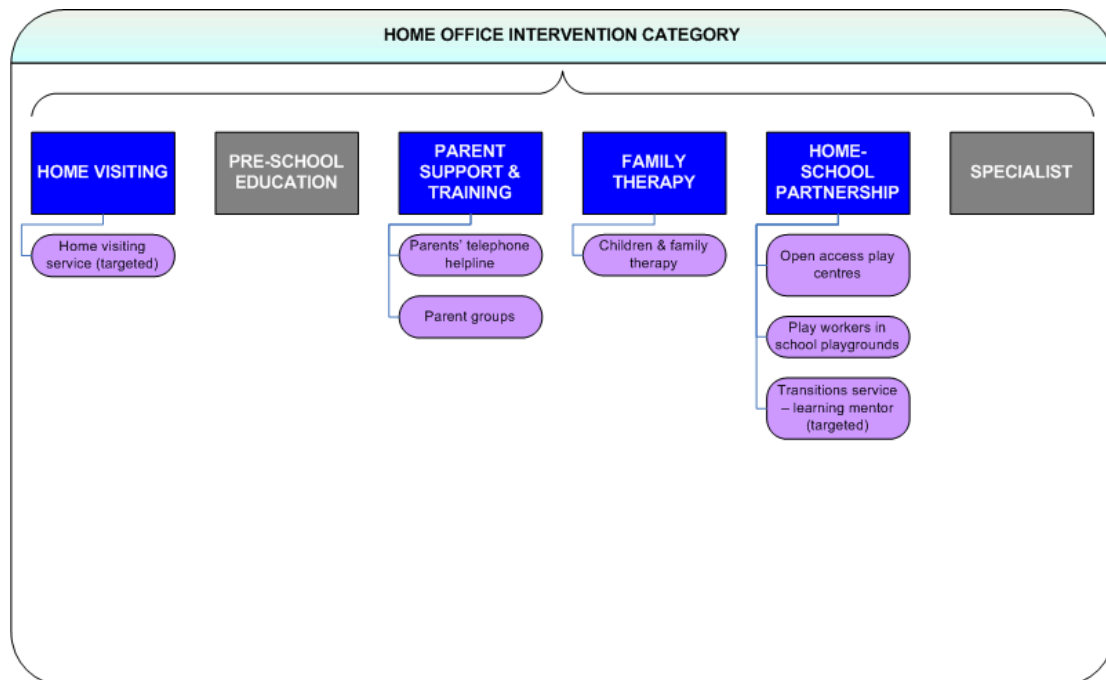
The number of services offered did not, however, necessarily reflect how many families and children were reached via On Track projects. For example, one project

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reached 1,271 children and parents with only 43 services on offer, whereas another reached almost half this number (689) with 81 services. These discrepancies are largely due to differences between the projects in terms of the proportion of universal and targeted services offered to children and their parents: those offering a larger proportion of universal services tended to have higher reach overall, as one might expect. By the same token, the degree of multi-modality within a project (as measured by the number of targeted service users reported to be using more than one service) was not necessarily a guide to the number of services offered, though the degree of multi-modality *was* highly correlated with 'reach' or overall project throughput.

Table 13.3 below shows projects ranked by the degree of multi-modality they achieved in terms of proportion of multiple service users out of all their users (column b) compared with how the projects ranked in terms throughput or reach (column c). As can be seen, the rankings are broadly similar, though there are some clear differences. The most noteworthy of these is Northampton, who ranked third in terms of multi-modality, but was second to last in terms of overall project throughput. Conversely, Manchester, who was ranked third in terms of throughput, had relatively few users who received more than one service (ranked 16 out of 22). Otherwise, four of the top five projects in terms of throughput were also within the top five in terms of 'multi-modality.'

(a) Project	(b) Multiple service users				(c) Project service throughput			
	Number of multiple service users	Number of users of targeted services	Percentage of multiple service users out of all targeted service users	Multi-modality ranking	Number of child users (aged 5-14)	Number of child population (aged 5-14)	All users as proportion of child population (aged 5 – 14)	Through-put ranking
Table 13.3 Project rankings by multi-modality and throughput (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)								
Oldham	322	388	83	**1**	983	1048	94	**1**
Rhondda	325	409	79	**2**	632	1759	36	**4**
Northampton	99	129	77	**3**	*124*	*3874*	*3*	**22**
Bridgend	259	354	73	**4**	860	2730	32	**5**
Rochdale	382	588	65	**5**	682	1360	50	**2**
Easington	186	306	61	**6**	658	2606	25	**9**
Sheffield	237	450	53	**7**	678	2597	26	**7**
Sunderland	246	510	48	**8**	*185*	*2421*	*8*	**17**
Solihull	106	233	45	**9**	572	3422	17	**12**
Haverhill	222	531	42	**10**	491	3992	12	**14**
Haringey	47	112	42	**11**	1103	4860	23	**10**
Bradford	174	426	41	**12**	409	3582	11	**15**
Portsmouth	164	420	39	**13**	*198*	*2980*	*7*	**18**
Greenwich	75	194	39	**14**	93	1583	6	**19**
Manchester	149	389	38	**15**	700	1510	46	**3**
Luton	139	373	37	**16**	844	3382	25	**8**
Brighton	46	145	32	**17**	161	3105	5	**20**
Brent	149	477	31	**18**	575	3460	17	**11**
Sandwell	43	161	27	**19**	105	1024	10	**16**
Southwark	164	687	24	**20**	547	2022	27	**6**
Wirral	65	282	23	**21**	123	3965	3	**21**
Kerrier	11	80	14	**22**	308	1863	17	**13**
Scarborough	5	144	3	**23**	*42*	*1204*	*3*	**23**

Base = 23 projects, 7,788 targeted service users

Table 13.3 also shows that in the top six projects ranked by multi-modality, more than 60% of targeted service users were multiple service users. However, for the lowest eleven projects, the reverse was true, as more than 60% of the targeted service users were receiving only one service. The middle six projects had a more or less equal distribution between single targeted service users and multiple targeted service users.

The cohort study at Wave 1 showed a lower level of multiple service use than the tracking data indicated (Finch et al, 2006a p67), though this is likely related to the general problem of undercounting service use in this study, as noted earlier. At Wave 1 (2004), around 29% (n19) of all respondents in On Track areas who indicated they or their child had used any On Track service reported using more than one service. At Wave 2 (2005), the rate of multiple service use had dropped to 20% amongst this same group of families. Although the numbers involved were very

small and we must be cautious about generalisations, this provides the only quantitative indication we have of multiple service-use trajectories over time, suggesting that over the course of a year, perhaps a fifth of all service users would have remained in contact with more than one service. Amongst the booster sample of high intensity service users the pattern was very different, and closer to the figures obtained from tracking data, with 48% of booster sample respondents reporting use of more than one service at Wave 1. This also corroborates the finding reported in Chapter Six, Table 6.8 that high need users were more likely to be found using multiple services than lower need users.

13.2.3 Assessing need

The Home Office guidance required projects to specify how they would identify children with the greatest needs and what referral systems would be put in place to ensure that they received the appropriate services. It was left to projects to develop their own tools, however, and the extent to which standardised assessment tools were utilised for this purpose varied amongst the 23 projects.

As described in Chapter One, standardised assessment tools were a key feature of the US Fast Track intervention, which loosely served as a model for the On Track initiative. In Fast Track, all children participating in the initiative were assessed with a standardised teacher observation tool at the age of five. Those who scored in the top 40% for disruptive behaviour were assessed a second time through a standardised parent interview. Children whose scores fell in the top 10% of the combined teacher and parent ratings were then offered a combination of additional services that included home-visiting and in-school tutoring support. These services were provided in addition to the universally available PATHS curriculum which promoted effective communication and pro-social skills amongst primary school pupils.

Only one On Track project, Manchester, offered the entire Fast Track intervention, which was done through one of seven local primary schools (Doherty, Price, Foster, Harries, Doherty and Barrow, 2005). The PATHS curriculum was provided universally to all primary pupils attending East Manchester schools (which included On Track area schools). One school within this project also implemented a screening process similar to the one developed for Fast Track to identify children eligible for additional home-visiting and school tutoring support. Four other projects also developed their own standardised assessment tools, and in Phase Two a number of projects mentioned using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) tools that began to come into general use from around 2004. However, these projects were the exception and not the rule; findings reported by the Regional Assessment Teams in 2003 suggest that the vast majority of projects (n15) did not use any standardised assessment tools, but instead relied on case meetings (n5 - described in Chapter Three) and the opinions of professionals, such as teachers (n8) to identify the needs of specific children. Even towards the later stages of Phase Two, two

projects in the qualitative study were actively resisting using formalised assessment procedures, since they felt they were potentially stigmatising. These projects instead made additional efforts to market their services to encourage families to self-refer (see Section 4.8 in Chapter Four for a more in-depth discussion on the branding and marketing of services).

13.2.4 Multiple service users

The previous sections make clear that in some instances, systems were in place for children and families to access multiple services. Box 8.2 uses qualitative data from the study of service users to show how families might have used various different combinations of services.

Box 13.2   Examples of multiple On Track service use from qualitative data

Use of multiple universal services – such as free fruit or massage schemes at school and attending On Track-provided swimming sessions in the local leisure centre. Another combination involved the same scenario as above but with the parent also attending, for example, an open-access parenting group

Use of multiple targeted services - in these cases, for example, a child was involved in one to one and group anger management or behavioural support sessions at school. Counselling for children also occurred in conjunction with another service (such as a targeted after-school club or small group work in school) and/or support for the parent through home visiting and counselling. Also, it was common for the child to attend a targeted after-school club and the parent to be receiving a home visiting service, or counselling or attending a parenting group.

Combination of universal and targeted services – Children and parents accessed a combination of the services mentioned in the previous two groups.

Below we describe the extent to which children and families received multiple services across the projects, as well as the demographic characteristics of multiple service users. When reviewing these data, it should be kept in mind that many of the projects did not consistently collect information on the users of universal services (see Dinos et al, 2006 p67), so the figures below are shown separately for targeted users and universal users. Note, then, that the figures for universal users are likely to be underestimates.

Single and multiple targeted service use

A 'single user' of a targeted service is defined as a user who received only one targeted service. A 'multiple user' is defined as a user who received more than one service, of which at least one was targeted. It was identified from the tracking study that 46% (n3615) of all users of targeted services received multiple services, whereas 54% (n4173) received a single service.

A further count of the total number of services used by targeted service users (e.g. one service, two services etc.) shows that quite substantial minorities of these users

were involved with multiple services. Over a third were using two or three services and 7% of users of targeted services used five services or more.

Figure 13.3: Distribution of users attending different numbers of services (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)
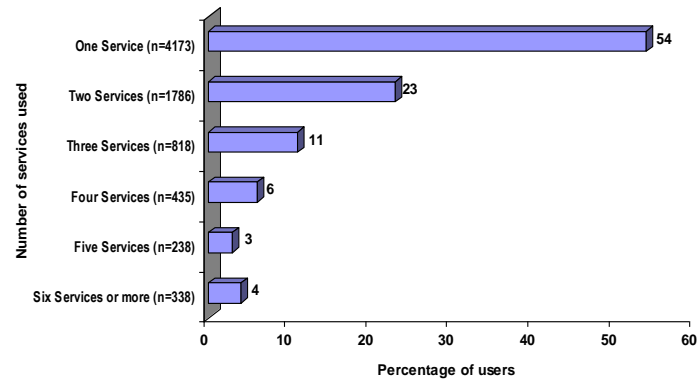
Base = 23 projects, 7,788 users of targeted services

The characteristics of single and multiple intervention users of targeted services

Table 13.3 provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of users of single and multiple targeted interventions and Box 13.3 summarises the demographic differences between single and multiple service users.

As illustrated in Table 13.4 and Box 13.3, the likelihood of receiving single or multiple interventions was similar for both male and female users. However, statistically significant differences were identified for age, ethnicity, type of user and area of residence of users of single and multiple interventions. At first glance there is evidence here to suggest that even though as shown in Chapter Three, On Track services were successful at reaching people from a range of ethnic backgrounds (see Section 3.3.2 for details), users from some ethnic groups were less likely to be offered (or to have taken up) more than one service. However, as shown above, those in high risk groups were much more likely than those with lesser levels of risk to be receiving multiple services, and as shown earlier in Table 6.8 in Chapter Six, the number of risk factors also varied between ethnic groups, so that for example Black Caribbean users were disproportionately likely to be found in the highest risk group of users, whereas Black African users were in the lowest risk group. Further analyses revealed that (for example), Black Caribbean service users were almost twice as likely as Black African users to be receiving multiple services, but that once the level of risk was accounted for, ethnicity was not a strong predictor of multiple service use. Thus, we concluded that it was level of risk rather than demographic factors such as ethnic group that accounted for multiple service use, providing evidence that On Track services were accurately and successfully targeting the highest need families to receive the greatest number of services.

Table 13.4 Demographic characteristics of users of single and multiple services (targeted service users only) (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)

		Single intervention		Multiple intervention	
		%	n	**%**	n
Sex					
Female (n 3,878)		**54**	2092	**46**	1786
Male (n 3,726)		**53**	1973	**47**	1753
Age					
0-5 (n 770)		**62**	474	**38**	296
6-8 (n 1,482)		**46**	686	**54**	796
9-11 (n 2,459)		**48**	1192	**52**	1267
12-14 (n 854)		**50**	424	**50**	430
15-17 (n 92)		**77*****	71	**23**	21
18+ (n 1,104)		**53**	582	**47**	522
Ethnicity					
Black or mixed African (n 511)		**72*****	366	**28**	145
Other (n 94)		**72**	68	**28**	26
Mixed heritage (n 133)		**70**	93	**30**	40
Indian (n 44)		**-**	29	**-**	15
Bangladeshi (n 138)		**60**	83	**40**	55
Black or mixed Caribbean (n 341)		**57**	196	**43**	145
Pakistani (n 786)		**52**	410	**48**	376
White (n 4,897)		**48**	2370	**52***	2527
Chinese (n 16)		**-**	13	**-**	3
Type of user					
Parent (n 1,759)		**59*****	1038	**41**	721
Child (n 5, 827)		**52**	3009	**48**	2818
Professional/Volunteer (n 20)		**-**	16	**-**	4
Area of residence					
Outside On Track Area (n 1,516)		**66*****	994	**34**	522
In On Track Area (n 5,400)		**49**	2647	**51**	2753
Risk level					
High risk (n 611)		**27**	162	**73*****	449
Intermediate risk (n 4508)		**56**	2501	**45**	2007
No risk (n 364)		**56**	204	**44**	160

χ^2 tests: *** = $p < .001$; ** = $p < .01$; * = $p < .05$
Where percentages are not included this is due to the small number of users

Box 13.3 Summary of demographic differences in single vs multiple service use

Age: users of targeted services between the age of 6 and 11 as well as users above the age of 18 were more likely to have received multiple interventions compared with the other age groups.
Ethnicity: users of targeted services of White background were more likely to have received multiple interventions than groups of other ethnic backgrounds. On the other hand, users of targeted services of Black African background were significantly more likely to have received a single intervention.
Type of user: the majority of parents using targeted services received single interventions. For child users of targeted services there was an almost equal likelihood of receiving one, or more than one intervention.
Area of residence: users of targeted services who resided within the On Track boundary were significantly more likely to receive multiple interventions than those who were reported to live outside the On Track boundary.
Risk level: users of targeted services who were classified as high risk (more than five dimensions of risk) were more likely to receive multiple interventions compared with users of other risk groups.

Table 13.4 also shows that multi-modal services were successfully reaching On Track area residents (as opposed to those living outside the designated catchment area),

and most encouragingly of all, that three quarters of targeted service users reported to be at the highest risk (measured by counting the number of risk factors present) were also successfully being engaged in multi-modal service provision, just as the programme's originators envisaged.

Single and multiple users of universal services

Universal service usage was counted using different methods to those used to count users of targeted services, and below, a 'single user' of a universal service is defined as a user who has received only one universal service, and a 'multiple user' of universal services is someone who received more than one universal service. In contrast to the patterns for users of targeted services, the data for universal service users showed that most had received a single intervention (76%, n6864), and only a minority (24%) were multiple intervention users (n2,109). If users of universal service were, on average, less needy than users of targeted services, then this is exactly what we would expect to find.

13.2.5 Other patterns of multi-modality

Although in this chapter we have concentrated mainly on multi-modality defined as the use of several services by one person, there were also other patterns of service use that we encountered. For example the tracking data showed that 5,436 users (32% of 16,761 recorded On Track users) who participated in On Track services were recorded as participating with other family members. As illustrated in Figure 13.4, 53% of these users (n2,890) participated in services with only one other family member; but 47% (n2,546) participated On Track services with two or more other family members.

