



What Happens to Persistent and Serious Young Offenders When They Grow Up

**A Follow-Up Study of the First
Recipients of Intensive Supervision
and Surveillance**

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Executive summary

In 2001, the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) launched the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP). Targeted at persistent and, later, serious young offenders, it aimed to tackle the underlying needs of young people, reduce reoffending, and reassure the community. In 2008, the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act put ISSP on a statutory footing as one of a range of interventions that could be attached to a Youth Rehabilitation Order. To reflect this change, ISSP was renamed ISS.

Ten years on from the initial pilots, this report revisits the cohort (who are now adults) from the original evaluations of ISSP (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005). It represents a summary of a broader joint-funded study by the Economic and Social Research Council and the YJB on what happens to persistent and serious young offenders when they grow up. The wider project will form a doctoral thesis (Gray, forthcoming).

Notes on method

This report's mixed-methods research combines a long-term reconviction study of 1,789 ISSP cases and 704 comparison cases, alongside life-history interviews with nine individuals previously subject to ISSP. It combines advanced quantitative methods (e.g. structural equation and mixture modelling) with in-depth narrative analysis to connect a quantifiable assessment of ISSP with an exploration of (ex-)offenders' subjectivities.

The qualitative sample is deliberately discrete, as is the nature of the biographic interviews. The small regional sample does not aim to be generalisable to wider groups of persistent young offenders, (although it may well be transferable¹ to similar studies). The strength of detailed qualitative data is its ability to encompass the complexity of individual cases. It facilitates theory-building, and is essential to providing valid and reliable answers to difficult questions (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007).

The ISSP and comparison groups used in this analysis were collected for the initial evaluations (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005). The comparison sample comprised all young people who:

- met the eligibility criteria for ISSP but were sentenced to a Supervision Order, Community Rehabilitation Order or a Detention and Training Order²

¹ Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings. Transferability is applied by the readers of research and can apply in varying degrees to most types of analysis. Unlike generalisability, transferability does not involve broad claims, but invites readers to make connections between elements of one study with their own or similar data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

² Supervision Orders and Community Rehabilitation Orders are community sentences that were in operation prior to the Youth Rehabilitation Order, which came into effect on 30 November 2009 as part of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008. A Detention and Training Order is a determinate custodial sentence which can be between four and 24 months in length.

during the timeframe of the original ISSP evaluations (from July 2001 until April 2003)

- came from YOTs who did not take part in the initial ISSP pilot during the time period in question (phase three and four schemes).

The ISSP and comparison groups were well matched in terms of age, and the frequency and gravity of their immediate criminal histories (see Appendix D). However, some statistically significant differences between the groups were apparent:

- the comparison sample included more serious-only offenders and more young women – both of these groups are at lower risk of reconviction (Moore et al, 2006)
- members of the ISSP group were more likely to have registered special educational needs, as well as a higher mean *Asset* score, which would suggest they were at greater risk of reoffending (Moore et al, 2006).

Two additional statistically significant differences emerged through the analysis in this study:

- members of the comparison group had shorter criminal histories than the ISSP sample
- those criminal trajectories began at a later age.

These differences highlight the difficulty of locating a well-matched comparison group of persistent and serious young offenders, who typically have very complex criminal and personal histories. It is impossible to say what the effect of an even closer matched comparison sample would have had on the results, particularly since meaningful differences between samples were negligible. However, it is possible the impact would have been more favourable to the ISSP sample, who were noted as having more entrenched criminal histories.

Findings from the quantitative research: examining long-term offending trajectories

In-depth analysis suggested that, on average, young people committed 3.3 offences in the first year after starting ISSP, and reduced their offending by 0.9 offences in each subsequent year, up to four years later. The mean gravity score³ of the most serious offence one year after ISSP was 3.7, and at each time point after (up to four years), this value went down by 0.9. Many young people deviated from these average downward trends, however.⁴

³ Offence gravity is measured using the *Counting Rules* introduced by the YJB in 2000, which provides a standard list of offences and grades their seriousness from one to eight (eight being the most serious offences, such as murder, one being the lowest, such as littering).

⁴ These estimations are based on latent growth curve modelling (see Tables A and B in Appendix A).

The ISSP and control groups displayed remarkably similar trajectories in the frequency of offending at all time points. Indeed, there were no long-term differences between the groups after the programme ended. However, considerable variation in the estimates for offending frequency and seriousness within the ISSP and control groups was observed, meaning that each group included a broad range of young people, some of whom were continuing to offend, and some of whom were desisting.

The strongest predictor of future offending frequency in the ISSP sample related to offender typology: young people who qualified for ISSP as 'persistent', rather than 'serious', offenders committed the largest number of offences one year after starting the programme, and had the most intractable long-term offending patterns. This group also committed higher gravity offences one year after ISSP.

Young people with the highest *Asset* scores and those who committed their first offence at a younger age were more likely to commit more serious offences post-ISSP.

Meanwhile, young White men, compared to young women and Minority Ethnic participants, were more prolific and more serious offenders in the year after ISSP commenced.

Poor access to environmental and housing services – as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2004 (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004) – was related to long-term persistent offending.

Finally, restorative justice was associated with a reduction in the frequency of offending in the first year after commencing ISSP.

A modelling exercise was used to identify groups of offenders within the ISSP sample. Four groups emerged from the data:

- desisting serious young offenders
- desisting persistent young offenders
- long-term high-gravity offenders
- chaotic frequency and gravity persisters.

Almost half (44%) of the ISSP cohort reduced their offending behaviour to a small number of low-level crimes within one to two years after the intervention, while a discrete subset (8%) posed a continuing and serious challenge to the adult criminal justice system.

Findings from the qualitative research: examining the life-histories of persistent young offenders

Despite being sentenced to ISSP seven years earlier, memories, details and historical feelings towards ISSP were clear in the minds of the nine participants interviewed in the qualitative research. The twin features of supervision and surveillance were often recalled distinctly, with the former typically experienced as care, while electronic monitoring (the surveillance element) was seen as a form of control.

Youth custody was rarely experienced as a deterrent or punishment. In fact, it afforded the young people in this sample considerable personal status. Custody was often perceived as the cognitively easier option, compared to community-based interventions – ISSP in particular – which were based on the concept of change and rehabilitation.

Relationship-based supervision was cited as one of the most influential aspects of ISSP. Developing a reliable and committed bond with a dedicated ISSP officer had a transformative effect on some young people. In other cases, however, trust issues remained insurmountable.

Even as young adults, the sample described desistance as a surprisingly long, demanding and fragmented process. As crime saturated nearly all aspects of their lives, moving away from offending was a life-changing exercise, and rarely happened without considerable external support.

Crime provided these young people, as children, with an exhilarating means for acquiring material goods and social status, and a sense of autonomy. However, persistent offending in childhood created a complex and often demoralising poverty trap for the sample as they grew up.

All but one of the sample (i.e. eight of those interviewed) said that, as children, they had been subject to harassment and physical violence by the police. Respondents described these experiences as a subsidiary form of punishment, sometimes in place of a conviction. Crime and criminal networks played a dominant role, and occupied a considerable amount of participants' time as they grew up. From the single ISSP team out of which the qualitative sample of young people was drawn (n=65), three of the sample were in prison for gang-related murders, one had been shot dead in a much publicised revenge attack outside a local prison and, of the nine interviewed, four confessed to having direct experience of gangs and using firearms in their teenage years.

Formal education did not provide a stimulating or relevant environment for any of the young people interviewed. Later in their lives, most found sporadic minimum-wage work – but it had failed to provide a means of sufficiency or future prospects. Wider aspects of disadvantage were also a barrier, as few employment opportunities were available locally.