Figure 13.4 Distribution of number of family members who also participated On Track services (Source: Dinos et al, 2006)
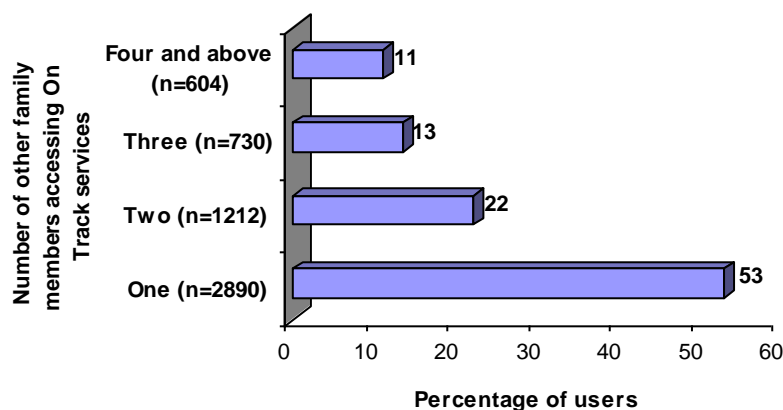
Base = 23 projects; 5,436 users who participated On Track services with other family member(s)

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13.3 The extent to which multiple service use was beneficial

Although the available evaluation data did not allow us to consider the effect of multi-modality on individual child and parent outcomes, findings from the qualitative studies of service users and providers showed some evidence of the impact of multiple intervention use. Perhaps the biggest 'added value' to the overall effectiveness of multiple service use of the services came from the multiple intervention use in families, where both children and their parents were accessing On Track services.

13.3.1 Providing multiple interventions within a family

The qualitative studies both suggested that the ability to work in a cross-disciplinary way with families was an important factor in progress in meeting their needs (Graham et al, 2006 p84). The ability to engage parents and therefore produce simultaneous changes in both parent and child was seen as important as a basis for sustainable change. However, workers did feel it was possible to see positive outcomes from services that only reached children, but that these might be slower to occur. Having appropriate services was also important in providing multiple interventions. This was particularly emphasised in projects where one service worker spent time with parents, taking the time to build trust and understand their needs. Improved attendance was reported as resulting from multiple interventions, intensive one to one work and/or effective transitions work.

13.3.2 Sustaining engagement with parents over time

As the qualitative study of service providers showed, sustaining engagement with parents in interventions (either in services that parents used, or those used by their children) was seen by workers as a very important feature of On Track's work in supporting positive change (Graham et al, 2006 p91). Parents' engagement in services attended by children in school was felt to reinforce and consolidate positive change and to support the child, and On Track had been very successful in doing this in all six areas that were studied.

Parental engagement was thought by service providers to be a key factor in effecting sustainable change. The thinking here was that it was unlikely that a child's behaviour was not associated with the home environment, and therefore issues needed to be addressed at all levels. However this view also valued the support of the parent in the service the child was using. In school based interventions it was felt parental support could improve the relationship between the school and the parent as well, which also helped facilitate positive change; engaging both the parents and the child could help build positive changes at different levels.

13.3.3 Quantitative evidence of added value of multi-modality

What can we conclude about the evidence for 'added value' of multi-modal service provision from the data presented so far? There are all sorts of complexities in the way the On Track programme was delivered and how well we were able to measure different aspects of process and outcome that make this a particularly difficult question to answer. Because of the high degree of correlation (or 'collinearity') between multi-modality and project throughput, (r = 0.56), the evidence presented in the first half of this chapter regarding throughput can, to some extent, also be seen as evidence that the more services offered, the better (some) of the outcomes for children. However, by the same token, it is difficult to disaggregate the relative contributions to good outcomes of receiving multiple services as opposed to good outcomes related simply to reaching more children. In addition, because we cannot identify which children in the schools survey received specific On Track services, we cannot model the likelihood of better outcomes in that study against number of services used. Although the *cohort study* does allow us to perform these kinds of analyses, chances of finding significant relationships are minimal due to the small numbers of children and parents in the sample, and especially the small numbers who identified themselves as receiving more than one service in that study.

Thus, for the reasons cited above, it is not possible to say whether the quantitative data collected for the evaluation tells us whether multiple service use resulted in better outcomes than single service use. However, to the extent that projects with greater throughput of users were also more likely to have greater number of multiple service users, it seems likely that multiple service use was one element of an approach to service provision that generally speaking showed an association with promising results for users.

13.4   Conclusions

This section has described the ways in which service throughput and multiple intervention use possibly influenced changes among On Track users. This was done by considering first the relationship between project throughput and risk and protective factors, as measured during Wave 2 of the schools survey. The benefits of multiple service use were then considered from data gathered via the tracking strand of the evaluation and the qualitative research on the perspectives of service providers. These findings tell us that users were able to access combinations of different types of services, both universal and targeted, and both within and outside On Track. At the local project level, formal and informal referral routes were implemented to facilitate multiple intervention use, though the specific criteria for the referral (and indeed the mechanisms used to secure referrals) were not always clear.

The findings presented in this chapter suggest that while we cannot say which types of services were 'most' effective, we can say that different services were associated with different outcomes. Services that tended to be delivered in a universal model were often associated with a greater absolute number of positive results, but on the other hand services that delivered mostly targeted interventions were usually working with much more needy children and families, with more entrenched difficulties. It is probably not reasonable to expect such services to deliver comparable results. Of those receiving targeted services, it appears that just under half (46%; n3615) received more than one. In addition, users at 'high risk' were much more likely to receive multiple services than others, suggesting that multi-modality was more likely to be found where users had greatest needs, just as would be hoped.

At the family level, one in three users of On Track (n5,436, 32%) were recorded as participating with other family members in data from 22 projects. Though we could not measure the potential benefits (or otherwise) of this using quantitative data, evidence from the qualitative strands of the research suggested that service providers considered that the biggest 'added value' to the overall effectiveness of the use of the services came from the multiple intervention use in families, when both children and their parents were accessing On Track services. This finding, coupled with the impacts detected at the family-level in the previous chapter, suggest that some of On Track's most important work was conducted with children and their parents together.

Although we know that multiple service use was occurring at relatively substantial levels during Phase Two of the programme, the extent to which we are able to comment on the effectiveness and outcomes of using multiple services is limited. In the qualitative strands of the study, service providers argued that multi-modal service use, whether interpreted as 'one individual using multiple services' or 'several family members using On Track services' , was a generally good thing, facilitating faster progress and leading to more sustainable outcomes. Whether this was borne out in terms of quantitative measures of impact for individual users was not possible to say however, largely because multi-modality, though not the same as 'reach', was so highly correlated with reach that we were unable to partial out the effects of one from the other. As the first part of this chapter suggests, throughput, or project reach, was associated with better outcomes, as measured in the schools surveys, in a range of dimensions. It remains a possibility, of course, that it is multi-modality and not reach that is behind some of these positive results. Certainly, multi-modality seems likely to be one element of a package of factors that contributed to successful implementation of On Track in the local areas.

Chapter Fourteen: What happened next? Mainstreaming On Track services

14.1   Introduction

Launched in December 1999 by the Home Office, the On Track initiative was originally planned for a three-year time frame between 2000 – 2003. However, over time it became clear that the time frame would need to be extended in order for projects to achieve their objectives. In this respect, it was expected that local projects would embed, or 'mainstream', effective practices and services into local service provision in order to increase the longevity of the project:

> *One of the On Track programme's major objectives is to help develop mainstreaming of effective models, processes and practice, both in pilot project areas and more widely.*
> *(Home Office, 1999)*

The Home Office originally envisaged that effective partnership working would be the primary vehicle for mainstreaming. Having obtained the initial commitment from existing service providers, it was anticipated that over time the contribution from these services *"would become an increasing proportion of the whole"* (Home Office, 1999). To this end, On Track projects were expected to develop services and implement them, with their contribution peaking after three years time and then declining "towards zero" as other agencies integrated them into their practice.

For these reasons, On Track projects were asked to indicate in their delivery plans, '*their commitment in principle, and that of all key partner agencies, to the core concept of mainstreaming successful programme elements*' (Home Office 1999). Although we do not have access to the original plans, we do have an understanding of the extent to which mainstreaming was successful. This information was collected through telephone interviews conducted with 14 of the 23 project managers during the final phases of the evaluation in the summer of 2006.[38]   During these interviews, we asked project managers to provide us with their definition of mainstreaming and to explain the extent to they felt they were successful in mainstreaming their services and practices into local agencies.

In this Chapter, we summarise the findings from these interviews by considering first the Home Office's perspective on mainstreaming and then comparing it with the On Track projects' interpretation of the remit. We then provide examples of the

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[38] Managers who were not available to participate in these interviews included some from projects that had struggled more with mainstreaming and sustainability, or where On Track activities had been wound up prematurely. For this reason, it should be kept in mind that the findings reported here may under-represent to some extent the views of managers from projects whose experiences of mainstreaming were less positive.

ways in which On Track projects successfully mainstreamed their services into local agencies, describing the factors that both facilitated and inhibited this process. We then conclude the Chapter with a summary of what was accomplished through the mainstreaming of On Track services that includes a brief discussion of what can be learned with regard to the mainstreaming of future services.

14.2   Mainstreaming defined

Maintreaming can be defined in a variety of ways. Perhaps the most commonly used definition is similar to the Home Office's (see above) where 'mainstream' organisations (most often statutory agencies) take over the financial responsibility and accountability for delivery of a service. A second definition of mainstreaming suggests that the ethos of a service, or model of service delivery, becomes adopted by a 'mainstream' organisation. A well documented example of this is from the United States High/Scope preschool curriculum that places an emphasis upon 'active learning' (High Scope Educational Research Foundation, 2005). This curriculum was developed by the Perry Preschool in Ypsilanti, in the state of Michigan, and was then 'mainstreamed' into federal Head Start programmes. The model is now adopted in early education curriculums throughout the world, largely because of its robust evidence base.

The definition of mainstreaming provided by the Home Office was deliberately wide and included five examples of mainstreaming:

1. The integration of particular programmes or services in a particular project area.
2. The incorporation of models of service delivery or professional practice in specific disciplines.
3. Refocusing services for a specific at-risk group.
4. The use of generic models, such as improved practice or content in teacher training.
5. New approaches to strategic or policy planning.

During the telephone interviews, project managers were asked to provide their own definition of mainstreaming. Although there was wide variation amongst their responses, the most common definition was similar to the Home Office's first example, in that mainstreaming involved an On Track service being taken over and delivered by a statutory or voluntary agency.

> [Mainstreaming involves] *Services that are taken up by a mainstream agency or service provider.*

> *What I see as mainstreaming is providing other people with a model that they might want to buy.*

A common theme in relation to this definition of mainstreaming was the funding arrangement for services. As one manager suggested "*projects [On Track services] that continue after Children's fund and On Track funding [has ceased] and funding [for these projects] has been picked up by another funder*". In this context, mainstreaming is defined as securing long term, and in some cases permanent, funding for services originally introduced by On Track. In this respect, this definition of mainstreaming is inherently linked to financial responsibility, whereas the mainstreaming of a service or practice model involves little or no cost.

Whilst the integration of services into project areas was the most common example of mainstreaming, many of the managers provided additional definitions. For example, mainstreaming also occurred when an idea or method of practice was adopted by a mainstream agency and implemented into their working procedures. As one On Track manager put it "……*[mainstreaming is] taking good practice and embedding it into existing service provisions.*" During the telephone interviews, a handful of project managers also commented that the decision to mainstream must be informed by evidence - in other words, the service must have been evaluated and proven effective.

Another common feature of the managers' explanations of mainstreaming was that it was most likely to occur by "*influencing [statutory agencies] and delivering [services] alongside statutory services*", as one put it. In this sense, mainstreaming was most likely to be successful in instances where statutory agencies, working within local government, adopted an effective service or practice and implemented it across the board. In practice this was achieved through On Track projects working alongside statutory agencies from an early stage in the planning and delivery of interventions. For example, On Track employees, who worked in partnership with external agencies, were often asked to train colleagues from other disciplines in practices and methods that were developed and delivered by the On Track workers.

It is also worth noting that two project managers explicitly acknowledged that mainstreaming could happen with voluntary agencies. As one manager stated:

> *Either actual work or practices that have been developed continuously and are embedded in the mainstream. Not just mainstream statutory agencies, but also voluntary.*

> *[On Track project manager]*

In sum, On Track projects demonstrated a shared understanding of the main principles of mainstreaming that was similar to the examples provided by the Home Office. We now demonstrate, with examples, the ways in which On Track services

and models of delivery were mainstreamed according to the five examples originally provided by the Home Office.

14.3   Examples of mainstreaming

14.3.1 The integration of On Track services in project areas

At the time the interviews were conducted, twelve out of the 14 managers felt that they had mainstreamed at least one service. Many of the examples the managers provided included services that were successfully mainstreamed into their project areas.   For instance, the PATHS curriculum (as adapted from Fast Track – see Appendix 1) was successfully introduced to all East Manchester schools after its initial success in a single primary school within the On Track catchment area. In addition, the primary school that originally piloted PATHS and the Fast Track model has now completely integrated the entire constellation of Fast Track services (the PATHS curriculum, peer pairing, friendship groups, parent training and home visiting) into its school curriculum (Doherty et al, 2005).

On Track Brent reported a similar success with its SHARE course offered to parents of primary school pupils living within their catchment area. This course was offered as a way of helping parents gain new skills so that they could more effectively assist their children with their schoolwork. The course was delivered by teachers who received training from the national SHARE organisation. Originally, SHARE was offered as a single course operating out of one On Track area school, because teachers found the course time consuming to set up and run. However, On Track Brent then provided training to school-based Learning Support Assistants, and the course has now been successfully integrated across 20 primary schools within the Brent local educational authority.

A third example of successful mainstreaming involves youth clubs originally sponsored by On Track Haverhill. These clubs proved to be so popular, they are now subsidised by the local council and children themselves pay a nominal fee.

14.3.2 The incorporation of models of service delivery or professional practice in specific disciplines

Another category of mainstreaming involved the incorporation of service delivery or professional practice in specific disciplines. Findings from the service providers' strand of the evaluation suggest that On Track projects often pioneered innovative methods of service provision (Graham et al, 2006). During this exercise, project managers reported that in many instances external agencies often became inspired by practices used by the On Track team and sought their advice on how to transfer and implement key principles or practices of On Track into their mainstream services. Typically, this happened when other professionals observed that the 'On

Track model' was working well with families and children (Graham et al, 2006 p.71). Examples of working practices that had been successfully mainstreamed into core services included:

- adopting On Track project's multi-agency referral panel model for referral and assessment.
- extending 'On Track' for older children in secondary schools. The On Track programme manager had assisted in the establishment of the programme in a consultative and advisory capacity.

The project managers participating in the telephone interviews also provided a number of examples of On Track service models that had become fully integrated into local schools within a relatively short period of time. For instance, in On Track Luton the *Family Room* model was successfully integrated across Luton schools within 18 months. Family Rooms are spaces within schools where a variety of family group activities are sponsored, such as 'Stay and Play' drop-ins, toy libraries, and adult literacy and numeracy support. These rooms were initially run by *Family Workers* employed by On Track in eight schools offering reception within the catchment area. The Luton LEA introduced *Family Workers* and *Family Rooms* to all area schools (both Key Stage One and Two), after their 2004 Key Stage One results reportedly indicated a marked improvement in the eight On Track schools that originally implemented the model.

14.3.3 Refocusing services for specific at-risk groups

In at least three instances, it was clear from the telephone interviews that On Track projects provided a bridge between mainstream services and a specific, at risk group. The first example comes from On Track Luton, who provided a link between child and adolescent mental health services CAMHS) and representatives of the local South Asian community to adapt Webster Stratton's *Incredible Years* parent training course to the needs of the parents of Bangladeshi and Indian descent. CAMHS now reports that there has been a marked increase in uptake of this service with Asian parents.

On Track Brent related a similar story regarding its mediation service offered to Black African and Caribbean families living within their catchment area. This service was offered through local schools and provided families with strategies for anger management, improved communication and links to CAMHS. The service proved to be so successful it is now running out of several schools with financial support from the Extended Schools initiative.