Conclusions

The data demonstrated a steep downward trend in the frequency and seriousness of offending for the ISSP sample as a whole, although there was considerable variation within the sample. Very similar patterns were identified in the comparison sample. Indeed, sharp post-test reductions are typical for this population of persistent and serious offenders (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Sherman et al, 1997; Smith, 2005; Moore et al, 2006). In terms of its effect on long-term offending patterns,⁵ ISSP proved no better and certainly no worse than other community⁶ or custodial disposals.

⁵ Up to four years post intervention.

⁶ The community disposals received by the comparison group were Supervision Orders and Community Rehabilitation Orders without Intensive Supervision and Surveillance.

With this in mind, it is useful to assess the possible merits (or otherwise) of ISSP, as gleaned from the quantitative and qualitative data used in this study.

- **A cost-effective alternative to custody**
ISSP appeared to have provided cost-effective and robust provision for young offenders, where custody might otherwise have been considered the most appropriate criminal justice response.
- **Perception of ISSP as tough and geared towards change**
ISSP was experienced and understood by young people to be a demanding community punishment, often more demanding than a spell in custody. Based on the concept of change, ISSP combined control with care and close supervision.
- **Relationship-based supervision**
The generous amount of time afforded by the programme provided unique and occasionally transformative opportunities for young people to bond with a responsible professional adult. These connections were described as having a strong influence on some participants during the programme and after the programme ended.
- **The desistance process requires support**
The progression towards desistance was shown to be long and arduous for this group of offenders, who required considerable and flexible support. In this regard, the time and resources provided by ISSP were well-suited to the circumstances of some young people who entered the programme.
- **Opportunities to desist**
The obligation of daily supervision and a night-time curfew forced young people to change their lifestyles while on ISSP. For some, this created unique opportunities to practice 'going straight'.
- **Managing expectations**
ISSP teams had extraordinary responsibilities to manage troubled and chaotic young people, and encourage them to participate constructively in society. In many cases, ISSP teams provided a host of welfare services for young people and their families whose needs had not been addressed by other mainstream agencies. It is important, therefore, that the success of the programme is not judged merely on short-term reconviction results.

Policy recommendations

These recommendations are based on findings from the three research reports published on the 2001 ISSP cohort (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005; and this report).

1. Focus ISS on the most persistent offenders

Magistrates and youth offending teams (YOTs) should limit the use of ISS⁷ to the small population of very persistent young offenders so as to secure the position of ISS as a genuine alternative to custody and limit net-

⁷ In 2008, the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act put ISSP on a statutory footing. Intensive Supervision and Surveillance (ISS) could be attached to a Youth Rehabilitation Order in various lengths and levels of intensity.

widening,⁸ as well as target intensive supervision at those most at risk of long-term reoffending.⁹

2. **Monitor potential net-widening**
In order to prevent net-widening, the recent lowering of the eligibility criteria for ISS should be monitored carefully by the YJB.
3. **Protect relationship-based supervision**
Staff who deliver ISS should have a limit put on the number of cases they handle in order to provide sufficient and flexible one-to-one support to the young person and their family.
4. **Provide 'routes out' support**
Where appropriate, criminal justice agencies should seek access to opportunities outside their clients' immediate neighbourhood to help them disengage from local criminal networks.
5. **Maximise the use of restorative justice**
Teams who provide ISS should seek to maximise the role of restorative justice in their provision, where appropriate.
6. **Use custody as a last resort**
The current evaluation has shown ISS to be a robust alternative to custody, so ministers, policymakers, magistrates and YOTs should continue to view custodial detention only as a last resort.
7. **Provide co-ordinated multi-agency support**
ISS staff and YOTs should seek to form close and effective working relationships with all mainstream social welfare services, and establish continuing support for young people beyond their ISS sentence.
8. **Support evidence-based policy by:**
 - a. **calculating full economic costs**
As the financial costs of criminal justice interventions become increasingly relevant, the full economic costs of programmes and custodial placements need to be collated by criminal justice agencies so that well-informed comparisons can be made.
 - b. **strengthening evaluative research**
Quantitative policy evaluations could be strengthened by the adoption of more sophisticated statistical models, rigorous research designs, and a reconsideration of measures of success, including social- and welfare-based indicators.

⁸ Net-widening occurs where offenders within the system are subjected to increased "levels of intervention which they might not have previously received" (Cohen, 1985:44).

⁹ Data analysis undertaken estimates that 56% of the ISSP sample (Groups 3 and 4 in the mixture-modelling analysis) presented the biggest challenge to the criminal justice system in terms of long-term offending. These young people had, on average, committed at least eight offences in the year before starting ISSP (see Graphs 4 and 5). Therefore, the lowering of the qualification for ISS since the introduction of ISSP in 2001 to 'around three' offending episodes in the prior 12 months (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009:11) may be pitched too low and risk expanding an intensive programme to those whose behaviour, although problematic, might not warrant a high-tariff sentence.

Context: intensive programmes and youth justice

In 2001, the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP) pilot was introduced by the YJB.¹⁰ It was based on a forerunner in Kent (Little et al, 2004), which was itself modelled on a scheme in Groningen, the Netherlands. Unlike many previous intensive programmes, it:

- targeted young offenders before and after custody
- was introduced as a condition of a Supervision or Community Rehabilitation Order
- could be part of post-release licence or bail conditions.

ISSP was set up as a multi-modal programme, highly intensive and combining supervision with surveillance in an attempt to ensure programme completion and to bring structure to young people's lives. Supervision on ISSP was specified by the YJB. For those on six-month programmes, the first three months were to involve at least five hours supervision a day during the week and access to support during the evenings and at weekends, with surveillance by electronic tag or other methods. After three months, there was to be a less intensive period of supervision with at least one hour each weekday. The programme's five core modules were:

- education
- restorative justice
- offending behaviour
- inter-personal skills
- family support.

Additional modules included housing, mental health, and drugs or alcohol support, as necessary.

ISSP was directed at young offenders between 10 and 17 years of age. Initially, it was targeted only at the most persistent young offenders. In April 2002, this was extended to include those committing serious offences. The revised eligibility criteria encompassed offenders who:

- had been charged with, warned over or convicted of offences committed on four or more separate dates within the last 12 months, and had received at least one community or custodial disposal (the 'offending episodes' criterion), or

¹⁰ The 1998 Crime and Disorder Act created the YJB to oversee the development and management of the reformed youth justice system, following the election of the Labour Party in 1997.

- were at risk of custody because the current charge or sentence related to an offence serious enough that an adult would have received a custodial sentence of 14 years or more (the ‘serious crime shortcut’)
- were at risk of custody because they had a history of repeat offending on bail, and were at risk of a secure remand (the ‘repeat offending on bail shortcut’).

The political impetus behind the introduction of intensive programmes is often associated with the need to tackle prison overcrowding while at the same time being seen to be strengthening community provision and appearing ‘tough on crime’ (Merrington, 2006; Moore et al, 2006). Consistent with this, the YJB stated that its aims for ISSP were “to simultaneously tackle the underlying needs of young people; [and] reduce reoffending; while reassuring the community and sentencers” (YJB, 2000). However, there are obvious tensions between these theoretical rationales and political aims (Pitts, 2003; Moore et al, 2006). Welfarist and punitive agendas make uncomfortable bedfellows – the former prioritising the needs of the individual before punishment – while an emphasis on ‘just deserts’ can conflict with the political desire for programmes to be viewed as genuine alternatives to custody. This is also the case with the ‘what works’ principle of risk classification, which focuses on the risk of reoffending rather than the seriousness of the current offence (McGuire, 1995).