A third example of refocusing services for at-risk groups involves the *Nurture Group* operating out of On Track Wirral. This intervention was originally developed to meet the needs of highly vulnerable children who were at risk for social and behavioural problems. Children are identified between the ages of 4 and 5 and are

then placed in a specialised classroom support where they receive extra support for their emotional issues. They typically remained in these classrooms for two to five school terms, until they became ready to return to mainstream classrooms.   This service has now been fully integrated into all local schools with additional financial support from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

14.3.4 The use of generic models, such as improved practice or content in teacher training

During the telephone interviews, the project managers did not provide any examples of mainstreaming that involved the integration of generic models. However, during the service providers' strand of the evaluation, a number of project managers discussed the widespread use of *circle time* - a group-based therapeutic activity that encourages participants to share their needs and feelings with others in a positive way. This practice was subsequently introduced into schools through a number of On Track projects, with primary teachers offering circle time in their classrooms, so that children could *'express issues, what they feel about the school or classroom and about the difficulties that impact on them amongst their peer group'* (Graham et al, 2006). In some areas, this practice had even extended to teaching staff themselves, as circle time had become a feature of the monthly team meetings.

Mainstreaming through teacher training happened frequently across the projects. In many instances, On Track workers trained staff to provide services themselves and on occasion supported them in their own initial provision of services. A particularly dramatic example of how On Track training helped mainstream practices into schools was the transitions[39] work that the On Track project piloted in Kerrier. In this instance, the local education welfare team approached the On Track team to train their teachers in the principles of the transitions curriculum so it could be delivered in all of its primary schools. Additional examples of mainstreaming that was supported through training provided by On Track staff included:

- The PATHS curriculum (see above)
- Reading Recovery; an intervention to assist primary school children who were behind in their reading skills
- health related educational programmes
- teaching of basic massage skills to children in class to massage each other
- educational courses on domestic violence and abusive relationships
- parent support groups to facilitate parents helping with children's homework
- home visiting with parents to establish better relationships with the school
- Parents as First Teachers programmes in nursery schools and reception class

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[39] Transitions work was the term used to refer to working with pupils in year 6, in primary schools, to prepare them for the impending move to secondary school. Transitions work often focused on academic expectations, finding your way around a new school and looked at peer relationships and the formation of new friendship groups.

14.3.5 New approaches to strategic or policy planning

Findings from the service providers' study suggest that On Track's multi-modal approach was often 'mainstreamed' into strategic and policy planning. This usually occurred through On Track managers' participation on strategic partnership boards. In one locality, the preventative work of the Youth Offending team was entirely based upon the local On Track project's approach of clustering schools within narrow geographical areas and providing them with a multi-stranded constellation of services.

On occasion, the referral and information systems pioneered by On Track projects became integrated into the local council's strategy for tracking and referring children. A striking example of this occurred in On Track Manchester, where the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership adopted the On Track referral and information sharing model as a way of meeting the requirements of the National Prolific and Other Priority Offender (POPO) strategy. One of the main priorities of the Partnership was to utilise existing structures for the identification and referral of young people. The Partnership was impressed by the model developed by the On Track project and subsequently adopted it to track the progress of children across all Children's Fund services.   This involved customising the original On Track database for other types of provision across all children's services.

On Track Manchester was also contributed heavily to the local area's service strategy. In this instance, the project was able to inform the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in developing a range of universal and targeted interventions to meet all levels of need because of its proven track record in developing effective services for children, parents and schools.

In the case of On Track Rhondda, not only were all of the services successfully mainstreamed into both core health and educational agencies -- the entire On Track model was adopted by an adjacent community. This happened as a result of the availability of funding specifically for preventative services, which enabled the neighbouring community (with initial support from On Track Rhondda) to offer a package of services that was especially tailored to the needs of their local community.

14.4   Factors that facilitated the mainstreaming of On Track services and practices

As the above examples illustrate, a number of factors facilitated the mainstreaming of

On Track services. These included support on the strategic level, joint working, evidence that the service was effective, work via schools and the availability of additional funding. Each one of these processes is discussed in greater depth below.

14.4.1 Strategic support

The integration of On Track services into wider local service provision most often occurred through strategic partnerships that were in charge of overseeing services for children and young people and their families. Mainstreaming at this level involved a strategic decision by the local authority or a department within it to mainstream. This 'top down' approach to mainstreaming was evident in five out the 14 projects that participated in the telephone interviews, where there existed a shared understanding of the pilot nature of the On Track initiative and the need to develop a mainstreaming strategy. In these cases, project managers became involved in strategic planning on a borough-wide level towards the end of the pilot stage and were thus able to exert some influence over the mainstreaming process using their On Track project as a model. In these cases, the project managers successfully championed the idea of mainstreaming, not only at a project level by building in mainstreaming strategies alongside service delivery, but also on a wider strategic level by participating in strategic partnerships. This often occurred in instances where On Track managers held additional responsibilities, such as the Children's Fund Manager and were therefore able to influence the direction of services for children and families in their local areas. The project managers also observed that services and practices were easier to mainstream if they supported one of the five *Every Child Matters* (ECM) outcomes.[40]

14.4.2 Joint working

The mainstreaming of On Track work was also achieved via joint working with service providers from external organisations. In many cases, On Track team members worked alongside these agencies deliberately from the beginning to facilitate the mainstreaming process (Graham et al, 2006). This occurred particularly frequently across On Track area schools, where On Track staff worked alongside school teaching and support staff, with the expectation that the school would continue to offer the service once On Track ceased to exist. Many of the examples of mainstreaming listed in Section 14.3.4 were a result of this kind of joint working.

14.4.3 Evidence based practice

One theme that was strongly evident during the telephone interviews was that mainstreaming was more likely to occur for services that were considered to have been 'proven' to be effective. This could occur because the service was evidence-based to begin with (a case in point being the PATHS curriculum that was successfully mainstreamed in Manchester and Wirral), or because the service demonstrated its effectiveness through its own self-evaluation or locally available

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[40] The five ECM outcomes are *Be Healthy, Be Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a Positive Contribution and Achieve Economic Well-being*.

evidence. This certainly was the case for the Luton *Family Room* model was mainstreamed into all primary schools after it was observed that the eight schools who piloted the *Family Worker* scheme achieved higher Key Stage One results in 2004.

14.4.4 Mainstreaming through schools

As discussed in Chapter Six, the On Track projects delivered over half of their services via schools. Participants in the service providers' study observed that often once school-based services were established, the school employees soon saw the benefits of On Track services and began integrating them into existing school structures and practices (see Chapter Four). Findings from the qualitative study of schools' perspectives generally reinforced this idea, since many of the focus group participants voiced a commitment to mainstreaming On Track services in their schools, although the ability to actually do so seemed contingent upon obtaining funding. Participants also talked about the ways in which the strategic changes related to *Every Child Matters* impacted upon their work and remarked that the mainstreaming of On Track services would help them meet the targets outlined through this policy agenda.

During the service providers' study, participants were asked to provide reasons for why such a high proportion of On Track services were delivered via schools by Phase Two.   One project manager believed this occurred because schools were more autonomous than some of their other partner agencies, which helped them to be more objective when evaluating the evidence of a service's effectiveness.

> *Where it (mainstreaming) has been successful the mainstreaming body has had more autonomy; that is the schools had looked at the evidence and the decision to mainstream had been made on that basis.*
>
> *[On Track project manager]*

In many cases, schools were successful in obtaining funding from external sources once the decision to mainstream a service was made. However, this decision was not always taken by the schools themselves. In many instances, the local authority decided when and if On Track services would be mainstreamed, and in these cases, additional funding was provided at the local authority level. During the telephone interviews, seven out of the 14 participating projects reported that at least one On Track service delivered through a school had been subsequently mainstreamed, in addition to any models that had been integrated into their practice through teacher training or joint working.

> *I've had three or four staff trained in that . . . . And now, as a result, even though the On Track work might peter out, I've got staff who are delivering the Webster Stratton parenting courses, or the Dinosaur school to children during PPA time.*
>
> *[Head teacher, primary school in On Track area]*

14.4.5 New funding streams

As the above examples suggest, mainstreaming was often facilitated by the availability of additional funding. Recent government initiatives and funding streams such as Extended Schools, Excellence in Cities, and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund have created new pathways for On Track projects to mainstream their services in addition to the conventional way of mainstreaming services via statutory and voluntary funding. During the telephone interviews towards the end of the evaluation period, one project manager remarked that he hoped he would be able to access some of the funding available through Children's Trusts:

> [*What*] *I am wanting to maintain is the crime prevention focus in the prevention team -- so maintaining the prevention arm of the Youth Offending Service and working with children and parents, with the difficult ones that nobody would want to work with that wouldn't be accepted in the play centres, in the play schemes. So then I am wanting the money that is going to the Children's Trust to come to crime prevention. So we mainstream it that way. That is my task for the future.*
>
> *[On Track project manager]*

It was clear from the telephone interviews that extended schools also provided a source of funding that enabled the mainstreaming of many On Track services.

14.5   Factors that interfered with the mainstreaming of On Track services and practices

During the telephone interviews, project managers readily identified a number of factors that interfered with their ability to successfully mainstream services. These factors were reported to included poor communication between agencies, 'initiative fatigue' (agencies and staff becoming weary of new requirements resulting from a large number of new initiatives) and a lack of appreciation for the work of On Track in general on the part of external agencies and especially those in the statutory sector. In several instances, managers expressed disappointment that services about which the project team had felt passionately had not been taken up for mainstreaming by other agencies, either because of a lack of funding, or because of a lack of interest – sometimes due to changes in local strategy and priorities for funding. For example, one project manager was saddened by the fact that her project's successful High/Scope preschool programme had been replaced by another pre-school curriculum, because the latter had been recommended by external education advisers. The project manager speculated that this change in curriculum occurred as a result of '…*A decision making process involving very few people who are extremely difficult to influence because they are usually pursuing an individual agenda.*

During the focus groups with service providers, several additional barriers to successful mainstreaming were identified. These included being unable to target appropriate staff members, or having difficulty in finding the time for staff to train

for and deliver the service or intervention. In the case of one project, for example, initial difficulties were encountered embedding a school-based service because the teaching staff did not have time available to attend the training and deliver the service. The On Track project had to therefore reconsider its strategy, and eventually decided to target learning assistants in schools instead. Once this change in strategy took place, the service proved to be highly successful, and was mainstreamed across all of the local schools.

Concerns were also expressed during telephone interviews with project managers that the provision of funding was the only realistic way to ensure services would continue after the life course of On Track, particularly in schools where specialist services had been commissioned by On Track from other local providers. These services were reported to have become a valued part of some schools and yet schools were described as being unable to find alternative funding to continue the services. In many cases, however, schools and On Track staff were exploring avenues for funding together.

14.6   Summary and conclusions

Findings from the telephone exit interviews suggest that at least half of the On Track projects had successfully mainstreamed at least one of their services. In some instances, the On Track project manager reported a very high degree of success – saying that most, if not all, On Track services had been successfully mainstreamed into their local area's core service provision. In fact, one project manager remarked (not without irony) that her project's mainstreaming endeavours had been so successful that she had essentially "*done [herself] out of a job*".

It was clear from the telephone interviews that mainstreaming occurred in a variety of ways. Although the integration of specific services into core provision was the most common form of mainstreaming, there were also many examples of where On Track projects changed or improved ongoing practice, refocused services for specific at-risk groups, provided training to statutory and voluntary agencies and influenced strategic decisions on the community level. Overall, it was clear that the On Track programme, both in terms of its staff and activities, added value to core services both for at risk families and for the community in general.

It was also clear from the interviews that a variety of processes facilitated the mainstreaming of services. This included the availability of additional funding, support on the strategic level and evidence that the service was effective. On Track services that demonstrated their effectiveness in schools were particularly likely to be mainstreamed, especially if the school was able to obtain additional funding, or the local authority saw it as a priority. In addition, On Track services that were seen

to support the *Every Child Matters* outcomes framework were also more likely to become integrated into the ongoing work of core health or educational services.

It was also clear from the telephone interviews that the On Track project occasionally encountered barriers when attempting to mainstream their services. Most of these barriers are common across much multi-agency work and included issues such as poor communication, conflicts of interest, limited funding and limited staff time (Meyers et al, 2004). In many instances, however, On Track projects were successful in overcoming these obstacles, especially when the project had established a strategy for mainstreaming from the onset.

Of course, these findings are based upon the reports of just over half of the projects and therefore not necessarily representative of all of the projects' experiences. However, it is encouraging to see that many projects were successful in efforts to mainstream and that these new services appear to have added value to the core agencies who ultimately became responsible for their delivery. It is likely that there is much to be learned from their experiences in the mainstreaming of future social care initiatives.

Chapter Fifteen: Conclusions

15.1   Introduction

First launched in 1999 by the Home Office, *On Track* was a long-term multi-component initiative based in 23 high crime, high deprivation communities in England and Wales. It was aimed at children and the families of children aged four to twelve who may be at risk of offending and antisocial behaviour in England and Wales, with the objective of reducing risk factors and boosting protective factors known from the research literature to be associated with the development of youth crime and antisocial behaviour.   This report has described the operation of the programme in its second Phase of existence, from 2003 to 2006. Based on eight different research studies[41], the report has sifted and weighed a variety of evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, in order to explore implementation and process factors in how the programme was delivered, and to assess what impact the programme may have had at different levels of the ecology of child development: the level of individual children, families, peer groups, schools, and communities.

Initially inspired by a tried and proven model of intervention working through schools in the United States (*Fast Track*), On Track evolved over the course of six years into something distinctively different. Although there were common features across the 23 projects, the programme was characterised by substantial local variation, so that we concluded that there was not so much 'one On Track' as 'many On Tracks'. In part this was inevitable given the degree of latitude that was left for local interpretation of the initial guidance from the Home Office. Although this specified five categories of services to be developed (home-school partnership, home visiting, preschool services, family therapy and parent support and training, plus a sixth category of 'specialist' services), and offered general guidance as to previous intervention models in these categories that had been proven to be successful, it left the details of how these services should be structured and delivered to local discretion. The blend of universal (open access) as opposed to targeted (restricted access) services also varied from one area to the next, though the overall mix was approximately half and half. The aim was that projects should offer services to the whole community, but that there should also be a focus on reaching the most at risk children and so-called 'hard-to-reach' communities who might stand to benefit most from preventive services. Moreover, where children's needs were multiple, multiple different services should be made available   - a so-called 'multi-modal' approach to service provision

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[41] Three qualitative studies (study of service providers, study of users, study of schools' perspectives, and five quantitative studies (longitudinal cohort study of On Track areas and users, survey of primary school pupil and survey of secondary school pupils in On Track areas, community profiling study, and tracking study of project-level data).

Like Fast Track, On Track was originally framed as an early intervention, crime prevention initiative. But over time, in no small part due to a transfer of central governance of the programme from the Home Office to the Department for Skills and Education in 2001, this focus became diluted and diverted into one that was more centrally concerned with wider issues of child and family wellbeing within a broader social inclusion agenda. The original theoretical underpinnings of the programme, based around an understanding of how risk and protective factors at different levels of child and family 'ecology' are thought to moderate the path to poor outcomes, remained central to local thinking about the structure and delivery of On Track throughout. However, the 'theory of change' – especially with regard to the mechanisms by which change would be achieved, in the sense of what *specific* interventions were expected to lead to what *specific* outcomes at which *specific* levels of ecology - was, from the outset somewhat opaque and remained so throughout. As an evaluation prospect, the lack of what researchers and practitioners now refer to as 'programme fidelity' or 'treatment fidelity' (ie, the degree to which the same intervention was delivered in the same way to different people), On Track was always going to be a challenge. Although we believe, on the basis of common trends visible in different strands of the evaluation, that it is possible to discern outputs and outcomes that appear to be impacts of On Track, we have always to bear in mind a number of important caveats. The first of these is that because of the variety of forms that On Track took in the 23 local areas, we can never be absolutely sure that what we see are direct results of On Track – because we cannot always be sure exactly what 'On Track' was. Second, On Track took place at a time of immense activity and innovation and expansion in child and family services across the board. We can never rule out the possibility that something else other than On Track was more important in driving change for children and families. Third, as spelled out in detail elsewhere in this report and in even more detail in the separate 'strand reports' on which our analyses here are based, a variety of methodological constraints were operating at the time of the evaluation, and these too weaken our ability to attribute outcomes confidently to On Track.

Having said that, the evaluation datasets add up to an immensely rich and multi-faceted picture of how On Track was implemented, and what happened to the children, parents, schools and communities 'exposed' to the programme. Through this triangulation of data, combining multiple perspectives (service users, workers, stakeholders) we are able to determine with more confidence whether evidence of change was absent, weakly present, strongly present, or unproven.   Below, we pick out the key findings of our 'synthetic' analysis and discuss the policy and practice implications.

15.2 Process factors

15.2.1 The evolution of theory, practice and governance

On Track was very much an 'evolutionary' programme. As we discuss in Chapter One, insofar as it was set up originally to be a 'demonstration' or pilot project to test out different approaches in the field, innovation, evolution, change and development characterised the implementation of On Track from the outset.

Evolution of theory in On Track

Evaluation research has consistently shown that the kinds of social interventions that show the most promising results are those that rest on a firm theory base. As Moran et al (2004) put it, writing about parenting support and child welfare interventions generally, to be maximally effective *"services need to know both where they want to go, and how they propose to get there"* – in other words why doing X is expected to result in Y outcome. In some respects On Track conformed to this principle, in that the model of risk and protective factors propounded in the original guidance from the Home Office was widely understood, respected and taken to heart by local projects. However the precise mechanisms of change by which risk factors would be lowered and protective factors and overall resilience would be boosted were not clearly articulated at the outset, and it became clear over time that the way in which On Track projects were delivering their work could not necessarily be expected to deliver change equally well at all levels of the ecology of child development. In particular, although at the outset *community change* was described as a likely outcome of the programme – especially with respect to change in community levels of youth crime and antisocial behaviour – as time went on it became clear that most project work was directed at other levels: at individual children, at families (including parents), and at schools. Community-level action was very much a minority interest for the programme as a whole. Moreover, the time frame for the programme and the age range at which it was aimed were not theoretically consonant with achieving substantial measurable change at the community level: the time frame of intervention (and evaluation) was too short, and the children using the programme too young for this to be plausible. Thus, there was a degree of mismatch between the locus and form of the work and the expectations regarding outcomes: ultimately, where On Track had its best results was at the level of families, schools and individual children, where the bulk of the work was carried out. This is an important point, because despite early rhetoric about the programme as a means of reducing youth crime levels, it would be unfair to judge On Track by its success at reducing youth crime at the community level. In the end, this was simply not the direction in which the programme developed.

Furthermore, the exact form that service provision should take was deliberately not specified by government. Much flexibility was left for local needs and priorities to shape the interventions to be delivered, although enthusiasm was expressed in

central guidance for certain well-known programmes that the (mostly American) literature had already shown to be effective, including the *High/Scope* preschool programme, and The *Incredible Years* programme developed by Carolyn Webster-Stratton, and home visiting, which had been shown in multiple studies to have promising results. In the end, some On Track projects utilised these programmes or variants of them, but others developed brand new bespoke services which were not necessarily yet of proven effectiveness. Thus, the extent to which what was actually delivered in the ground conformed to the theory of evidence-based practice was, to say the least, variable.

Practice evolution

As the discussion above implies, the evolution in practice was also substantial over the course of the programme, and by the time the second Phase of On Track (and this evaluation) began, projects had already developed, tried out and rejected some forms of intervention. This process of trial, development, change and further trial continued throughout the life of the programme with some local projects 'morphing' into very different beasts by 2006. The programme was always intended to be time limited (originally three years, extended to six and then eight years at the time of writing), and so this was just as it should be: the ultimate aim was to find successful models of working and to 'mainstream' these so that the work of the programme lived on after its death as an integral part of the wider fabric of local service delivery. Some projects were especially successful in carving out a local niche for themselves in this respect, but as much as specific services, it was what became referred to by project staff as '*the On Track way of working*' that was the lasting evolutionary legacy left by the end of Phase Two. The 'On Track way of working' was essentially about multi-agency co-operation, and in some areas On Track blazed a trail for developing structures for cross-agency case work (e.g multi-agency referral panels, multiple intervention co-ordinator posts) that were then taken up by other agencies.

In particular, practice evolution was most clearly visible in respect of the engagement and partnership of schools in early intervention work with children and families. Although On Track never became as comprehensively 'school based' as Fast Track, by the end of the Phase Two evaluation period it was clear that schools were the single most popular location of On Track work, and that On Track had become very substantially a school-focused programme. Inevitably this did not take root equally strongly in every area, but by 2006 many primary schools were speaking enthusiastically and warmly about the benefits On Track had conferred, and how their approach to learning had shifted to accommodate new types of preventive and therapeutic work with at risk children and parents.

Evolution of governance

The development of theory and practice in the On Track programme cannot be understood without an appreciation of the considerable changes that occurred in governance, both at the central and at the local level. Centrally, the biggest shift

occurred in 2001 when On Track was moved from the Home Office, where it had been part of the Crime Reduction Programme, to the newly founded Children and Young People's Unit (CYPU), where it eventually became part of the £960m Children's Fund. Later still, the CYPU was disbanded and the Children's Fund became housed, along with a many other important child and family policy initiatives such as Sure Start, within the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

Not only did this result in a shift of emphasis away from crime and towards broader child wellbeing issues, but it resulted in major changes in funding and in local governance structures. A round of stringent cuts to On Track budgets in 2004 left many strands of project work without adequate resources, and at this point a number of services were discontinued, with preschool services almost disappearing from the On Track menu around this time. The advent of the Children's Fund was a mixed blessing for On Track, and some projects did not survive the move from being independent entities to becoming the smaller siblings of the much larger initiative. Certainly for all projects there was a degree of disruption to services associated with this move, and some never fully recovered their strength. Others, however, thrived, finding new opportunities for partnership and joint working. Painful though it undoubtedly was, perhaps it could also be argued that this process led to a kind of a winnowing that sorted the stronger services and projects from the weaker. Certainly, as in any evolutionary process, a degree of 'survival of the fittest' took hold from this point on that has critically shaped the legacy left by On Track in its local areas as the programme draws to an end.

15.2.2 Populations and geography

Although all the On Track areas were chosen for their common characteristics of deprivation, as Chapter Three showed, no two On Track communities were alike. All had definite geographical boundaries in which the majority of their work was carried out, but catchment areas varied in size from spread-out rural to densely populated urban communities. They varied by demographic factors in terms of ethnic make-up, proportion of the population under 18, and also by various indicators of poverty. Some were certainly poorer than others. Methodologically speaking it is probably important to note that on the whole, we have not been able to take full account of area differences. For the purposes of the national study, we did not evaluate each On Track area separately but instead generally analysed results at the aggregated national level. This may mean that we have glossed over important area-based factors, and indeed as the community profiling strand demonstrated (being one of the few strands of the research that was able to analyse results area-by-area), areas did appear to respond differently to On Track.

However, as the community profiling strand of the research and the cohort study in On Track communities both showed, On Track areas shared one factor in common: they were almost without exception worse off in terms of the degree of poverty and deprivation than the surrounding poor areas. This is unsurprising, perhaps, but

there is an important implication here for the interpretation of results from the evaluation study. This evaluation study, like so many before it, was not able to employ randomised allocation ('RCT') methodology, even though this is considered the gold standard for evaluation research by many. An RCT was simply not deemed practical by the commissioners for a host of reasons ranging from practical factors to ethical concerns. Since we could not begin as RCTs do by randomly selected individuals to make up 'On Track' and 'non-On Track' samples, we began by selecting areas (or communities) as the 'next best' alternative, scientifically speaking. But finding appropriate comparator areas to serve as 'controls' for the research was not easy, and in fact, despite using the most robust techniques currently available for selecting comparison areas against which to compare and contrast research results in a 'quasi-experimental' model of evaluation, it is clear that often, we were not comparing 'like with like' in the precise sense.

Finding an appropriate comparison group is a well-established problem in evaluation research involving initiatives in exceptionally deprived communities. In the quasi-experimental model, comparison areas or individuals who have not been exposed to the initiative under investigation are examined alongside the results for areas or individuals who have. By monitoring change over a specific period, on a range of indicators, we hope to find out whether those in the 'treated' area or group experience more positive change than those in the 'untreated' group. Yet if we already know that the treated group are, by virtue of their position at the very bottom of the scale of deprivation, exceptional, it is difficult to know how to calibrate the scale by which we judge whether the intervention has been 'effective'. If we see no change, for example (the scientific 'null-hypothesis') does that mean the intervention has failed? Given the degree of difficulties in the treated group, perhaps *simply not having got worse* over time might represent a degree of success? If they get worse, might they have got worse still without the intervention? It is impossible to say. For this reason, in this study we have tended to interpret even fairly small degrees of positive change amongst On Track service users and communities as promising, and have been reluctant to categorise 'no change' (or even 'slight change for the worst') as proof of failure. We have also taken groups of results indicating positive change over time, even if not all 'statistically significant', as indicative of success. This does not conform to the most exacting standards of science and will be criticised by some, but given the very real difficulties faced by many of those in On Track communities and the inevitable constraints and deficiencies in our community-based research methods, we have taken the view that this is a reasonable and pragmatic approach for this study.

15.2.3 Services and users

Chapter Six, which presents data on the services offered by On Track projects and analyses the characteristics of users as recorded by projects over the course of the Phase Two evaluation confirms the picture of 'many On Tracks' rather than one 'On Track'. Across all 23 projects, over one thousand different services and nearly 17,000

individual users were recorded, but the variation between projects was substantial. The 'largest' project in terms of users recorded over 1,400 users over 20 months; the smallest under 150. One project submitted details of 113 different services; another just 13. Similarly, the 'reach' or throughput of individual projects varied widely. Calculated as a proportion of the whole population of children aged 5-14, some projects reported reaching almost all children (94%); others hardly any (3%). Overall, findings from the tracking study indicate that the average reach of the programme was 18% of children aged 5-14 – close to one in five children - which, we would argue, is no mean achievement. Services mainly catered to children (who accounted for around three quarters of all recorded users), and the largest single category of service after 'specialist' (which covered at least ten distinct types of intervention, of which perhaps two fifths were specialist in the sense originally envisaged by the Home Office) was home-school partnership, accounting for 33% of services. Nevertheless, nearly one in ten services were in the parent support and training category, and although in a minority in terms of service type, as we discuss below, parenting services were nevertheless associated with a number of positive outcomes at the family level.

One factor driving throughput was the balance of universal and targeted services, and within this, some targeted services (such as family therapy) were especially resource-intensive. Where these services predominated, this tended to reduce the throughput of the project as a whole. However, much of the variation in project profile was also driven by differences in the ways local projects structured their services. Whilst some chose a 'contracted out' model, maintaining a small core staff but buying in services from external voluntary or statutory agencies, others used an exclusively 'in house' structure, directly employing and managing all staff involved in delivering On Track services. A third model half way between these two was a 'mixed economy'. Findings from the tracking study suggest that not only did mixed economy services generally achieve the greatest reach, they were also more likely to achieve 'multi-modality', i.e. that users were also more likely to receive more than one service. We concluded from this that mixed economy projects may have provided an optimal service delivery structure, creating a good environment for multi-agency working and cross-disciplinary service development, whilst at the same time minimising the management and service quality-control difficulties that were often encountered in a purely contracted-out model.

Overall, there was good evidence that the On Track programme achieved its aim of reaching the more vulnerable and 'hard-to-reach' sections of the community. Projects appeared to know and target their communities well, so that for example in communities with a large population of minority ethnic families, proportions of users in these groups were appropriately high. Moreover, the level of vulnerability of users, as measured by the number of different dimensions in which risk factors were recorded, was a very good guide to the number of services used by an individual. High risk users were substantially more likely to be recorded as

receiving multiple services, and it is an indicator of the sensitivity with which projects targeted and addressed need that in statistical analysis, the number of risk factors recorded for users discriminated significantly between different minority ethnic groups. So, for example, Black African parents and children, who as a group were recorded as being generally low need compared to other groups, were much less likely to receive more than one service than Black Caribbean children and parents, who generally speaking were recorded as having high levels of risk. Thus, On Track projects were not only successfully reaching black families as well as white families (which would be an achievement in itself, given the known difficulties for family support services in reaching minority ethnic families (e.g Thoburn, Chand and Procter, 2005; Ghate and Hazel, 2002); they were also successfully reaching black families most *in need*.

Perhaps the only obvious area where, in an ideal world, the programme could have improved its reach was in relation to fathers. Though a number of projects ran special services aimed at fathers, overall, as noted in Chapter Six, the proportion of men as opposed to women using targeted On Track services was 12% compared with 88%[42]. Some projects also complained that the geographic boundaries of their catchments areas constrained the work they could do, with some having to turn away families who lived outside the designated On Track area in spite of evidence of need. Clearly, however, many projects did not enforce this rigorously, as just under a third of all users were recorded as living outside the local catchment area boundaries.

15.3   Multi-agency working

On Track was conceived fundamentally as a 'multi-agency' initiative, as Chapter Four discusses in detail. Indeed, cross-disciplinary and multi-agency partnerships were envisaged as the prime mechanisms by which multi-modal services could be delivered, and multi-modal services (defined here as multiple services offered to users with multiple needs with the aim of achieving more 'joined-up' intervention) were seen as one of the most substantial opportunities offered by a programme like On Track.

The evaluation findings clearly demonstrate that multi-agency partnership had been one of the defining characteristics of On Track, both at the strategic and (eventually) at the operational and front line levels. In particular, the relationships forged between On Track projects and schools were, by the end of the programme, arguably one of its greatest achievements. Of course, like all achievements worth having, this was not won without struggle. Many projects described the frustrations and slow progress of establishing relationships, one by one, with each school in their

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[42] Based on numbers of users of targeted service users aged 18+. Details of the sex of universal service users were not consistently available.

catchment area, building up trust, and waiting to be 'allowed in'. Schools, for their part, complained that in some areas they were given too little information or choice over which of the many services on the On Track 'menu' they could access, and acknowledged the anxieties over professional territories and sometimes outright difficulties that could arise when personnel from 'non-education' backgrounds were allowed into school and allowed to have direct contact with children. By the end of the evaluation period, however, many areas and schools had overcome these initial difficulties and were firm friends. Many schools reported enthusiastically that behaviour had been improved, and that relationships with, and understanding of, children's wider families had been transformed in some cases. Though these improvements did not (yet) show up in the quantitative research for the evaluation, qualitative research left us in no doubt that in many areas, On Track had permanently changed the way schools thought and functioned.

Relationships with youth offending and the police were perhaps less uniformly good, though this may have been a reflection of the fact that On Track was primarily working with children who in general were too young to have come to register as cause for concern to these agencies. Some areas, however, had strong links with Youth Offending Teams, Youth Inclusion Programmes and Youth Inclusion and Support Panels working with at risk young people, and were building services around their needs.

Relations with other statutory agencies including social services and health (mainly child and adolescent mental health services) were also variable, and appeared to be dependent, to a degree, on personal connections formed between staff – for example, where an On Track project manager had a background in social services or CAMHS, partnerships often developed and flourished. Some projects in addition made a special point of reaching out to these agencies and encouraging them to take an active role on multi-agency referral panels, with some success. In some areas, it even seemed that On Track may have been picking up some of the lower level case work that might formerly have fallen into the case loads of these agencies, though we were not able to measure this very accurately. However as has now become a familiar story in studies of multi-agency working, there were also reports of disputes over professional territories, and cases where statutory agencies excluded On Track staff from case decisions when levels of risk were deemed to have crossed a threshold, despite intensive work having been accomplished with the family previously by On Track workers. The resource constraints under which CAMHS, and especially social services, carry out their work was however acknowledged as part of the problem here.

15.4   Staffing and workforce issues

15.4.1 The vital role of project managers

As discussed in Chapter Seven, there were a number of main findings in relation to staffing and workforce issues. One was the vitally important role that project managers (also called Coordinators) played in determining whether the project would sink or swim. The degree to which this made a difference probably cannot be overstated. Given the multi-agency nature of much On Track work, the ability to manage, communicate negotiate and cajole across agency and disciplinary boundaries appeared to be a fundamental requirement. It was clear to the research team, and confirmed by external stakeholders, that project managers with 'vision' and a strong sense of what the On Track remit was, as well as the ability to articulate this cogently, were the most successful in building strong projects with teams that cohered in the face of the many changes that characterised the On Track journey. Projects that survived to the point of being able to mainstream their work (or at least elements of it) in time for the end of the initiative were often those where there had been minimal changes of personnel, and a high degree of consistency over time in management staff. Projects with frequent changes of manager generally fared much less well. Certainly, managing an On Track project was a demanding – not to say impossible – job at times, and the multiple skills demonstrated by many in this role, from business management to human resources to risk management to front-line work with service users - would have been the envy of many a multinational corporation, no doubt.

15.4.2 Staff skills and training and support needs

Developing and delivering innovative services required workers who were willing to take risks, and it was clear that in some cases, the experience of working in an On Track project had been somewhat frightening and undermining for some. Some workers seconded from other organisations with a strong sense of agency and professional identity found the new and uncharted waters of the On Track services they were required to deliver extremely challenging and somewhat 'de-skilling', perhaps understandably so. On the other hand, staff who thrived in On Track projects were those who were flexible, open to learning from colleagues from different disciplinary backgrounds, and ultimately able to work outside their own professional 'comfort zone'. The time-limited and sometimes seemingly precarious nature of employment prospects within the programme also required a particular approach to career development. Workers with this approach (and in projects where managers helped to cultivate it) tended to speak of their time at On Track as a positive, even unique, learning experience that had equipped them with transferable skills to take forward into their future career, and to see the impermanence of the programme as a positive rather than as a negative factor.