Soon after the pilot schemes were established, the programme was rolled out nationally, and has continued to attract significant numbers. From the pilot programme’s beginning in July 2001 until the end of March 2009, 34,235 young people have started on ISSP, and the disposal has frequently exceeded its yearly target. This is notable because programmes intended to provide alternatives to custody often lose their appeal after the initial furore of the pilot subsides (Moore et al, 2006). On the other hand, ISSP’s popularity with sentencers might indicate unintended net-widening, whereby more young people are propelled further into the criminal justice system following the introduction of a new programme.¹¹

ISSP on a statutory footing

In 2008, the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act put ISSP on a statutory footing¹² as one of a package of interventions that could be attached to a Youth Rehabilitation Order. To reflect this change, ISSP was renamed ISS. The remit and scope of the new ISS programme was transformed in two critical ways. Firstly, instead of a nationally applied and explicit offending qualification, the new referral criteria were based on a series of subjective qualifications. A young person could be made subject to ISS if one or more of their offences was deemed:

- imprisonable

¹¹ Net-widening occurs where offenders within the system are subjected to increased “levels of intervention which they might not have previously received” (Cohen, 1985:44).

¹² Section 1 (3) (a) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 1 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 provides for a Youth Rehabilitation Order with Intensive Supervision and Surveillance (ISS) as an alternative to custody.

- the offence or the combination of the offence and one or more offences associated with it were so serious that a custodial sentence would be appropriate, or
- where they were aged 10 to 14 and their offending was considered persistent.

Moreover, the court could impose ISS where there had been “wilful and persistent non-compliance” with a previous order (YJB, 2010).

In contrast to the objective eligibility criteria for ISSP, the accompanying sentencing guidance for ISS was a matter of local interpretation.¹³ For example, the custody threshold could be variously applied depending on the age, criminal history of the offender and circumstances of the offence (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009).¹⁴ Similarly, the guidance on persistence declared there was no legally recognised definition of persistence, but that a young person was “likely to be found to be persistent where the offender has been convicted of, or made subject to, a pre-court disposal that involves an admission or finding of guilt in relation to imprisonable offences on at least three occasions in the past 12 months” (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009:11).¹⁵ Meanwhile, a Detention and Training Order ISS could be applied where risk assessments indicated there was a “risk of serious harm” or a “high likelihood of reoffending” (YJB, 2009:11).

The second significant variation from the original ISSP model that was detailed in the YJB guidance (YJB, 2009) involved three new levels of supervision intensiveness. As a replacement for the previous universal structure of ISSP, two six-month versions of ISS with different levels of intensiveness were introduced, as well as an extended 12-month programme for young people with significant individual and social needs (with an *Asset* score above 33) or where there was a risk of serious harm.¹⁶ Finally, the operational guidance allowed for a variation to the normal structure where young people were aged 13 or under

¹³ A study by Barnardo’s examined custody thresholds for 12 to 14-year-olds and concluded that “Parliament’s clear intention of making custody for such young children genuinely a last resort is not reflected in sentencing practice” (Glover and Hibbert, 2009:4). Likewise, Jacobson et al, (2010) concluded that, of 3,283 children who received custody in the second half of 2008, as many as 35% were sentenced for offences that were neither violent nor in the more serious gravity range: only 29% were sentenced for offences that were both violent and more serious.

¹⁴ See sections 11.5 –11.18 (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009).

¹⁵ See section 6 for discussion of the various methods for testing the persistence criterion (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009).

¹⁶ Band 1 ISS is based on the previous ISSP model. It includes three months at high intensiveness of 25 hours per week, followed by five hours per week in the second three-month phase. Band 2 ISS includes three stages: months one and two involve 20 hours per week, month three is 10 hours per week and months four to six are five hours per week. The extended ISS requires young people to attend for 25 hours per week for months one to four, 15 hours per week in months five and six and five hours per week from month seven onwards (YJB, 2009).

or in full-time training or employment (YJB, 2009).¹⁷ The relevance of this was a movement towards increasing localism and less prescription from government.

In short, the changes made after the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008 reconfigured the priorities of intensive youth justice programmes away from targeting a precise group of high-level persistent and/or serious offenders, to emphasising ISS first and foremost as an alternative to custody. The intention was to capture the mounting number of young people who did not meet the criteria for ISSP, but who nevertheless slipped into the widening custodial pool.¹⁸ Indeed, between 1997 and 2007, the number of 10 to 14-year-olds taken into custody in England and Wales increased by 295%.¹⁹ Undeniably, despite concerted efforts, attempts to divert young people (and adults) away from custody have been undermined in the past few decades by a number of factors. Culturally, since the 1980s, crime has moved centre-stage as a social and political issue (Garland, 2001; Pitts, 2003). Farrall et al (2009) stress how a preoccupation with crime in the 21st century has been articulated through public discussion of fear and insecurity – leading to demands for more punitive responses from the state, including tough and unremitting community penalties.²⁰ This last point is particularly relevant to the topic of intensive community programmes, since programme violations frequently result in a custodial penalty and ultimately undermine the diversionary effects of community-based alternatives. Indeed, the breach rate in the ISSP evaluation was 60%,²¹ and, of those, 31% received a custodial sentence (Moore et al, 2004).

Costs of ISSP versus custody

More recently, economic considerations have become prominent, as criminal justice agencies have faced dramatic cuts. In this respect, ISS may prove promising. While there is a lack of clear information on the true cost of custodial placements – as well as up-to-date costs of intensive interventions – estimates indicate that ISS is indeed a cheaper alternative to custody. Firstly, it is important to bear in mind why estimates can vary. As regards custody, staff-to-offender ratios are significantly higher in secure training centres (STCs) and

¹⁷ Known as a junior ISS, young people aged 13 and under, and considered to lack the maturity to comply with a more intensive programme, could have their order amended to 12.5 hours of contact per week for the first three months. If a young person was in full-time education or training, their contact hours could also be reduced to between seven and 10 hours per week, depending on their other commitments (YJB, 2009).

¹⁸ For example, in 2008–9, around 26% of young people in custody aged 13 received their sentence for a breach of a statutory order (Hart, 2010). Meanwhile, in 2007-8, 28% of children aged 14 and under sentenced to a Detention and Training Order had not committed a serious or violent index offence (Glover and Hibbert, 2009).

¹⁹ House of Commons written answers 26 Feb 2010.

²⁰ There have been notable changes in recent youth custody rates: between 2007/08 and 2011/12, the number of young people in the secure estate fell by 33% (YJB/Ministry of Justice, 2013). Nevertheless, critical issues remain: over two-fifths of young people in custody in 2011/12 were there for non-violent crimes and 16% were there for breach offences (YJB/Ministry of Justice, 2013).

²¹ This figure includes multiple breaches during one ISSP order.

secure children's homes than in under-18 young offender institutions (under-18 YOIs). STCs which have been established more recently also have associated buildings costs. Moreover, the per capita cost of each place in an under-18 YOI levied by HM Prison Service on the YJB does not include all the expenses incurred by national and regional administration, premises, insurance, staff pensions, depreciation, land, capital and other central expenditure (The Foyer Foundation, 2011). Neither does it include the costs of post-custody supervision, which is met by YOTs. As such, it is well recognised that the costs of custody are vastly understated (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2010). Additionally, there are broad variations in the stated public costs of youth detention (The Foyer Foundation, 2011). However, to give an approximate comparison, Table 1 provides some examples of the annual per capita costs for youth custody.