Overall, we did not find any evidence that specific staff training or support needs were overlooked or went unmet within projects. Most staff who took part in the evaluation research were satisfied with their access to training and did not identify any obvious gaps. However, it might be that given the innovative nature of On Track, there was in the early years little existing training available for such a job in any case. Though professional social care and youth work skills were of course important, it may have equally been the case that flexibility of approach and mindset – things that cannot necessarily be taught – may have been more important to success in an 'On Track career'.

15.5   The impact of On Track

Overall, the eight studies provided substantial evidence on how On Track services may have impacted upon the individuals, families, youth peer groups, schools and communities in contact with the programme. Collectively, the studies suggest that there were a number of important dimensions on which the On Track programme was associated with positive results for those who used or were otherwise 'exposed' to On Track services. The results were not uniformly positive, but over time, there were certainly a number of promising findings, suggesting some risk factors for poor outcomes had diminished, and that a substantial number of protective factors had been bolstered. Positive impacts were found at all levels, with perhaps the most striking results found at the level of families, and more specifically, at the level of parenting. Moreover, significant impacts were more likely to be detected in areas where there was a higher On Track presence (ie, where more people were reached). In addition, patterns emerged that suggested certain types of services were more likely to be associated with certain outcomes.

15.5.1 Individual level impact

At the level of **individual children**, the most positive results were found in relation to attitudes and behaviours that are considered to be precursors to youth antisocial behaviour and offending, and within this, the results were generally stronger for primary school aged children than those at secondary school. However, in terms of an impact on offending itself, this remained unproven, with some data suggesting improvement over time, and other data suggesting a worsening of this problem in On Track areas.

15.5.2 Family level impact

At the level of the **family**, both parenting attitudes and selected parenting behaviours showed consistent signs of positive impact associated with living in an On Track area and using On Track services. Protective factors at the family level – including coping, confidence, home-school interaction, and relationships and involvement with children – showed strong and consistent evidence of impact associated with the presence of On Track. Risk factors including the use of physical punishment declined. The increase over time in parents' contacts with schools was

especially noteworthy, and suggests that home-school partnerships had been strengthened by exposure to On Track.

15.5.3 Peer level impact

At the level of **peer groups**, the impact of On Track on peer group behaviours was unproven, in the same ways that impact on individual behaviours was unclear. However, the evidence for improvement in children's peer relationships associated with On Track service use was fairly strong. On Track did seem to have helped children in the highest need groups in particular to make new friends and to have more positive relationships with other children.

15.5.4 School level impact

At the level of the **school**, risk factors such as truancy and low attainment remained largely unaffected by exposure to On Track for secondary schools, but there were more positive results for primary schools. In relation to protective factors connected with school life such as satisfaction with and enjoyment of school, schools in On Track areas mostly showed fairly strong evidence of improvement as the On Track programme matured. Primary schools with higher levels of On Track activity showed especially strong results.

15.5.5 Community level impact

Finally, at the level of the **wider community**, risk factors (e.g area-wide youth crime, area-wide attainment rates) showed no evidence of improvement associated with the presence of On Track, with the exception of social isolation of parents. Protective factors such as youth perceptions of the quality of the local neighbourhood improved for younger children, but not for older children. Service uptake appeared to increase in On Track areas once families were in contact with On Track, and showed strong increase amongst hard to reach section of the community. Some agencies may have increased their activity in On Track areas.

15.5.6 The relationship between throughput, multi-modality and impact

On Track was conceived as a 'multi-modal' programme – a programme that would offer multiple services to children and families as appropriate to meet multiple needs across different dimensions of risk and protection. Although the projects varied as to the extent to which they conformed to this aspiration, overall, just under half of all On Track users of targeted services were reported in tracking returns to be receiving two or more services. Project reach or throughput was highly correlated with multi-modality: the more 'multi-modal' the service offer the more users reached.

By analysing tracking data collected by projects against data from the second wave of the schools survey (collected in 2004), we found generally consistent evidence that

project-wide throughput was associated with lower levels of risk factors and higher levels of protective factors, especially where secondary school aged children were concerned. In this respect the greatest impacts were detected in relation to attitudes (both parent and child); on parenting practices including discipline; and on parent-child relationships and home-school interactions. Overall, the least impact was found, as expected, at the level of the wider community, but also at the level of the individual child behaviour risk factors, with some notable exceptions. Some child behaviours such as youth offending, truancy and poor performance at school appeared to have improved in some studies but remained stable or even got worse in others.

Different categories of services were associated in different ways with different risk and protective factors, probably reflecting the different user groups involved as well as the variable aims and objectives of the services. For example, specialist services and home-school partnership services appeared to have their strongest impact on secondary school aged children. Parenting support services were also associated with positive outcomes for secondary school aged children, and to a lesser extent where younger children were concerned. Home visiting showed relatively few significant relationships in either direction, and family therapy showed no significant relationships for younger children and was almost exclusively associated with higher levels of risk and lower levels of protective factors for secondary school aged children.

15.6.6 Overall impact?

Taking into account all the evidence gathered, we concluded that the presence of On Track was an influential factor in reducing risk factors and boosting protective factors for children and parents. For example, for some factors there were significant differences between primary schools with higher levels of On Track activity compared with those with lower or no On Track activity. There was also a range of significant differences between On Track service users and On Track area residents compared to carefully selected comparison areas containing families who were not exposed to On Track. Throughput of users at area and service level was also related to a range of positive changes, suggesting that as far as our analysis was able to establish, some elements of risk appeared to be lower and some protective factors higher where a larger proportion of the local child population was reached.

Bearing in mind our comments earlier about the difficulties of establishing causality, these results can be construed in three ways. If throughput is considered a measure of the *intensity* of On Track delivery, then we can say that where On Track was most intense, results were often more positive. On the other hand, throughput could be one measure of the *success* of implementation, to the extent that the more families reached, the more 'successful' the project. In this interpretation, the more successfully On Track was implemented, the better the results. Third, as we note

below, high throughput might have been just one element of a package of 'good practice' factors, not all of which were measured, which together increased the likelihood of better outcomes for children and families.

15.6   Mainstreaming and the future

At the time of writing, the On Track programme is in its final year of life. Whilst some projects continue to function as they have always done, many are in the process of mainstreaming their most successful services and some are already quite far down this road.

The idea that successful On Track services would be mainstreamed has been present from the outset, as discussed in Chapter Fourteen. By late 2006, at least half of the projects had successfully accomplished this for at least one of their services. Some projects reported a considerable degree of success here, with several core services successfully integrated into their local area's core service provision. In these cases, as more than one project manager noted with a degree of irony, projects' mainstreaming endeavours had been so successful that they had essentially "*done [themselves] out of a job*".

Mainstreaming occurred in a variety of ways. Although the integration of specific services into core provision was the most common form of mainstreaming, there were also many examples of where On Track projects changed or improved ongoing practice, refocused services for specific at-risk groups, provided training to statutory and voluntary agencies and influenced strategic decisions on the community level. From these examples, it was clear that the On Track project, both in terms of its staff and activities, added value to core services and the community in general.

A variety of processes facilitated the mainstreaming of services. This included the availability of additional funding, support at the strategic level and evidence that the service was effective. On Track services that demonstrated their effectiveness in schools were particularly likely to be mainstreamed, especially if the school was able to obtain additional funding, or the local authority saw it as a priority. In addition, On Track services that were seen to support the *Every Child Matters* outcomes framework were also more likely to become integrated into the ongoing work of core health or educational services. Of course, barriers were also encountered along the way. Common across much multi-agency work, these included difficulties such as poor communication, conflicts of interest, limited funding and limited staff time. In many instances, however, On Track projects were successful in overcoming these obstacles, especially when the project had established a strategy for mainstreaming from the onset.

15.7   What have we learned?

Developing and implementing On Track 'from scratch' to the point of reaching close to 20,000 users by 2005 (when we ceased to collate data) has been a major undertaking and in general a major achievement by local projects. The On Track 'journey' has not been an entirely smooth one – indeed, project mangers described a series of hurdles to overcome, including the substantial problems created by changes in governance at national and local level and cuts in funding mid-way. In spite of this, many projects survived long enough to develop, test, and eventually mainstream the best elements of their service packages, and it was clear that in respect of multi-agency working, the On Track programme will leave a positive legacy in many if not all the areas in which it functioned.

Schools were a major part of On Track's identity, even though at the outset school-based work and home-school partnerships were envisaged as just one element of the programme package. Since On Track first started, the agenda for schools across England and Wales has changed to embrace the concept of extended schools, and schools are now a central plank of government policy in relation to child and family support in its widest sense, seen as a strong locus for early intervention and prevention work. It is perhaps not surprising then that On Track also became increasingly school-focused and school-based over time, and encouraging that some of the programme's most valuable work was in the area of building home-school relationships and bringing schools further into the fold of multi-agency working.

Family and parenting work was also an area in which On Track's work appeared to be making a particularly valuable contribution, and in this respect, again On Track was working against the background of a major expansion in family and parent support services across the board. Though engaging parents from impoverished communities was not something that came without effort, many projects reported success in this respect and both the qualitative and the quantitative strands of the evaluation study suggest there were measurable improvements in a range of risk and protective factors at the family level.

One of the challenges for interpretation of data from the evaluation study was the apparent correlation or inter-relatedness of many important variables. For example, it became apparent that throughput – the proportion of the eligible child population reached by projects and by different services within projects – was highly related to other indicators of project functioning such as multi-modality (the extent to which multiple services were offered to users). This made it difficult to disaggregate findings and to be sure, where positive outcomes were related to several inter-related factors, which particular factor was 'driving' the good results. However, it may be that the attempt to disaggregate in this way is any case misguided. Our strong impression as researchers from the overview of projects we obtained from

multiple perspectives was that in many ways a 'virtuous circle' was in operation. Projects that did well on one outcome indicator tended to do well on others, and also tended to be associated with process factors that created the most 'permitting circumstances' for the project to flourish and its work to take root. Thus, in projects with high throughput, we also found a wide range of service provision, structures that facilitated and optimised multi-agency working, staff teams that cohered, and project managers who gave strong and consistent leadership. At the other end of the scale, projects that were struggling in one aspect of their work often struggled in others too – inconsistent leadership, high staff turnover, difficulty establishing cross-agency relationships, low visibility to the wider community of service providers, and work that was limited in reach and impact.

The lack of programme fidelity in the way services were delivered across On Track as a national programme created headaches for the research team and was, in the end, an important limiting factor in our ability to clarify the impact of On Track on users and communities. However, we would also argue the degree of local flexibility allowed was positive, in that it permitted projects to develop locally relevant services and to exploit the varying opportunities present in the specific local circumstances. Perhaps somewhat more prescriptive guidance from government at the outset might, however, have helped optimise the position, so that something closer to the Fast Track principle of '*flexibility without loss of fidelity*' (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2002) would have been achieved. This would have made it more likely that research could isolate which specific bits of the package that was 'On Track' had been most effective and most replicable in the future.

Lastly, though there was much to be positive about regarding the implementation and impact of On Track, it is important not to gloss over the limitations of the programme. The glass may just as easily be seen as 'half empty' as 'half full'. On Track was a not a magic bullet for problems such as youth crime, truancy, low attainment and bullying at school. On these sorts of indicators the results were much more mixed, and to the extent that the studies supported one another, the tendency was usually towards neutral (no change over time) or worsening results. On Track was almost certainly not responsible for this: in most cases where On Track areas failed to show encouraging change over time it was the case that the national trend was similarly bad. Youth crime, as noted many times already, was not expected to change in the short time over which we measured it. Although it is disappointing that attainment in On Track schools did not increase, and truancy remained high, these facts underscore how very difficult these problems are to shift. 'Fixing behaviour' remains the most difficult thing to achieve in community-based interventions across the world, and it is always easier to achieve 'soft' impacts (change in attitudes, confidence, intentions) than it is to achieve 'hard' impact – lasting change in behaviour. In this respect, it is also important to remember that the 'crime prevention' focus of On Track as a programme became much diluted or

diverted over time, towards more general 'child wellbeing' objectives. Thus On Track was spreading its net very wide in terms of objectives, and as we have noted, there was in consequence not 'one On Track' but 'many On Tracks', all doing different things in different ways. It may be that to tackle the most challenging youth behaviour problems, a more narrowly focused and carefully specified programme is required.

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Appendix 1: Fast Track – structure, content and evaluation results

Structure and content of Fast Track

The first phase of Fast Track starts at the age of six, when children begin school full time. Table 2.2 (taken from CPPRG, 2002a) provides an overview of the continuum of services offered to families at this time.

Table A1. 1: Fast Track Intervention Components in Grades 1 to 3

Component	Grade 1 (age 6)	Grade 2 (age 7)	Grade 3 (age 8)
Universal components PATHS Curriculum	Yearly curriculum	Yearly curriculum	Yearly curriculum
Indicated components Child social-skills groups Parent training groups Parent-child sharing	22 sessions 22 sessions 22 sessions	14 sessions 14 sessions 14 sessions	9 sessions 9 sessions 9 sessions
Individualized components Academic tutoring Peer-pairing Home visiting	60 sessions 22 sessions 11 visits	0 or 60 sessions 0 or 14 sessions 8, 16 or 32 visits	0 or 60 sessions 8, 16 or 32 visits

This multi-component approach offers a mixture of both universal[43] and targeted[44] services to each child based upon individual need. The universal component involves the PATHS curriculum (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) that is provided to all children during their first three years of school. This curriculum was developed by a member of CPPRG (Kusche and Greenberg, 1994) as a way of promoting mastery in four domains known to foster resilience in children: (a) friendship skills and pro-social behaviour, (b) emotional understanding and self-control, (c) effective communication and conflict resolution skills and (d) problem solving strategies. Multiple evaluations of this curriculum have demonstrated that it reduces aggressive and hyperactive behaviour in classroom settings (CPPRG, 1999b; Greenberg, Kusche, Cook and Quamma, 1995).

In addition to participating in PATHS, children identified as 'high risk' by their teachers and parents receive a combination of individual and group-based targeted

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[43] Defined as services provided to all members of the community or population, irrespective of need, and often offered on an open-access basis

[44] Defined as aimed at specific groups where a particular need is identified, and often offered on a referral-only basis

interventions upon the child's entry into first grade.   During the kindergarten year (age 5) teachers screen all of their pupils with a standardised assessment tool (The Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation-Revised, Werthamer-Larsson, Kellam and Wheeler, 1991).   The parents of the children scoring in the top 40% of disruptive behaviour on the teachers' scales are then contacted by phone, and interviewed with an additional standardised scale (CPPRG, 1992) involving their child's aggressive and non-compliant behaviour at home. Scores from the teacher and parent interviews are then summed and children scoring in the top 10% become are invited to participate in the interventions described below:

> *Parent training groups*. Parent training is provided via a 22-session curriculum that promotes protective factors such as positive family/school relationships and sensitive parenting. This curriculum is based on the methods developed by Forehand and McMahon (1981) and Webster-Stratton (1989) that emphasise the use of praise and the careful monitoring of child activities. The parent training groups also reinforce the self-control and problem-solving strategies taught in the PATHS curriculum. Parent and child sharing activities take place for one half hour after each parent training session in order to facilitate positive parent-child interactions under the guidance of a trained professional.

> *Home visiting*. Parents of 'high-risk' children also receive bi-weekly home visits or telephone contacts aimed at helping them apply the skills that are covered during the parent training groups. During these visits, parents receive individually tailored support for solving real-life personal problems that go beyond the scope of their relationship with their child, such as substance abuse or family conflict. In this respect, home visits work to reduce risk factors by teaching parents effective life coping and problem solving skills.

> *Social skills training*. Children identified as 'high risk' participate in 22 group sessions of social-skills training that focus on pro-social behaviour and play skills.   The first part of the programme fosters positive communication and emotional expression, whereas the second half emphasises anger-management and self control.   Empathy and conflict management strategies are also taught. Peer-pairing is provided to children who have been rejected by their classmates as way of promoting and nurturing friendships.

> *Academic tutoring*. High-risk children also receive academic tutoring to increase their reading skills via a phonics-based reading programme. This is done to promote a sense of mastery and reduce the risk of academic failure. Tutoring sessions take place three times a week, and a parent attends at least one of these sessions to ensure that the child's reading skills are reinforced at home.

One can see from this continuum of interventions that high-risk children receive a relatively high 'dosage' of consistent support that address risk factors on the individual, family and school levels. However, the level of support may be reduced

during Grades 2 and 3, if the child's risk or need decreases. For example, a child will only continue to receive academic tutoring if they remain in the lower third of their class during grades 2 and 3.