Table 1: Estimates of annual per capita costs of youth custody

Source	Date	Under-18 YOI	STC	Secure children's home
National Audit Office	Jan 04	51,000	165,000	185,000
<i>Community Care</i> magazine	Nov 05	55,075	174,550	192,154
YOA report with figures provided by YJB ²²	Jun 08	53,544	172,260	185,461
YJB Chair's letter to all local authorities ²³	Apr 09	55,008	n/a	206,184
YJB memo to Foyer Federation ²⁴	May 09	60,372	160,080	215,496
YJB Note on Children and Young People's Estate Average Sector Prices for 2012 – 13 ²⁵	Apr 12	60,000	178,000	212,000

²² Quoted in The Foyer Foundation, 2011.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ These figures are based on the prices that the YJB pays for the services it commissions in young people's secure custodial facilities, as of 1 April 2012. They are not intended to represent the total price of providing custody and related services to young people.

The estimated costs of a placement in an under-18 YOI in January 2004 (£51,000) leapt by around £9,000 within five years to just over £60,000 in May 2009 – above the rate of inflation.²⁶ Ellie Roy, the former chief executive of the YJB, explained to the House of Commons Justice Committee in 2010 that, as a result of the inflation-stripping costs of utilities and food, the costs of custody will keep rising even if the current numbers remain stable (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2010).

A broad cost-benefit analysis of ISSP was conducted as part of the initial evaluation in 2004 (Moore et al, 2004). This exercise collected information directly from the pilot schemes to calculate accurately the unit costs of the programme per order. The average cost of an ISSP, including surveillance and supervision, was £12,274 per order. It should be noted that both tagging and voice verification required important set-up costs at a local level, but more young people could be added at a relatively low rate, once the systems were established. Although these figures were correct at the time of publication in 2004, they are now out of date. Moreover, as with the estimates for custody, the data above does not include the additional costs of supervision after ISSP. However, it would be fair to assume that the costs incurred by YOTs for continuing to manage cases after ISSP and Detention and Training Orders were broadly similar and would not make a substantial difference to the estimated expenditure presented above.

Based on the costs above, during 2004, the average cost, broken down on a monthly basis, of sending a young person to each type of custodial establishment was as follows:

- under-18 YOI – £4,250
- STC – £13,750
- secure children's home – £15,416 (National Audit Office, 2004).

These all vastly outweighed the monthly cost of ISSP, which was estimated – based on the cost-benefit analysis undertaken as part of the initial evaluation of ISSP (Moore et al, 2004) – to cost £2,045 during the same time period.²⁷ It is also worth noting that ISSP provided an alternative to custodial remands as well as sentences. Nevertheless, a young person starting on an intensive community programme might not always be genuinely diverted from custody. If such a young person is placed on an intensive community programme instead of a more generic community order (estimated to cost in the region of £2,000 to £8,000²⁸ per order), yet goes on to receive a custodial sentence, any potential financial savings would be lost.

²⁶ The rate of inflation over the five years from 2004 to 2009 averaged 2.7%, meaning the inflated costs of custody should be in the region of £58,374 (Bank of England, 2011).

²⁷ Note that the lengths of a custodial remand, a Detention and Training Order and ISSP (bail and community) can vary greatly.

²⁸ The Howard League (2004) reported costs for various community sentences: 12-month Community Rehabilitation Order, £3,000; 12-month Community Punishment Order, £2,000; 12-month Drug Treatment Order, £8,000.

Evidence-based practice: published research on ISSP

Three evaluations of ISSP have been published so far. The first involved an investigation of the implementation, process and short-term outcomes of the ISSP pilot (Moore et al, 2004). The second report extended the reconviction study to 24 months (Gray et al, 2005), as well as exploring the impact of ISSP on custody. Finally, the third report examined a small-scale pilot of an extended 12-month ISSP (Sutherland et al, 2006). These evaluations were conducted by Oxford University, commissioned by the YJB, and were intended to provide evidenced-based feedback.

Methodology

This report revisits the original ISSP cohort, 10 years after the initial ISSP pilots. The project has applied advanced quantitative methods to pre-existing datasets, and has retraced a subset of the original sample, who are now adults, to undertake qualitative research. Through a combination of methods, the study has aimed to address evaluative 'what works?' questions, but through a much longer-term perspective than is often attempted (or possible).

This report represents a policy-relevant summary of a wider project, jointly funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the YJB, which will form a doctoral thesis (Gray, forthcoming).

Research aims

This study aims to:

1. shed light on the offending behaviour patterns of persistent and serious young offenders previously subject to ISSP as they enter adulthood
2. explore the signs of change that were self-evident in the qualitative data collected by the ISSP evaluators, but proved too subtle to be captured by the quantitative thrust of the original evaluations (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005)
3. consider how the various objectives of the youth justice system (rehabilitation, punishment, reparation) are experienced and understood by these young people as they grow up
4. illustrate how the outcomes of long-term evaluations of multi-modal programmes (such as ISSP) are shaped by the methodological and evaluative tools used to assess their impact.

Research methods

A combination of methods was adopted, encompassing 1,789 ISSP cases and 704 comparison cases already collated by the YJB. The following research exercises were conducted.

1. Criminal history searches for all the cases in the original ISSP studies (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005) were conducted and examined to build up a statistical picture of which young people persisted with or desisted from crime.
2. Detailed life-history interviews were carried out with a subset of the original ISSP cohort (n=9). The sampling frame was limited to one regional area (located in the North West) in order to consider the local culture and social context of crime and desistance.

3. This study benefited from exclusive access to a combination of ISSP datasets that were subject to secondary analysis: qualitative data from interviews with young adults, members of staff and family members, in addition to quantitative data from the Police National Computer (PNC), *Asset* and supervision monitoring during the initial ISSP evaluations.
4. The quantitative data was explored using advanced techniques including structural equation and mixture modelling.
5. The qualitative data was analysed using narrative and psycho-social case-study methods.

Quantitative research methodology

Full details of the quantitative research methodology are included in appendices B to D. However, a brief summary of the method and issues encountered are worth acknowledging here.

The study encompasses the first 41 pilot ISSP schemes, covering those cases commencing in the period from 2001 until April 2003. The comparison sample was taken from the original ISSP reconviction studies and comprised all young people who:

- met the eligibility criteria for ISSP but were sentenced to a Supervision Order, Community Rehabilitation Order or a Detention and Training Order during the timeframe of the original ISSP evaluations (from July 2001 until April 2003)
- came from YOTs who did not take part in the initial ISSP pilot during the time period in question (phases three and four schemes).

Because this reconviction study involves a longitudinal design – which looks at both aggregate and individual change – it was necessary to remove repeat cases from the database. Consequently, sample sizes in this study (1,789 ISSP and 704 comparisons cases) have been reduced from previous evaluations.

To capture a picture of the participants' long-term offending behaviour (for both the ISSP and comparison groups), information on offending frequency and the gravity of the most serious offence was collected on all cases (see Appendix C). This covered a seven-year period, including three years before the start of the original order and a four-year period post-intervention or release from custody. All time periods are calculated 'at liberty'²⁹ i.e. time spent in the community (any time spent in custody is adjusted for in these calculations). Information gathered for this period was collected on a year-on-year basis.

²⁹ Being a sample of highly persistent and serious offenders, many spent time in custody during the follow-up periods before and/or after the start of their order. Each time period had to be extended on an individual basis to compensate for this. Since the PNC does not contain release dates, these were estimated. We assumed that half the sentence period was spent in custody on Detention and Training Orders and adult prison sentences. On the advice of the Parole Board, adult sentences in excess of four years were calculated at 60% of the total, and minimum recommendations for life sentences for individuals were sourced through media outlets where life sentences were applied.