The delivery of Fast Track

"Flexibility without the loss of fidelity" is the guiding ethos behind the delivery of Fast Track. Those involved in its development and co-ordination feel strongly that its multi-faceted approach is necessary to reduce anti-social behaviour. Thus, none of the components summarised in Table 2.2 are up for negotiation in the delivery of Fast Track services. However, considerable efforts are made to develop strong partnerships between the Fast Track co-ordinators and the schools, families and communities at each project site to make sure that those who deliver the interventions are properly supported (CCPRG, 1999a).

Once established, the partnerships are maintained through a high degree of ongoing assistance from the Fast Track project team and the costs for this are covered by the program grant. This support begins with a two-day workshop that covers the principles underlying PATHS that is mandatory for all teachers delivering the curriculum. Each site is also assigned two Educational Co-ordinators (EC's) and one Family Co-ordinator (FC). All of the EC's have teaching experience and their role is to provide ongoing training and consultation support to site teachers throughout the duration of the project. The ECs also run the child social skills training groups and train the academic tutors. The Family Co-ordinator runs the parent training groups and conducts the home visits. Thus, fidelity to the Fast Track model is ensured by the fact that each site's capacity is increased by the presence of additional, highly skilled professionals who help deliver the services.

The success of Fast Track

Numerous evaluations of Fast Track suggest that it is a highly effective way of discouraging anti-social behaviour and improving child competencies. The evaluation utilised a longitudinal, randomised-control trial design that considered both short and long-term outcomes. During the ten year evaluation, children participating in the Fast Track initiative showed significant improvements in the following areas when compared to their peers in the control group (CPPRG, 2006):

Short-term outcomes (measured successively for the first three years) include:
- Improved social skills
- Improved academic skills
- Reduced use of harsh discipline by parents
- Less aggressive behaviour in home and at school
- 37 percent of the intervention group had become free of conduct problems as opposed to 27 percent of the control group at the end of Grade 3

- Placement in special education services was one-fourth lower for the Fast Track group.

Long-term outcomes (6+ years, high risk group only) include:
- A significant decrease in arrests. Court records that 38 percent of high risk group boys had been arrested at age 14 opposed to 42 percent of the control group
- A significant decrease in conduct disorders. Psychiatric interviews at age 15 suggest that the intervention reduced conduct disorders by over a third – from 27 percent (the control group) to 17 percent in the intervention group.

The evaluation is also currently considering the initiative's cost-effectiveness, as it is anticipated that Fast Track has significant potential for reducing mental health, juvenile detention and special education costs.

Fast Track and other school-based interventions

Although described as a community-based initiative, it is important to note that Fast Track is primarily delivered through schools. Returning to Table 2.1, it is apparent that many of the risk and protective factors associated with anti-social behaviour are school related. Although direct causal links to school variables remain debated (Rutter et al, 1998), many have observed that the majority of the risks associated with anti-social behaviour are likely to manifest themselves in school settings (Gottfredson, 1997; Paris and Prior, 2005). Risk and protective factors strongly linked to school environments include the following:

Achievement. Numerous studies suggest that the feelings associated with poor achievement also contribute to delinquent behaviour and drug abuse (Farrington, 1992). Children who struggle with learning are likely to experience low self-esteem and engage in antisocial behaviour as a way of seeking attention and achieving a sense of mastery (Gold, 1978; Phillips and Kelly, 1979; Jessor, 1976).

Peer rejection. Children are also vulnerable for feelings of low self-esteem when they are not accepted by their peers at school, and this too can lead to drug abuse and offending behaviour (Gottfredson, 1997; Hawkins, Catalano and Miller, 1992).

Peer group. Delinquent children often have delinquent friends and young people often engage in anti-social activities together (Reiss, 1988) and these peer groups are often established and maintained within school settings (Gottfredson, 1997). A number of school-based initiatives have sought to regroup students in order to discourage problematic children from associating with each other, with mixed results (Graham, 1998; Gottfredson, 1997)

Exposure to bullying. Bullying is highly associated with offending behaviour (60%, Olweus, 1991) and this also commonly takes place in school settings (YJB, 2001). Whole school approaches that discourage bullying behaviour in school have been linked to decreases in anti-social behaviour among students outside of school (Olweus, 1990 and 1991).

Lack of commitment to school. Students who lack commitment to school or feel alienated from school are also more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour (Graham, 1988; Johnston, 1991). A lack of commitment to school is often demonstrated through truancy, and this has shown to be highly correlated with youth offending behaviour (as high as 48%, West, 1982), although surprisingly, truants rarely offend during school hours (Ekblom, 1979). The development of home-school partnerships between parents and schools appears to be a successful way of reducing truancy and other delinquent behaviour in schools (YJB, 2001).

Parental involvement. Parental involvement in school activities is consistently related to school achievement (Goldman, 2005). Parents who are involved and committed to their children's education are more likely to have children who achieve on average or above average levels. A number of US based initiatives, including Fast Track and LIFT (Linking Interests of Families and Teachers, Reid and Eddy 1997) have had success in reducing anti-social and aggressive behaviour through the establishment of parent school partnerships and parent training activities.

Access to drugs and weapons. Children and young people often gain knowledge of or access to drugs and weapons during school time. A considerable amount of evidence exists that schools can restrict access to these antisocial substances through clear rule setting (see Gottfredson, 1997 for a full review).

School policies and practices. Rutter (1979) observed that school processes, such as the quality of teaching and school organisation, can work to reduce conduct problems in school settings. For example, schools that support high quality teaching and a commitment have effectively demonstrated a decrease in the frequency of anti-social behaviour. Conversely, school practices, such the high use of punishment and the low use of praise appear to actually promote delinquency (YJB, 2001).

Appendix 2: The Community Context of On Track-supplementary data tables for Chapter Three

Table A2.1 Lone parents households in On Track areas (Source: Census 2001)		
On Track Area	**Households (number)**	**Proportion of households headed by a lone parent**
	n	**%**
Bradford	4,878	12
Brent	7,136	24
Bridgend	8,703	12
Brighton	8,428	12
Bristol	4,418	16
Easington	6,901	12
Greenwich	4,620	16
Haringey	13,111	19
Haverhill	11,361	9
Kerrier	6,117	9
Luton	5,895	10
Manchester	4,324	22
Northampton	8,428	18
Oldham	3,004	18
Portsmouth	6,704	16
Rhondda	5,287	14
Rochdale	3,694	20
Sandwell	3,000	14
Scarborough	2,670	17
Sheffield	6,858	11
Solihull	7,588	19
Southwark	6,177	18
Sunderland	7,774	12
Wirral	12,158	20
On Track average	**6,635**	**16**
National average	**24,479,439**	**10**

Table A2.2 Individuals unemployed in On Track areas (Source: Census 2001)

On Track Area	Population	Individuals unemployed
	n	%
Bradford	17,060	18
Brent	19,225	13
Bridgend	20,995	7
Brighton	20,706	4
Bristol	11,005	7
Easington	17,428	8
Greenwich	11,299	10
Haringey	32,403	13
Haverhill	28,512	4
Kerrier	14,325	6
Luton	18,793	12
Manchester	9,440	13
Northampton	21,535	7
Oldham	6,984	11
Portsmouth	17,534	7
Rhondda	12,566	9
Rochdale	8,496	12
Sandwell	7,320	11
Scarborough	6,692	7
Sheffield	17,314	11
Solihull	19,006	9
Southwark	14,447	14
Sunderland	18,627	8
Wirral	26,380	14
On Track average	**16,586**	**10**
National average		**5**

Table A2.3 Distribution of NS-SEC of head of household's occupation in On Track project areas and nationally (Sources: Cohort survey Wave 1, Ay Maung et al, 2006; and General Household Survey 2003)

	OT area %	GHS 2003 %
Classes 1.1 and 1.2: Higher managerial and professional occupations	6	10
Class 2: Lower professional and technical occupations	14	22
Class 3: Intermediate occupations	6	13
Class 4: Employers in small organisations	3	8
Class 5: Lower supervisory occupations	13	10
Class 6: Semi-routine occupations	25	18
Class 7: Routine occupations	22	15
Not classifiable	11	5
Base (unweighted)	780	17,898

Base: families in On Track areas

Table A2.4 Total annual income of family before deductions (Sources: Cohort survey Wave 1, Finch et al, 2006a; and General Household Survey 2003)

	OT area sample	GHS 2003 #
	%	%
£20K or more	27	65
£15K less than £20K	11	9
£10K less than £15K	21	9
£5K less than £10K	23	12
Less than £5K	7	5
Not stated	11	-
Base (unweighted)	780	2,852

Base: families in On Track areas and Booster sample
Figures taken from the 2003 General Household Survey (ONS) were based on usual gross weekly income and are based on families with dependent children only.

Table A2.5 Percentage of On Track area households without a car and with 2 or more cars (Source: Census 2001)

On Track Area	Households	Households without a car	Households with 2+ cars
	n	%	%
Bradford	4,878	46	10
Brent	7,136	48	11
Bridgend	8,703	33	20
Brighton	8,428	26	26
Bristol	4,418	34	20
Easington	6,901	35	18
Greenwich	4,620	39	14
Haringey	13,111	53	9
Haverhill	11,361	18	36
Kerrier	6,117	19	32
Luton	5,895	39	14
Manchester	4,324	61	6
Northampton	8,428	29	24
Oldham	3,004	49	11
Portsmouth	6,704	36	19
Rhondda	5,287	41	15
Rochdale	3,694	60	7
Sandwell	3,000	42	15
Scarborough	2,670	39	14
Sheffield	6,858	44	13
Solihull	7,588	40	17
Southwark	6,177	59	7
Sunderland	7,774	38	17
Wirral	12,158	52	11
On Track average	**6,635**	**41**	**16**
National average	**24,479,439**	**27**	**29**

Table A2.6 Housing profile of On Track Areas (Source: Census 2001)

On Track Area	House-hold spaces	Vacant	Detached	Semi Detached	Terraced	Flats	Caravans
	n	%	%	%	%	%	%
Bradford	5,468	11	4	23	64	10	0
Brent	7,262	2	4	16	20	59	0
Bridgend	9,084	4	14	33	46	6	0
Brighton	8,592	2	11	39	32	18	0
Bristol	4,513	2	9	48	30	14	0
Easington	7,152	3	19	41	34	6	0
Greenwich	5,154	11	4	12	45	39	0
Haringey	13,452	2	4	8	36	51	0
Haverhill	11,832	4	30	27	36	7	0
Kerrier	6,392	2	36	26	28	8	1
Luton	6,082	3	5	26	42	26	0
Manchester	5,070	15	3	29	52	16	0
Northampton	8,642	2	17	19	51	13	0
Oldham	3,147	4	4	27	57	11	0.05
Portsmouth	6,817	2	6	39	36	19	0
Rhondda	5,689	7	4	9	77	10	0
Rochdale	4,314	14	4	22	53	21	0
Sandwell	3,155	5	8	49	21	21	0
Scarborough	2,760	3	9	53	25	12	0
Sheffield	7,157	4	4	45	39	13	0
Solihull	7,927	4	4	30	37	28	0
Southwark	6,239	1	1	4	20	75	0
Sunderland	7,943	2	10	33	42	15	0
Wirral	13,209	8	6	25	44	24	0
On Track average	**6,328**	**5**	**8**	**28**	**41**	**21**	**0.1**

Table A2.7 Tenure of accommodation held by households in On Track areas and nationally
(Sources: Cohort survey Wave 1, Finch et al, 2006a; and General Household Survey 2003)

	OT area sample	GHS 2003#
	%	%
Owned outright	6	12
Being bought on a mortgage/bank loan	44	57
Shared ownership (owns & rents property)	-	na
Rented from a Council or New Town	26	13
Rented from a Housing Association	15	8
Rented privately	7	10
Rent free	-	na
Some other arrangement	1	na
Base (unweighted)	780	3945

Base: families in On Track areas
Figures taken from the 2003 General Household Survey (ONS)
'-' denotes less than 0.5%.

Table A2.8 Individuals 16+ with no qualifications in On Track areas (Source: Census 2001)		
On Track Area	Population (16+)	Individuals 16+ with no qualifications
	n	%
Bradford	10,713	52
Brent	13,314	32
Bridgend	15,229	46
Brighton	14,522	31
Bristol	7,393	40
Easington	12,655	40
Greenwich	8,176	29
Haringey	23,199	32
Haverhill	20,919	33
Kerrier	10,430	31
Luton	12,824	40
Manchester	6,381	55
Northampton	14,885	33
Oldham	4,774	49
Portsmouth	11,708	44
Rhondda	8,943	50
Rochdale	5,737	56
Sandwell	5,062	50
Scarborough	4,432	41
Sheffield	11,779	48
Solihull	12,944	45
Southwark	10,582	31
Sunderland	13,906	37
Wirral	18,701	41
On Track average	**11,634**	**41**
National average	**42,525,596**	**30**

Table A2.9 District level child vulnerability rates per 1000 population for Year 2000 (Source: Community profiling strand: Bowers et al, 2008)			
Local authority area in which On Track area located	Population under 18	Children on the child protection register per 1000	Number of looked after children per 1000
	n	n	n
Bradford	123,077	2	9
Brent	59,176	2	9
Bridgend	29,588	2	5
Brighton	46,121	4	11
Bristol	81,486	4	12
Easington	106,641	2	7
Greenwich	52,126	4	14
Haringey	49,828	4	15
Haverhill	149,024	3	7
Kerrier	105,001	3	12
Luton	48,584	3	10
Manchester	92,468	3	19
Northampton	149,464	2	7
Oldham	56,178	2	9
Portsmouth	40,670	3	10
Rhondda	54,513	3	6
Rochdale	52,761	2	7
Sandwell	69,063	3	9
Scarborough	124,871	2	5
Sheffield	109,386	4	11
Solihull	47,148	2	6
Southwark	54,953	2	15
Sunderland	63,723	4	7
Wirral	73,593	4	9
On Track authorities average	76,643	3	9
National average		2.7	5.1

Local authority area in which On Track area located	Population	Theft of car	Theft from car	Residential burglary	Sexual offence	Robbery	Violence
Table A2.10 Basic Command Unit crime rates per 1000 population (Source: Community profiling strand: Bowers et al, 2008)							
	n	n	n	n	n	n	n
Bradford	343,871	13.2	19.6	15.4	1.1	1.9	10.4
Brent	248,611	7.0	12.1	13.4	1.4	8.1	21.7
Bridgend	133,546	11.0	10.5	5.0	0.4	0.1	10.6
Brighton	275,743	9.9	19.6	10.9	0.8	1.4	16.8
Bristol	147,279	12.5	21.3	15.5	0.6	1.4	9.1
Easington	99,112	6.9	7.0	7.1	0.5	0.2	7.4
Greenwich	213,592	12.2	14.9	10.2	1.6	2.2	29.2
Haringey	211,757	11.9	19.6	14.6	2.0	9.5	23.0
Haverhill	231,536	3.0	6.8	2.6	0.5	0.2	6.7
Kerrier	474,144	2.7	10.5	3.9	0.6	0.2	7.5
Luton	174,557	11.7	26.5	9.5	1.0	2.3	13.2
Manchester	139,944	35.3	30.7	24.8	1.8	11.3	37.8
Northampton	184,610	10.0	21.3	11.6	0.8	1.5	11.5
Oldham	219,596	15.9	15.8	14.8	0.8	2.1	16.5
Portsmouth	188,765	7.5	14.8	6.4	1.4	0.9	16.9
Rhondda	243,737	8.9	7.4	6.0	0.4	0.2	7.5
Rochdale	204,758	19.1	17.2	18.1	0.9	2.0	14.5
Sandwell	150,798	12.3	24.3	12.6	0.7	2.1	14.8
Scarborough	235,283	2.7	6.3	4.9	0.5	0.4	6.9
Sheffield	121,546	16.4	20.3	10.6	0.8	3.1	12.2
Solihull	201,145	9.2	18.2	9.5	0.5	1.6	11.1
Southwark	227,195	11.1	20.5	15.5	2.0	8.8	32.9
Sunderland	107,030	9.0	13.1	9.3	0.5	0.6	8.9
Wirral	335,928	7.3	9.2	8.1	0.6	1.1	9.1
On Track area average	**222,351**	**10.2**	**15.5**	**10.4**	**0.9**	**2.5**	**14.4**
National average		**6.5**	**12.1**	**7.7**	**0.7**	**1.8**	**11.5**

Table A2.11 District level Offence rates per 1000 young people (aged 10 - 17) for year 2000
(Source: Community profiling strand: Bowers et al, 2008)

Local authority area in which On Track area located	Young people population	Offences per 1000 juveniles
	n	n
Bradford	55,188	67
Brent	26,813	48
Bridgend	13,898	57
Brighton	20,132	38
Bristol	.na	.na
Easington	50,170	52
Greenwich	22,306	58
Haringey	21,416	68
Haverhill	68,775	29
Kerrier	50,034	40
Luton	21,777	53
Manchester	42,225	108
Northampton	68,701	24
Oldham	25,380	49
Portsmouth	na	na
Rhondda	25,641	57
Rochdale	24,304	85
Sandwell	31,171	24
Scarborough	60,452	22
Sheffield	48,667	40
Solihull	22,488	34
Southwark	21,984	41
Sunderland	30,680	97
Wirral	35,916	60
On Track area average	**35,823**	**52.5**
National average		**44.5**

Table A2.12 Involvement with the police - Secondary school children (Source: Cohort survey Wave 1: Finch et al, 2006a)

	%
Any involvement with the police	20
- Been told off or told to move by a police officer	18
- Been stopped by a police officer and asked questions about something that you did	7
- Been picked up by the police and taken to your parents or taken to a local police station	5
- Been given a formal warning at a police station or charged with committing a crime	4
Base (unweighted)	189

Base: secondary school children in On Track areas who answered self-completion by themselves.

Table A2.13 Self-reported antisocial behaviour (Source: Wave 1 schools surveys: Armstrong et al, 2005)		Yes		No	
		%	n	%	n
Have you ever sold or dealt any illegal drugs? (base 6,332)		11	663	90	5669
Have you ever been arrested and taken to a police station? (base 17,024)		14	2323	86	14701

Theft

In the past year (12 months) how many times have you…	Never		Once		Twice		3-5 times		6 or more times	
	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
Stolen or tried to steal anything from a car (base= 5603)	84	4707	8	450	3	167	2	94	3	159
Stolen or tried to steal a car, van or motorbike (base= 5577)	85	4759	8	434	3	159	2	93	3	158
Sneaked or broken into a building, intending to steal something (base= 5564)	90	4982	5	298	2	93	1	63	2	128
Stolen or tried to steal anything else (base= 5604)	50	2763	26	1430	9	523	7	365	9	523
Shoplifted or stolen anything from a shop, supermarket or department store (base= 5740)	31	1794	30	1730	13	761	11	651	14	804

Other types of antisocial behaviour

	Never		Once		Twice		3-5 times		6 or more times	
Attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them (16,718)	90	15108	5	817	2	259	1	171	2	363
Bought, sold or held onto something you knew had been stolen (base= 16,742)	79	13230	11	1786	4	723	3	482	3	521
Vandalised somebody else's property, or written or sprayed graffiti on walls, buses, trains, seats (base= 16,791)	68	11,364	14	2340	6	1000	6	996	7	1091

Table A2.14 - Unauthorised absences 2001 (Source: DfES)	Primary schools		Secondary schools	
Area	*LEA Average*	OT schools average	*LEA Average*	OT schools average
Bradford	0.8	1.5	2.4	9.0
Brent	0.5	1.2	0.7	0.7
Bridgend	na	na	1.6	1.4
Brighton & Hove	0.5	1.0	1.2	0.8
Bristol	0.9	1.7	2.3	7.1
Easington (Durham)	0.1	0.2	0.7	1.2
Greenwich	1.4	2.0	2.5	3.8
Haringey	1.6	1.2	2.4	4.2
Havehill (Suffolk)	0.2	na	1.0	1.0
Kerrier (Cornwall)	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.4
Luton	0.6	1.0	0.6	0.5
Manchester	0.9	0.6	1.7	0.8
Northampton	0.4	1.0	1.0	2.7
Oldham	0.4	1.0	1.4	2.7
Portsmouth	0.7	2.7	1.6	na
Rhondda CT	na	na	2.3	3.7
Rochdale	0.5	0.2	1.6	1.8
Sandwell	0.4	0.7	1.7	1.5
Scarborough (North Yorkshire)	0.2	0.4	0.5	3.0
Sheffield	0.8	2.1	2.2	2.9
Solihull	0.2	0.8	0.9	1.3
Southwark	1.8	2.7	1.7	1.5
Sunderland	0.2	0.1	1.0	1.4
Wirral	0.4	1.1	0.5	0.8
All	**0.63**	**1.13**	**1.41**	**2.35**
National Average (England)	**0.5**		**1.1**	

Table A2.15 Exclusions in 1999/2000 (% of school population) (Source: Community profiling strand: Bowers et al, 2008)				
	Primary school		**Secondary school**	
Area	*LEA Average*	*OT school average*	*LEA Average*	*OT school average*
Bradford	0.04	na	0.24	0.3
Brent	0.04	0.38	0.33	0.37
Bridgend	na	na	1.5	na
Brighton & H	0.04	0.14	0.28	na
Bristol	0.04	1.57	0.41	na
Easington (Co. Durham)	0.03	1.79	0.28	na
Greenwich	0.03	0.32	0.26	0.13
Haringey	0.03	na	0.16	0.45
Havehill (Suffolk)	0.05	0.46	0.15	0.18
Kerrier (Cornwall)	0.02	0.51	0.15	0.1
Luton	0.01	0.25	0.11	na
Manchester	0.07	0.27	0.33	0.14
Northampton	0.01	0.46	0.2	1.68
Oldham	0.02	1.43	0.28	0.14
Portsmouth	0.01	na	0.25	na
Rhondda CT	na	na	1.8	na
Rochdale	0.04	0.6	0.24	na
Sandwell	0.03	0.49	0.62	0.27
Scarborough (North Yorkshire)	0.01	2.11	0.08	na
Sheffield	0.02	na	0.33	0.4
Solihull	0.02	0.35	0.18	0.31
Southwark	0.03	na	0.59	1.36
Sunderland	0.02	2.13	0.18	na
Wirral	0.01	0.28	0.16	0.26
All	**0.03**	**.80**	**.38**	**.44**
National Average (England) 1999/2000	**0.03**		**0.21**	

Area	Primary school		Secondary school	
	District average	On Track areas average	District average	On Track areas average
Bradford	1.5	1.22	2.4	2
Brent	1.8	1.96	2.8	3.13
Bridgend	.	0	.	0.45
Brighton	1.8	1.4	2.2	1.5
Bristol	2.1	3.67	4.8	3.05
Easington	2.4	1.7	3.5	6.7
Greenwich	2.3	2.76	2.8	3.3
Haringey	1.2	1.04	2.3	3.6
Haverhill	1.9	1.47	3	3.45
Kerrier	3.2	5.07	5.1	5.5
Luton	1.1	0.97	2.8	2.2
Manchester	0.8	0.65	1.9	1.65
Northampton	1.8	3.27	2.1	3.3
Oldham	0.5	0	0.7	0.7
Portsmouth	1	1.42	1.3	.
Rhondda	.	1.6	.	1.1
Rochdale	1	0.8	1.6	1.3
Sandwell	1.3	1.98	1.9	2.1
Scarborough	1.5	2.47	2.2	2.7
Sheffield	1.9	1.47	2.9	3.6
Solihull	0.8	0.2	1.4	1.3
Southwark	1.9	1.17	3.1	3.2
Sunderland	1.4	2.29	2.3	8
Wirral	1.7	2.72	2.3	1.63
All	**1.59**	**1.72**	**2.52**	**2.85**
National average (Eng)	**1.6**		**2.5**	

Table A2.16 Percentage of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs in Year 2000 (Source: Community profiling strand: Bowers et al, 2008)

Table A2.17 Key stage 1 average SAT scores (Year 2000) (Source: DfES)						
	LEA Average			**OT schools average**		
Area	Reading	Writing	Maths	Reading	Writing	Maths
Bradford	64	52	69	60	40	69
Brent	67	56	72	62	60	72
Bridgend*	83	87	89	72	69	69
Brighton & Hove	65	49	76	66	56	70
Bristol	65	52	72	40	23	43
Easington (Co. Durham)	71	60	77	60	49	65
Greenwich	60	48	68	57	49	64
Haringey	59	50	65	61	47	69
Havehill (Suffolk)	69	60	75	64	49	70
Kerrier (Cornwall)	68	53	75	72	51	80
Luton	62	50	67			
Manchester	60	51	67	52	43	68
Northampton	72	62	79	56	41	70
Oldham	65	58	73	53	34	67
Portsmouth	68	55	77	57	44	66
Rhondda CT*	81	86	89	70	84	78
Rochdale	64	55	72	64	47	71
Sandwell	60	47	64	57	50	62
Scarborough (North Yorkshire)	73	64	80	68	59	71
Sheffield	65	55	73	72	53	53
Solihull	78	68	81	60	48	62
Southwark	60	47	67	56	47	70
Sunderland	67	57	73	61	50	74
Wirral	74	64	78	60	49	69
All	**68**	**58**	**74**	**61**	**50**	**67**
National Average (England)	**68**	**57**	**73**			

- Note that KS1 scores for English LEAs/schools are for reaching at least level 2b but scores for Welsh LEAs/schools are for reaching level 2

Table A2.18 Key stage 2 and Key stage 3 average SAT scores (Year 2000) (Source: DfES)											
	LEA Average						OT schools average					
	English		Maths		Science		English		Maths		Science	
Area	K2	K3	K2	K3	K2	K3	K2	K3	K2	K3	K2	K3
Bradford	66	54	60	55	75	51	68	33	89	37	89	24
Brent	74	61	72	61	86	56	69	54	65	47	75	35
Bridgend	77	65	76	64	83	63	60	62	49	56	66	61
Brighton & H	73	61	66	64	83	63	65	61	75	52	86	47
Bristol	65	48	62	52	81	51	63	51	64	41	68	40
Easington (Durham)	75	64	74	64	89	64	78	49	68	48	82	44
Greenwich	64	52	61	49	79	46	62	46	66	50	80	38
Haringey	67	48	64	48	79	42	70	48	64	27	76	17
Haverhill (Suffolk)	76	67	67	71	88	73	69	60	66	67	78	55
Kerrier (Cornwall)	75	68	70	70	88	71	75	74	81	55	90	51
Luton	71	58	63	60	83	56	54	51	48	48	64	36
Manchester	66	52	64	49	83	47	70	62	74	63	85	59
Northampton	75	61	70	68	88	69	44	61	42	58	66	56
Oldham	71	59	70	60	85	57	59	18	59	19	76	23
Portsmouth	69	56	64	59	86	57	61	na	59	na	77	na
Rhondda CT	76	57	73	58	79	58	54	50	57	57	57	56
Rochdale	72	55	69	59	86	58	58	54	58	51	69	44
Sandwell	66	54	65	51	82	50	50	52	49	49	75	44
Scarborough (North Yorkshire)	81	76	76	76	91	77	62	55	65	45	79	39
Sheffield	67	61	64	61	82	59	58	52	52	46	70	42
Solihull	81	74	77	74	91	73	72	57	58	42	85	42
Southwark	65	41	61	44	79	40	62	40	58	48	67	35
Sunderland	72	64	70	61	87	61	70	44	66	43	74	38
Wirral	78	73	72	68	89	67	62	58	61	59	79	54
All	**72**	**60**	**68**	**60**	**84**	**59**	**63**	**52**	**62**	**48**	**76**	**43**
National Average (England)	**74**	**63**	**71**	**65**	**84**	**59**						

Table A2. 19 GCSE average percentage (5+ Grades A-C and all Grades A-G) Secondary schools (Year 2000) (Source: DfES)	GCSE (grades A-C in five or more subjects) %		GCSE (grades A-G) %	
Area	LEA Average	OT school average	LEA Average	OT school average
Bradford	34.3	22	92.3	74
Brent	45.6	36	96.2	95
Bridgend	n/a	41	n/a	89
Brighton & H	43.2	27	92	90
Bristol	31.8	28	89.2	80
Easington (Durham)	35.6	27	92.4	76
Greenwich	33.8	34	92.6	84
Haringey	30.9	19	92.1	72
Haverhill (Suffolk)	54.3	40	96.7	91
Kerrier (Cornwall)	53.3	43	96.2	98
Luton	38.2	38	95.6	96
Manchester	31	50	86.4	95
Northampton	48.7	19	94.1	73
Oldham	41.5	25	94.8	87
Portsmouth	34.3	n/a	91.9	n/a
Rhondda CT	n/a	35	n/a	82
Rochdale	40.4	29	94.2	83
Sandwell	34.3	34	92.1	81
Scarborough (North Yorkshire)	58.3	30	97	86
Sheffield	42	30	92.7	67
Solihull	55.9	20	96.7	81
Southwark	33.6	28	95.3	88
Sunderland	39.2	26	95.1	82
Wirral	50.5	43	95	92
Average across all District and On Track areas	**41.4**	**31.5**	**93.7**	**84.4**
National average (England)	**50**		**88.9**	

Appendix 3:   Methods of analysis for the cohort study[45]

Interpreting tables from the cohort study

Selecting the approach

The cohort study examined a range of risk and protective factors associated with the likelihood of offending, and change over time in these factors between Wave 1 (2004) and Wave 2 (2005) for a panel sample of parents and children. One of the key aims of the analysis was to establish whether the experiences of (a) On Track users and (b) On Track area residents differed from the experiences of residents in the Matched areas, *once any differences in background profile or characteristics had been taken into account*.

The Matched areas had been initially selected to provide a good basis for comparison with the On Track areas – similar in terms of background profile and characteristics but not exposed to On Track services. However, the study was not set up as a fully experimental design and inevitably there arose some differences between the On Track and Matched areas in terms of background characteristics that might be expected to influence risk and protective factors independently. We did not wish to make a raw comparison between the Matched area and On Track area/user figures as this might reflect these other differences aside from the presence/absence of On Track services.

We therefore chose the following approach, which involved:

- using propensity score matching to generate weights which could be used to adjust the raw Matched area figures;
- making direct comparisons between the On Track area/user figures and *adjusted* Matched area figures. This comparison took into account a number of social and demographic background factors.
- testing the significance of differences between the groups using simple statistical tests.

Other statistical approaches would not necessarily take differences in background information into account, meaning any differences in outcomes could not be attributed to the On Track measures with any certainty.

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[45] **Taken from:** Finch, S., Aye Maung, N., Jones, A., Tipping, S. and Blom, A., with Ghate, D. (2006b) *The National Evaluation of On Track Phase Two: Report of the First Wave of the Longitudinal Cohort Study – Technical Report.* Available on the web at: http://www.prb.org.uk/OnTrackWebsite/FramePage.htm **and** Aye Maung et al (2008b) Aye Maung, N., Parfrement, J., and Tipping, S. (2008b) *National Evaluation of On Track, Phase Two: Technical Report of the Longitudinal Cohort Study.* London: Department for Education and Skills. Available on the web at: http://www.prb.org.uk/OnTrackWebsite/FramePage.htm

The next sections give an *overview* of each stage of this process. Fuller details are available in Finch et al, (2006b) and Aye Maung et al, (2008b).

Adjusting the matched area figures (propensity score matching)

Propensity score matching is a method that allows cases from a treatment sample (in this case the sample of households in On Track areas) to be matched to cases from a control sample (the sample of matched areas). For this analysis, a method called *kernal* matching was used. There were three stages to the matching:

1. *A propensity model was fitted using logistic regression, which modelled whether a respondent lived in an On Track or Matched area.*
   A range of background variables were used as predictors, including socio-demographic and income variables, as well various indicators of need

2. *A predicted, or propensity, score was generated by the final model for each case.*

3. *The propensity scores were then used to match the On Track and Matched area samples, by generating weights for the Matched area sample.*
   These made the profile of the Matched sample similar to that of the On Track sample in terms of the variables used in the model. When combined with the existing selection weights, this allowed the resulting samples to be compared directly.

Testing the differences at each Wave

Once the Matched area sample had been weighted as described above, we made direct comparisons between the adjusted Matched area figures and the On Track area/user figures. Carrying out the analysis in this way means simple statistical tests can be used to test the differences between On Track area residents/users and residents in Matched areas.

Differences between the Matched area estimates and the On Track area/user samples were tested separately for Wave 1 and Wave 2, using a simple t test for independent samples. Significance results are indicated in the tables throughout the report.

Testing differences in the change between Waves

In addition to testing whether the samples were different at each Wave, we also wanted to look at whether the change from Wave 1 to Wave 2 was different between the samples. When testing proportions, however (which the majority of tables in this report cover), a slightly different approach was required to the one described previously.

To do this, a *difference score* was generated for each respondent. Respondents who had reported a change in their situation a score of –1 or 1 (depending on the direction of the change). Respondents not reporting any changes were given a score of 0. The mean of this difference score therefore indicated the amount of change occurring between the two waves.

For example, 48% of parents living in On Track areas reported they had some form of regular help with childcare at Wave 1, while at Wave 2 the corresponding figure was 54%, giving a difference between the Waves of 6%. All parents who used regular childcare at Wave 2 but not Wave 1 had a score of 1 and all parents who used regular childcare at Wave 1 but had stopped using it by Wave 2 had a score of –1. All parents whose situation remained the same had a score of 0 (either because they had used childcare at both waves or had never used it).