Reconviction

Since this study deals with persistent and serious offenders, reconviction rates do not provide an adequate measure of offending behaviour or the process of desistance. Instead, this study maintains a focus on frequency and seriousness of offending. However, reconviction data has also been collected to show year-on-year how many young people drop out of the criminal justice system – although they may, of course, continue offending without the knowledge of the police. It is also important to note that desistance in this case is measured in year-blocks (at liberty) and young people may re-enter the system at a later stage.

Analysis

The quantitative analysis presented in this report includes all individuals (1,789 ISSP and 704 comparisons cases), unless stated otherwise (see Appendix D for further explanation), and follows them over a seven-year period. Analysis was conducted using SPSS and Amos software.

Limitations of the comparison group

The original ISSP reconviction studies were based on a quasi-experimental design, which required a well-matched comparison group, in terms of their offending profiles and personal characteristics. The two groups collected for the initial evaluations (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005) were indeed very well matched in age and the frequency and gravity of their immediate criminal histories (see Appendix D). However, some statistically significant differences between the groups existed. The comparison sample included more serious-only offenders and more young women – both of these groups are at *lower* risk of reconviction (Moore et al, 2006). The ISSP group, meanwhile, was more likely to have registered special educational needs, as well as a higher mean *Asset* score – which would suggest they were at *greater* risk of reoffending (Moore et al, 2006).

Two additional statistically significant differences became apparent through the analysis in this study. Firstly, it was revealed that members of the comparison group had shorter criminal histories than the ISSP sample, and, secondly, we discovered that those criminal trajectories began at a later age. The relevance of this is that, if members of the ISSP sample had longer, more engrained criminal careers, it is also likely that they would have experienced greater exposure to the criminal justice system before ISSP, been better known to the police and sentencers, and, as such, may have developed harder, more notorious reputations as recidivist offenders. Such characteristics may affect the likelihood of future offending, as well as magistrates' sentencing decisions.

This finding highlights the difficulty of securing a well-matched comparison group of persistent and serious offenders. It is impossible to say what the effect of an even closer matched comparison sample would have had on the results, particularly since meaningful differences between samples were negligible. However, it is possible the impact would have been more favourable to the ISSP sample, who were noted as having more entrenched criminal histories.

Qualitative research methodology

The qualitative interviews were obtained from a single ISSP team from the North West that processed 65 individual ISSP cases during the pilot. It was decided at an early stage to focus this discrete and detailed aspect of the study in one geographic region. Retracing the sample was a sensitive and time-consuming process (see Appendix F; also see Appendix H for ethical considerations). A variety of sources proved useful, not least new social networking sites such as Facebook. In the first instance, 28 of the most reliable contacts were approached. All available women (n=4) and all young people from Minority Ethnic groups (n=12) were invited to interview. Regrettably, no young women agreed to take part in the study. Eventually, 11 young people agreed to be interviewed (39% response rate). All participants were male and four were of dual heritage (one British Chinese and three Black British). One interviewee refused to participate on the day of interview, while a second young person was arrested and remanded on grievous bodily harm charges before the planned interview could take place. Each of the remaining nine participants was interviewed on two occasions. All interviews bar one were conducted face-to-face, either in prison or at an office in the city centre. One set of interviews was conducted over the phone.

A note on generalisability (quantitative and qualitative)

The specific local angle of the qualitative data does not aim to be nationally generalisable, although aspects of the findings, where appropriate, may well be transferable³⁰ to other studies. Instead, the strengths of biographical interviewing and in-depth qualitative data are their ability to encompass the complexity of individual cases. This type of qualitative data facilitates theory-building and is essential for providing valid and reliable answers to difficult questions (Gadd and Jefferson, 2007); it is thus an appropriate method for exploring the lives of persistent and serious young offenders as they grow up.

Meanwhile, the quantitative data was gleaned from a national sample of the first 41 ISSP pilot sites, including a range of urban, rural and suburban areas in England and Wales. There was, however, variation in how the programme was delivered and these differences are discussed in earlier reports (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005). Nevertheless, there was no evidence that any one research site performed significantly better than others when subject to multi-level modelling (Gray et al, 2005). Overall, because of the breadth and depth of the quantitative data, it is expected that the results are indeed generalisable, i.e. likely to be replicated in other research sites where the appropriate methods are used and the conditions are comparable.

³⁰ Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings. From a qualitative perspective, transferability is primarily the responsibility of the individual doing the extrapolating. The qualitative researcher can enhance the transferability of the original study by thoroughly describing the research context and key assumptions underpinning the data collection and analysis. The concepts of external validity and transferability are said to be similar because both processes involve determining whether a study's conclusions may be extrapolated beyond the particular conditions of the research study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Details of the ethical procedures applied to both the quantitative and qualitative methods are included in Appendix H.

Findings from the quantitative research: examining long-term offending trajectories

Offending frequency: changes over time

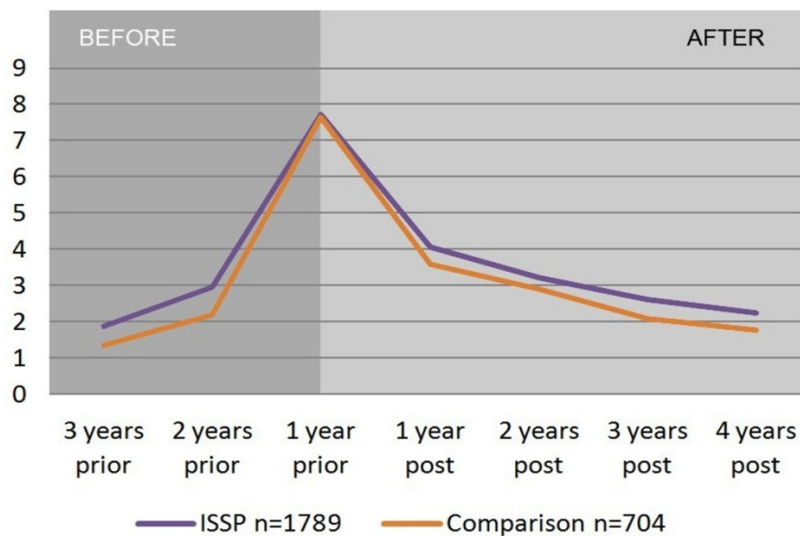
Graph 1 provides an illustration of the offending patterns of the ISSP and comparison groups³¹ over the seven-year study period and demonstrates the following three important features.

- There is a sharp spike in the frequency of offending immediately before the intervention, with a dramatic reduction afterwards. A likely explanation for this pattern (observed in both the ISSP and comparison groups) is the statistical phenomenon, 'regression to the mean' (Cook and Campbell, 1979), which expects extreme scores at the pre-test stage to move towards the average at the post-test stage.³²
- Over the four years following the intervention, the frequency of offending drops steadily and ends approximately in the same position as the starting point, three years before the intervention. Nevertheless, in both groups, offending behaviour persists.
- The ISSP and comparison cases have remarkably similar trajectories as a group at all time points, although the standard deviations suggest there are considerable differences within each sample.

³¹ See Table A in Appendix A for full details of figures.

³² Given that ISSP aimed to work with persistent and/or serious offenders (who generate extreme offending scores), it is not possible to avoid the problem of regression to the mean. The way it is managed is to use a well-matched comparison group with similar characteristics. Both groups are expected to reduce their levels of offending frequency and seriousness. The impact of ISSP is measured by whether the ISSP group outperforms the comparison group.