The mean of the difference score for parents in On Track areas was 6.08, equal to the percentage change between Wave 1 and Wave 2. The standard error of the difference score can then be used to run statistical tests and compare means across the different sub-samples.

Difference scores were generated separately for respondents in Matched areas, respondents in On Track areas and On Track service users on data weighted by the propensity score and selection weights. The mean scores (% change from W1 to W2) were then tested for significance using a simple t-test. Significance results are indicated in the tables throughout the report.

Interpretation of differences

The comparison between the On Track and adjusted Matched area figures was net of background socio-economic profile (as defined in the modelling). Therefore the Wave 1 (2004) difference indicated *early* impacts of residing in an On Track area (given that the programme had already been running since before the start of the current evaluation). The Wave 2 (2005) difference indicated *later* impacts.

The comparison between On Track users and the adjusted Matched areas did not measure *impact* in quite the same way. The comparison group represented households with a similar profile to those in On Track areas; users of On Track services were however a self-selecting and potentially distinctive group. The Wave 1 difference shows users' relative position at early or no exposure to On Track, the Wave 2 difference indicates their relative position after exposure to On Track.

For each factor examined, we deduced that there was evidence of different change amongst On Track users/residents[46] if there was:

- a statistically significant relationship between service use or residency at Wave 1 and the factor (such that these groups had higher levels of risk or lower levels of a protective factor); but there was no significant relationship at Wave 2 (i.e. service users/area residents were now no different to those living in Matched areas); or
- no significant relationship between service use or residency at Wave 1 and the factor, but a statistically significant relationship at Wave 2 (such that service users/area residents now had lower levels of risk or higher levels of a protective factor).
- a statistically significant difference in the Wave 1-Wave 2 change between the On Track area/user sample and the Matched area sample.[47]

The Booster sample

As described in the cohort study report, the Booster sample was intended to augment the numbers of On Track users, specifically those participating in lower incidence – and in all likelihood more intensive – interventions. It therefore differs from the On Track and Matched area samples in that it was not recruited by random probability methods but from a small proportion of cases for which records were supplied by projects and where families had consented to be contacted for research purposes. Because it was not possible to calculate the probabilities of selection for this sample, and the evidence suggested that the returns in some areas represented a very low proportion of the total users of the project, it was not possible to combine this sample with the household sample as originally envisaged. Findings for this sample are therefore presented alongside those of the other samples throughout the report. It is also not possible to test the statistical significance of differences between the Booster sample and the other samples, as such tests can only be applied to random samples.

The tables throughout the report are shown in a standard format. Figure A3.1 gives a fuller breakdown of the contents of these tables, using a table from the Wave 2 report as an illustration.

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[46] For a small number of factors, On Track users were significantly different from the Matched areas at both waves. Generally, this reflected the fact that On Track users were relatively disadvantaged at both W1 and W2. In this case, it is assumed that On Track did not have any impact.

[47] This condition could, and did, overlap with either of the first two.

Figure A3.1 Interpreting the tables in the cohort study, reproduced in Chapters Eight-Twelve   [note that figures may not add up due to rounding]

Adjusted matched area figures for W1 and W2

For each wave, the arithmetic difference: On Track area – Matched area. For W1, this shows *early* impacts of residing in an OT area; for W2 *later* impacts. Statistically significant differences between OT area and matched area indicated by ** (1% level) and * (5% level).

For each wave, the arithmetic difference: On Track user – Matched area. This shows difference between users and comparison group at each Wave: at W1, the relative position of users at early/no exposure to OT; at W2, their relative position after exposure to OT. Statistically significant differences between OT area and matched area indicated by ** (1% level) and * (5% level).

Table 3.8 Parental hostility and criticism: proportion of parents characterising relationship with child as having low hostility

	Matched % (adjusted)	OT area %	OT area Diff	OT user %	OT user Diff		Booster
W1	64	64	-1	69	4		69
W2	61	64	3	73	12	*	66
Change from W1 to W2	-3	1	5	4	8		-2
Base (unweighted)	408	440		127			202

Notes:
1. Base for all: main parents answering W1 and W2 self-completion. Base includes 'not stated'.
2. 'Low hostility comprises 'average' and 'below average' scores on the Hostility and Criticism Summary. Excludes 'not stated'.

Arithmetic difference in matched area figures (W2 – W1). Measures amount and direction of change between waves in the

Arithmetic difference: in OT area figures (W2 – W1). Measures amount and direction of change between waves in

Arithmetic difference in differences between OT area and Matched areas (W2 – W1). Quantifies impact of living in OT areas. Where indicator represents positive outcome (e.g. coping well with parenting), positive values indicate relative improvement amongst OT area residents; negative values represent relative worsening. (Reverse is true where indicator represents negative outcome e.g. parent rating child as academically 'below average.) Statistically significant differences between OT area and matched area indicated by ** (1% level) and * (5% level).

Arithmetic difference in differences between OT user and Matched areas (W2 – W1). Quantifies impact of using OT services. Where indicator represents positive outcome, positive values indicate relative improvement amongst OT users; negative values represent relative worsening. (Reverse is true where indicator represents negative outcome.) Statistically significant differences between OT area and matched area indicated by ** (1% level) and * (5% level).

Arithmetic difference: OT user figure at W2 – figure at W1. Measures the amount and direction of change between waves amongst OT users.

Appendix 4: Statistical data tables for regression analysis, Chapter Thirteen

Individual level risk and protective factors by Home Office intervention category throughput

Table A4. 1: Prediction of the individual risk and protective factors measured in the primary school survey at Wave 2, by Home Office intervention categories

	Risk factor Challenging behaviour (n = 7312)			
	β	t	p	Mult. R
Constant	2.37			
Sex	-.167	-14.5	< .001	
School year	-.040	-3.5	< .001	.172

$$R^2 = .030, F_{(2, 7309)} = 111.7; p < .001$$

	β	t	p	Mult. R
Constant	2.34			
Specialist throughput	.021	1.829	*ns*	.173

$$\Delta R^2 = .000; F_{(1,7308)} = 3.35; ns$$

Table A4. 2: Prediction of the individual risk and protective factors measured in the secondary schools survey at Wave 2, by Home Office intervention categories

	Risk and protective factors											
	Offending behaviour (n=8528)				Tolerance of ASB (n=7933)				Substance misuse (n=9501)			
	β	t	p	Mult. R	β	t	p	Mult. R	β	t	p	Mult. R
Constant	2.18				7.56				-.81			
Sex	-.18	-17.2	<.001		-.055	-5.07	<.001		.012	1.18	ns	
School year	.11	10.17	<.001	.21	.25	22	<.001	.26	.212	21.2	<.001	.21

$R^2 = .044, F_{(2, 8525)} = 195.04; p < .001$		$R^2 = .065, F_{(2, 7930)} = 274.80; p < .001$		$R^2 = .045, F_{(2, 9498)} = 226.06; p < .001$

	β	t	p	Mult. R	β	t	p	Mult. R	β	t	p	Mult. R
Constant	2.25				7.61				-.83			
Home/School Partnership	nm	nm	nm		-.039	-2.68	<.01		-.005	-.41	ns	
Specialist	-.028	-2.42	<.01		-.096	-6.19	<.001		-.061	-4.27	<.001	
Home Visiting	nm	nm	nm		nm	nm	nm		nm	nm	nm	
Family Therapy	.030	2.678	<.01		.040	3.41	<.01		.060	5.57	<.001	
Parent Support and training	-.035	-3.32	<.01	.22	nm	nm	nm	.29	nm	nm	nm	

$\Delta R^2 = .004; F_{(3,8522)} = 10.49; p < .001$		$\Delta R^2 = .020; F_{(3,7927)} = 58.692; p < .001$		$\Delta R^2 = .011; F_{(4,9495)} = 28.71; p < .001$

Family level risk and protective factors by Home Office intervention category throughput

Table A4.3: Prediction of family level risk and protective factors measured in the primary schools survey at Wave 2, by Home Office intervention categories

Risk and protective factors

	Parental supervision and consistency (n = 7312)				Parental warmth and involvement (n = 7312)				Parental tolerance of anti-social behaviour (n = 9402)			
	β	t	p	Mult. R	β	t	p	Mult. R	β	t	p	Mult. R
Constant	1.46				2.412				3.93			
Sex	.083	7.16	<.001		.112	0.67	<.001		-.048	-4.84	<.001	
School year	-.010	-.87	ns	.084	.004		ns .304	.11	.243	24.33	<.001	.25
	$R^2 = .007$, F (2, 7309) = 25.99; p < .001				$R^2 = .013$, F (2, 7309) = 46.29; p < .001				$R^2 = .061$, F (2, 9399) = 304.99; p < .001			
Constant	1.49				2.37				3.96			
Home/School partnerships	-.020	-1.55	*ns*		.029	2.42	<.05		-.042	-3.158	<.01	
Specialist	.018	-1.35	*ns*	.090	nm	nm	nm	nm	-.111	-7.843	<.001	
Family Therapy	nm	nm	nm	nm	nm	nm	nm	nm	.036	3.384	<.001	
Parent Support and training	nm	nm	nm	nm	.018	1.49	*ns*	.12	nm	nm	nm	.29
	$\Delta R^2 = .001$; F (2,7307) = 3.91; p < .05				$\Delta R^2 = .001$; F (2,7307) = 5.06; p < .01				$\Delta R^2 = .024$; F (3, 9396) = 83.174; p < .001			

Table A4. 4: Prediction of family level protective factors measured by the secondary schools survey at Wave 2, by Home Office intervention categories

Protective factors

Home Office Intervention Throughput	Parental Warmth & Involvement (n = 9422)				Supervision and discipline (n = 9501)			
	β	t	p	Mult. R	β	t	p	Mult. R
Constant	18.47				10.19			
Sex	.040	3.97	<.001		.108	10.75	<.001	
School year	-.17	-16.7	<.001	.17	-.198	-19.74	<.001	.22
	$R^2 = .030$, F (2, 9419) = 145.05; p < .001				$R^2 = .049$, F (2, 9498) = 246.59; p < .001			
Constant	18.46				10.18			
Home/School Partnership	.047	3.49	<.001		.036	2.69	<.01	
Specialist	.005	.327	ns		.026	1.86	ns	
Family Therapy	-.024	-2.21	<.01	.18	-.057	-5.22	<.001	.24
Parent Support and training	nm	nm	nm		nm	nm	nm	
	$\Delta R^2 = .003$; F (3, 9416) = 11.23; p < .001				$\Delta R^2 = .009$; F (4, 9494) = 21.52; p < .001			

School level risk and protective factors by Home Office intervention category throughput

Table A4. 5: Prediction of school level protective factors measured by the primary schools survey at Wave 2, by Home Office intervention categories

Home Office Intervention Throughput	Satisfaction with school (n = 7312)				Antisocial peers (n = 7312)				Being bullied (n = 7312)			
	β	t	p	Mult. R	β	t	p	Mult. R	β	t	p	Mult. R
Constant	4.36				1.29				2.66			
Sex	.213	18.79	<.001		-.228	-20.03	<.001		-.125	-10.9	<.001	
School year	-.123	-10.8	<.001	.246	.064	5.61	<.001	.236	-.102	-8.83	<001	.161
	$R^2 = .06$, F (2, 7309) = 234.85; p<.001				$R^2 = .056$, F (2, 7309) = 216.31; p<.001				$R^2 = .026$, F (2, 7309) = 97.75; <.001			
Constant	4.29				1.29				2.71			
Home/School Partnership	.036	2.815	<.01		nm	nm	nm		-.020	-1.59	ns	
Specialist	.029	2.239	<.05		nm	nm	nm		nm	nm	nm	
Home Visiting	nm	nm	nm		.044	3.84	<.001		-.021	-1.61	ns	.165
Family Therapy	nm	nm	nm		nm	nm	nm		nm	nm	nm	
Parent Support and training	nm	nm	nm	.252	-.034	-3.01	<.01	.244	nm	nm	nm	
	$\Delta R^2 = .003$; (F 2,7307) = 11.964; p < .001				$\Delta R^2 = .003$; F (2,7307) = 13.381; p < .001				$\Delta R^2 = .001$; F (2, 7307) = 4.52; <.05			

Table A4. 6: Prediction of school level protective factors measured by the secondary schools survey at Wave 2, by Home Office intervention categories

Home Office Intervention Throughput	School satisfaction (n = 9206)				School involvement (n = 9266)				School ethos (clarity of rules) (n = 9190)			
	β	t	p	Mult. R	β	t	p	Mult. R	β	t	p	Mult. R
Constant	13.10				13.46				11.42			
Sex	.102	9.89	<.001		.077	7.56	<.001		.064	6.19	<.001	
School year	-.059	-5.65	<.001	.12	-.153	-14.9	<001	.169	-.16	-15.75	<.001	.17
	$R^2 = .014$, F (2, 9203) = 63.38; p<.001				$R^2 = .029$, F (2, 9263) = 136.3; <.001				$R^2 = .030$, F (2,9187) = 140.51; <.001			
Constant	.12.98				13.74				11.63			
Home/School Partnership	.073	5.35	<.001		.051	3.055	<.01		0.12	.715	ns	
Specialist	.097	6.599	<.001		.003	.184	ns		.083	4.875	<.001	
Home Visiting	nm	nm	nm		-.063	-4.914	<.001		-.054	-4.249	<.001	
Family Therapy	-.036	-3.22	<.01	.21	-.059	-5.326	<.001	.196	-.058	-5.198	<.001	
Parent Support and training	.025	2.415	<.05		nm	nm	nm		nm	nm	nm	.22
	$\Delta R^2 = .029$; F (4,9199) = 70.005; p < .001				$\Delta R^2 = .010$; F (4, 9259) = 23.188; p<.001				$\Delta R^2 = .019$; F (4, 9183) = 46.982; p<.001			

Table A4. 7: Prediction of school level protective factors measured by the secondary schools survey at Wave 2, by Home Office intervention categories

Risk factors

Home Office Intervention Throughput	Antisocial Peers (n = 9501)				Being bullied (n = 9077)				Bullying others (n = 9059)			
	β	t	p	Mult. R	β	t	p	Mult. R	β	t	p	Mult. R
Constant	-2.30				1.99				1.14			
Sex	-.078	-7.94	<.001		.043	4.17	<.001		-.075	-7.14	<.001	
School year	.30	30.92	<.001	.309	-.143	-13.8	<.001	.148	-.063	-6.03	<.001	.099
	$R^2 = .096$, F (2, 9498) = 503.33; <.001				$R^2 = .022$, F (2, 9074) = 102.21; <.001				$R^2 = .010$, F (2, 9056) = 45.02; p < .001			
Constant	-2.33				1.96				1.141			
Home/School Partnership	.004	.34	ns		nm	nm	nm		.033	3.164	<.01	
Specialist	-.06	-4.34	<.001		nm	nm	nm		nm	nm		
Home Visiting	nm	nm			.013	1.209	ns		nm	nm		
Family Therapy	.023	2.17	<.05	.317	.024	2.321	<.05		nm	nm		
Parent Support and training	nm	nm	nm		-.040	-3.794	<.001	.157	-.048	-4.580	<.001	.114
	$\Delta R^2 = .005$; F (3, 9495) = 16.83; p<.001				$\Delta R^2 = .003$; F (3 ,9071) =7.830; <.001				$\Delta R^2 = .003$; F (2, 9054) = 14.443; p < .001			

Community level risk and protective factors by Home Office intervention category throughput

Table A4. 8: Prediction of community level protective factors measured by the primary and secondary schools surveys at Wave 2, by Home Office intervention categories

Protective factors

Home Office Intervention Throughput	Primary students' perceptions of their local neighbourhood (n = 7312)				Secondary students' perceptions of their local neighbourhood (n = 9380)			
	β	t	p	Mult. R	β	t	p	Mult. R
Constant	3.96				21.62			
Sex	.025	2.10	<.05		-.052	-5.04	<.001	
School year	.049	3.94	<.001	.052	.026	2.52	<.05	.057
	$R^2 = .003$, F (2, 7309) = 9.989; p<.001				$R^2 = .003$, F (2, 9377) = 15.47; p <.001			
Constant	4.014				21.41			
Home/School Partnership	-.027	-2.093	<.05		-.009	-.521	ns	
Specialist	nm	nm	nm		.077	4.484	<.001	
Home Visiting	-.037	-2.848	<.01		.055	4.223	<.001	
Family Therapy	nm	nm	nm		-.032	-2.866	<.01	
Parent Support and training	nm	nm	nm	.084	nm	nm	nm	.14
	$\Delta R^2 = .003$; F (2,7307) = 10.894; p < .001				$\Delta R^2 = .009$; F(4, 9373) = 20.840; p < .001			

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