Graph 1: Mean number of offences by young people in the ISSP and comparison groups from three years prior to and up to four years post-intervention



Initial analysis suggested there were statistically significant differences in the mean frequency scores between the ISSP and comparison groups two and three years prior to the intervention start date and three and four years post. But, when these results were subject to multivariate analysis³³ (i.e. controlling for other factors), the differences between the groups post-intervention was non-significant.

To provide further insight, analysis using latent growth curve modelling³⁴ was undertaken which took account of the long-term, repeated measures style of the data. This modelling strategy tested a range of independent variables on long-term offending behaviour, looking in turn at individual,³⁵ social³⁶ and offender typology indicators.³⁷ There were statistically significant results on a range of factors (see Table C, Appendix A):³⁸

³³ Linear regression analyses were conducted on each time period. Offending frequency data was transformed into a natural log to make it suitable for analysis. The following variables were included in the models: age at first offence; age; gender; ethnicity; mean *Asset* score; group membership (ISSP/comparison); offender typology (serious, persistent, serious and persistent); offending frequency 12, 24 and 36 months prior; mean offending gravity score 12, 24 and 36 months prior; previous custodial order; previous community-based order. Variables were entered into the model in a step-wise process. The R^2 value was low, ranging from .234 to .248.

³⁴ Latent growth modelling is a statistical technique used to estimate growth trajectories. It has emerged as a flexible analytical method and uses longitudinal, 'repeated measures' data (in this case, the number of offences or mean gravity score of worst offence year on year). These models are useful because they quantify intra-individual growth over time, producing estimates of the initial starting point and the rate of change.

³⁵ The variables in this domain included gender and ethnicity.

³⁶ The variables in this domain included the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and *Asset* score.

³⁷ The variables in this domain included age at first offence; qualified for ISSP via persistent offender route; qualified for ISSP via serious offender route; ISSP or 'control' participant.

³⁸ The fit indices are: CFI .870; RMSEA .0084

- The strongest predictor of offending frequency related to offender typology: young people who qualified for ISSP on account of persistence were more likely than serious-only offenders to have a high level of convictions in the year after starting ISSP. They also had the most intractable offending trajectories longer term.
- Similarly, although to a less degree, offenders with the highest total *Asset* scores were more likely to have an elevated number of convictions post-ISSP as well as longer-term offending careers.
- Young people who received their first criminal conviction earlier than others were more likely to have a higher level of convictions in the year after ISSP, although their longer-term trajectories were not significantly different (statistically) from those who began offending later in their youth.
- Compared to young women and Minority Ethnic participants, young White men were more likely to commit a higher number of offences in the year after ISSP commenced.
- Poor access to environmental and housing services – as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2004³⁹ – was related to offenders who struggled to desist from offending in the longer term.
- There was no difference in the immediate or long-term offending careers of the ISSP and control candidates.

Offending seriousness: changes over time

Graph 2 presents information on the mean gravity score⁴⁰ of the most serious offence in each time period (at liberty) in the seven-year period under question.⁴¹ It demonstrates the following features.

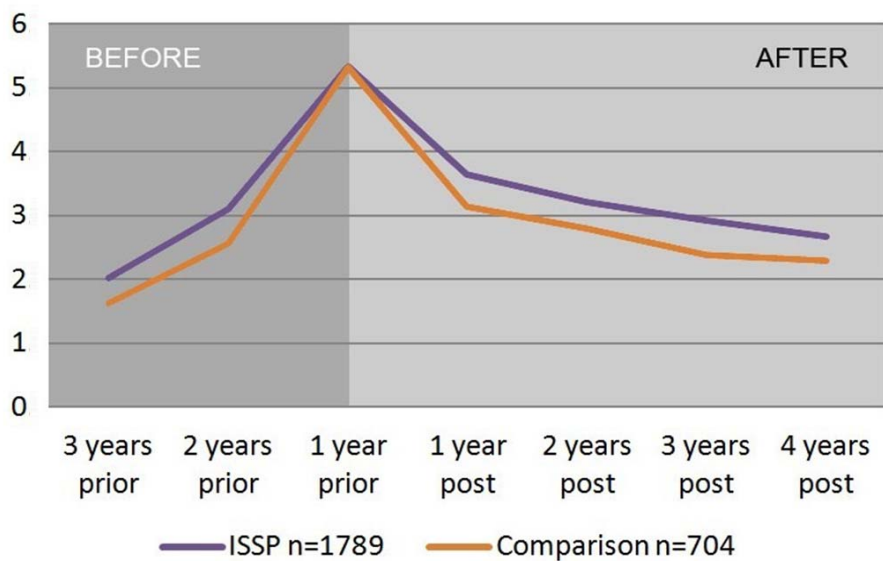
- The gravity score reaches its peak just prior to the intervention; this is followed by a sharp reduction. Again, the statistical phenomenon ‘regression to the mean’ is the most likely explanation for this pattern (Cook and Campbell, 1979).
- In both the ISSP and comparison groups, the mean score after the intervention never drops below its lowest point before the intervention.
- The trajectories of both groups are remarkably similar at all time points, although it is clear there is variation within the samples (see standard deviations in Table A and Table B, Appendix A).

³⁹ This index focuses on deprivation with respect to the characteristics of the living environment, including measure of the quality of local housing and the outdoor living environment (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004).

⁴⁰ Offence gravity is measured using the *Counting Rules* introduced by the YJB in 2000, which provides a standard list of offences and grades their seriousness from one to eight. Where no offence was committed, the young people were scored zero.

⁴¹ See Table B, Appendix A for full figures.

Graph 2: Mean gravity score for young people in the ISSP and comparison groups from three years prior to and up to four years post-intervention



Initial analysis indicated that there were statistically significant differences in the results of the ISSP and comparison samples in all years except one year before the start of the intervention. But when these results were subject to multivariate analysis⁴² (i.e. controlling for other factors) the effect disappeared.

Longitudinal analysis was used to investigate the data further. Specifically, the seriousness of the offending was examined in relation to a combination of social,⁴³ individual,⁴⁴ and offender typology characteristics (including the ISSP and comparison cases)⁴⁵ (see Table D, Appendix A).⁴⁶ The following findings were statistically significant:

- young people who met the persistence criterion for ISSP committed higher gravity offences in the year after ISSP than those who did not
- those with the highest *Asset* scores and young people who were convicted of their first offence at a younger age were also more likely to commit higher gravity offences post-ISSP

⁴² Linear regression analyses were conducted on each time period. The following variables were included in the models: age at first offence; age; gender; ethnicity; mean *Asset* score; group membership (ISSP/comparison); offender typology (serious, persistent, serious and persistent); offending frequency 12, 24 and 36 months prior; mean offending gravity score 12, 24 and 36 months prior; previous custodial order; previous community-based order. Variables were entered into the model in a step-wise process. The R^2 value was low, ranging from .181 to .193.

⁴³ The variables in this domain included the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and *Asset* score.

⁴⁴ The variables in this domain included gender and ethnicity.

⁴⁵ The variables in this domain included age at first offence; whether the young person qualified for ISSP via the persistent offender route; whether the young person qualified for ISSP via the serious offender route; and whether the young person was an ISSP or 'control' participant.

⁴⁶ The fit indices are: CFI .884; RMSEA 0.069.

- young women, those from Minority Ethnic backgrounds and comparison cases had lower levels of offending seriousness in the first year post-intervention. However, these patterns were not sustained in the longer term.

Reconviction

Table 2 provides information on reconviction rates in the four-year follow-up period, and shows the levels drop consistently each year.

Readers will notice a difference in the reconviction rates between the ISSP and comparison samples, with comparison reconviction rates being significantly lower. However, as already mentioned, the comparison sample includes significantly more serious-only offenders and young women who, typically, have a lower risk of reconviction. Once the data was analysed in multivariate models that controlled for key features,⁴⁷ the comparison group only outperformed (in terms of statistical significance) the ISSP group in the first year after the intervention. The strongest predictors of reconviction over the four-year follow-up period (see Tables C and D in Annex A) were found to be:

- previous offending frequency up to three years prior to the respective year
- offender typology (being a persistent rather than a serious offender)
- high mean *Asset* scores
- age at first conviction (participants who begin offending younger were at greater risk of reconviction) and
- gender (where young women have the highest odds of desisting).

⁴⁷ Binary logistic regression was conducted on each time period. The following variables were included in the models: age at first offence; age; gender; ethnicity; mean *Asset* score; group membership (ISSP/comparison); offender typology (serious, persistent, serious and persistent); offending frequency 12, 24 and 36 months prior; mean offending gravity score 12, 24 and 36 months prior; previous custodial order; previous community-based order. Variables were entered into the model in a step-wise process. The model was more successful in predicting reconviction than desistance; 33–49% of desisting cases were accurately predicted, while 84–95% of convictions were successfully identified. Again, the Nagelkerke pseudo R_2 was modest and the models were only able to explain 22–27% of the variance.

Table 2: Reconviction rates up to four years post-order: ISSP and comparison groups

Number of years post-order	ISSP group reconviction rate (%) (n=1,789)	Comparison group reconviction rate (%) (n=704)
1 year	79.7***	72.0
2 years	72.1**	65.8
3 years	67.3***	57.1
4 years	60.8**	53.7

Chi-square test confidence levels: **=99% level, ***=99.9% level.

Offending trajectories within the ISSP sample

Young people's offending careers post-ISSP were examined in depth using latent growth curve modelling.⁴⁸ The resulting estimations confirm that there were reductions in both offending frequency and seriousness at each time point after ISSP. On average, young people committed 3.3 offences in the first year after ISSP and reduced their offending by just under one (0.9) offence in each subsequent year, up to four years.⁴⁹ However, many young people deviated from the average downward trend, as there was significant variation in these results.⁵⁰ The mean gravity score of the most serious offence in the year after ISSP was 3.7 and, at each time point after the intervention, this value decreased by 0.9 (up to four years).⁵¹ Again, there was significant variation in the results for offence seriousness post-ISSP.⁵²

Impact of ISSP practice on subsequent offending

Finally, aspects of the ISSP programme were examined to ascertain if any one element of the supervision or surveillance had a positive – or indeed negative – effect on subsequent offending behaviour. Again, latent growth curve models were run on all aspects of the multi-modal programme,⁵³ different forms of electronic monitoring⁵⁴ and the total number of days of exposure to the programme. The findings that emerged were that:

⁴⁸ For further details, please refer to the statistics in Tables A and B in Appendix A.

⁴⁹ The fit indices are: CFI .907; RMSEA 0.088.

⁵⁰ The variance statistics are: Intercept .325***; Slope .030***

⁵¹ The fit indices are: CFI .969; RMSEA 0.036.

⁵² The variance statistics are: Intercept .167***; Slope .021***

⁵³ Education and training; restorative justice; changing offending behaviour; interpersonal skills; family support; accommodation; drug/alcohol problems; leisure/recreation activities.

⁵⁴ Electronic tagging and voice verification.

- notably, restorative justice was positively associated with a reduction in the frequency of offending in the first year after commencing ISSP ($p < .05$),⁵⁵ confirming a finding in the previous 24-month reconviction study of ISSP (Gray et al, 2005)
- there were no statistically significant differences in offending frequency or seriousness related to surveillance type⁵⁶
- from examining the number of days spent on ISSP, increased exposure to the programme was associated with modest reductions in the frequency ($p < .05$)⁵⁷ and seriousness ($p < .01$) of offending immediately after the programme.⁵⁸ However, it is possible that these results reflect a 'selection effect', whereby those offenders who breached and left the programme early were also more likely to commit further and more serious offences.

Can we treat all ISSP cases the same?

Since the data revealed that offending behaviour within the ISSP sample varied significantly, it was decided a mixture-modelling exercise might provide a useful means of exploring these patterns (Muthen and Shedden, 1999). This method allows the researcher to identify qualitatively different developmental processes within a given population, and has become increasingly popular in criminological and other evaluative research over the past 10 years (Nagin and Tremblay, 1999).⁵⁹

This exercise was exploratory and limited to the ISSP sample, who were shown to have a number of underlying differences, compared to the comparison group. Future research might benefit from applying the method to other populations of persistent and serious young offenders.

⁵⁵ The fit indices are: CFI .969; RMSEA 0.039. Estimate for restorative justice: -.157; S.E. .055; C.R -2.832; P.005.

⁵⁶ It is worth noting that this study only assessed whether one particular style of electronic surveillance worked better than another. Indeed, since the vast majority of ISSP cases (82% – Moore et al, 2004) received some form of surveillance, we are not in a position to verify whether surveillance of persistent and serious young offenders works better than having no surveillance (since the sample size of young people who had no form of electronic monitoring was too small). Future research to explore the specific effect of tagging and voice verification is required.

⁵⁷ The fit indices are: CFI .966; RMSEA 0.05. -.001; S.E. .000; C.R -2.931; P.003.

⁵⁸ The fit indices are: CFI .985; RMSEA 0.028. Estimate for total number of days spent on ISSP -.001; S.E. .000; C.R -3.443; P.000.

⁵⁹ Trajectory analysis has become an increasingly popular method for examining the offending behaviour of delinquent youth populations (Nagin and Tremblay, 1999; Nagin, 2005). Recently, the method has also been employed in wider criminological studies, such as the study of crime distribution across geographic locations (Weisburd et al, 2004; Weisburd et al, 2009) and trends in terrorist activities and crime across countries and groups (Piquero and Piquero, 2006).

Results

This method identified four empirically distinct groups with good sample sizes. The analysis focused solely on the ISSP sample and included the seven years' available data and combined information on the frequency and seriousness of offending. Appendix E contains the mean estimates of frequency and seriousness of offending for the four-group analysis.

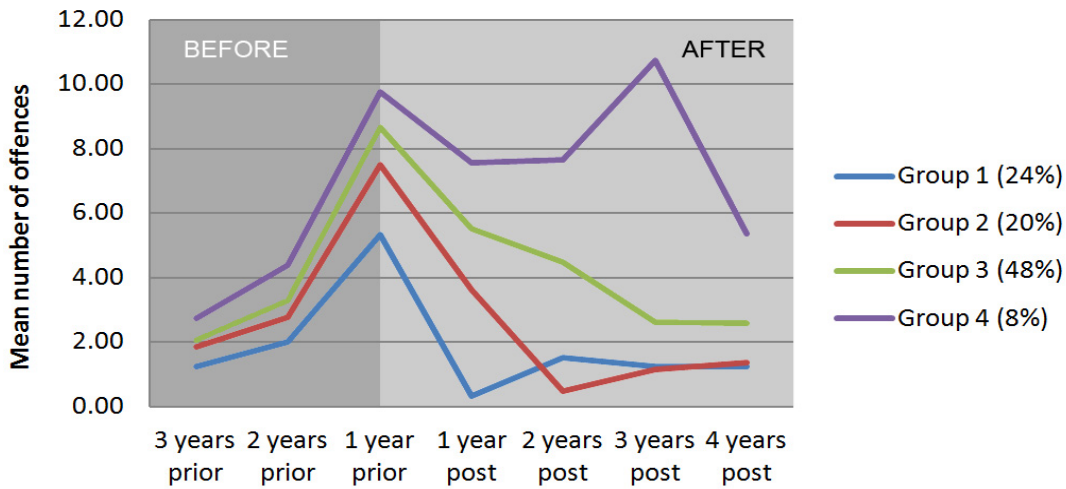
The top-line findings are illustrated in Graphs 3 and 4, which display the frequency and gravity distributions respectively.⁶⁰ A mixture-modelling analysis also provides an estimate of the proportion of the population that lies in each group. For example, the population of 'group three' is estimated to be 48%. It is important to note that the following analyses are not intended to present a causal relationship between ISSP and long-term offending behaviour; at this stage we are simply looking to explore some of the variation within the sample's behaviour, as indicated by the previous results.⁶¹ The four groups can be summarised as follows.

- **Group 1 (24%): Desisting serious young offenders**
These offenders peak with a small number of high gravity offences before ISSP. The majority desist within the first year following ISSP, with periods of non-offending and low-level fluctuations as young adults.
- **Group 2 (20%): Desisting persistent young offenders**
These offenders experience a peak in their offending frequency immediately prior to their ISSP sentence. In the short-term, they continue committing low-level offences but on a downward trend. On average, most will desist from offending around two years' post-ISSP, with minor fluctuations thereafter.
- **Group 3 (48%): Long-term high-gravity offenders**
Members of this group, the largest group within the ISSP sample, exhibit a down-turn in terms of the frequency of their offending after ISSP – although it is not achieved as quickly as the first two groups. In addition, the gravity of their ongoing offending follows a much slower decline, suggesting they continue to commit fewer but relatively serious offences as they grow up.
- **Group 4 (8%): Chaotic frequency and gravity persisters**
This group, the smallest in the analyses, contains the most prolific offenders. The frequency of their offending fluctuates at the high end over the study period, while the gravity of their offending only achieves a modest reduction after ISSP.

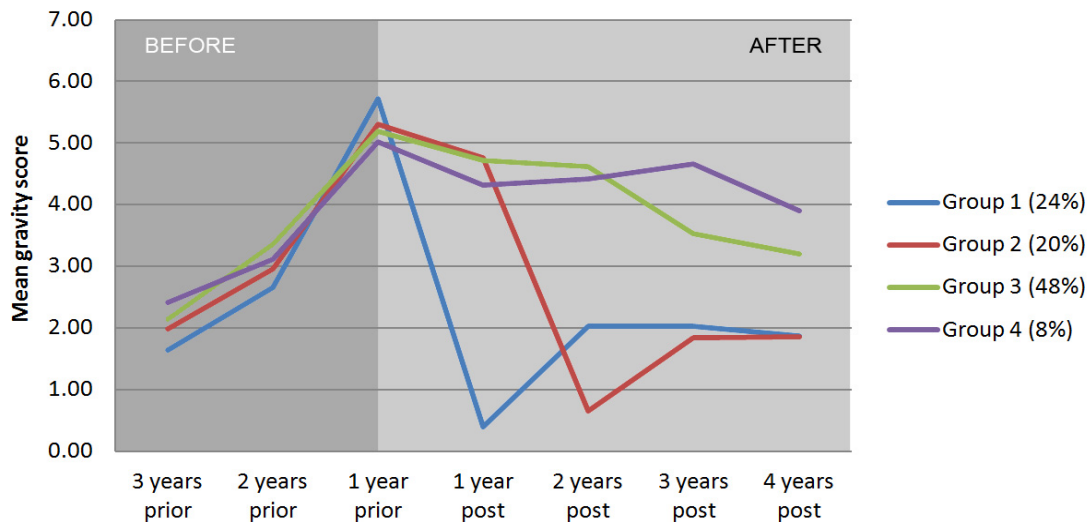
⁶⁰ The Convergence Statistic was 1.0008; Posterior P.73.

⁶¹ There are some limitations to the mixture-modelling approach: questions arise when attempting to identify the optimal number of latent classes. Secondly, the various populations within the sample may not be adequately modelled using the same statistical structure. Another limitation is that, in large samples, a number of latent classes could be required to explain adequately the variation that exists across all individuals. Finally, there is considerable and contentious debate within the academic community as to the appropriateness of employing statistically (rather than theoretically) led models, which lead to abstract conclusions. Despite these limitations, mixture modelling and similar approaches represent important new developments in the study of change (Duncan et al, 2006).

Graph 3: Distributions of offending frequency for the four groups identified through mixture modelling



Graph 4: Distributions of offending seriousness for the four groups identified through mixture modelling



According to this investigation:

- The average reduction in crime, as demonstrated in the previous analysis (see Graphs 1 and 2), was maintained by approximately half of the sample (Group 1, 24% and Group 2, 20%). Their offending behaviour reduced, on average, to a small number of low-level crimes within one to two years after the intervention.

- Group 1 (24%) – the ‘desisting serious young offenders’ – were distinguished by the gravity of their offending prior to ISSP. Indeed, this group committed some of the most serious offences out of the sample at this time (a mean gravity score of 5.7 – see Appendix E), but presented the least risk in relation to longer-term offending when compared to the other three groups.
- The largest group – Group 3 (48%), the ‘long-term high-gravity offenders’ – continued their offending into early adulthood (albeit at a lower frequency level) and by the fourth time-point post-intervention had committed an average of 2.6 offences per year with a mean gravity score of 3.2.
- The smallest group – Group 4 (8%), the ‘chaotic frequency and gravity persisters’ – posed the biggest challenge to the criminal justice system out of all the groups identified: four years after ISSP they committed, on average, 5.4 offences a year, with a mean gravity score of 3.9.
- Notably, and substantiating the results from the latent growth curve modelling above, it was young people who committed the highest volume of offences at the point of entry onto ISSP (Group 3 and Group 4, i.e. the most persistent offenders) who were more likely to sustain their offending behaviour from childhood into early adulthood.

Findings from the qualitative research: examining the life-histories of persistent young offenders

All names, personal details and locations have been changed or removed to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Details of the qualitative research methodology and ethical considerations can be found in Appendices F–H.

Memories of ISSP

In all cases, despite the passing of seven years, and even where participants only spent a short time on the programme, memories of ISSP were lucid in the minds of the interviewees. Memories focused on aspects of the daily programme – the number of hours one had to complete, the ISSP office, particular activities (going to college, football, cooking) and relationships with staff. Overall, this suggests that ISSP was distinct from other youth justice and probation orders (of which this cohort had considerable experience) and had strong programme integrity.⁶² In five cases, interview data from the initial evaluations was available, and notably similar issues arose in these follow-up discussions. This would indicate young people had consistent and clear opinions of their time on the programme.

Perceptions of supervision and surveillance

Despite the tough configuration of the ISSP programme, it would seem the majority of participants had a sense – perhaps in retrospect, if not at the time – that ISSP staff were motivated by welfare-orientated goals. John and Jordan both appreciated the firm but fair approach of their officers, who pressured them to comply, but tempered their approach with warmth and encouragement. By contrast, many had been subject to probation or other YOT programmes that were often perceived to involve nothing more than an administrative task of signing the book.

It didn't feel like punishment at all. It felt like they were trying to help.

Wesley

Like when you go to normal probation, you just sign your name in, and then you're off aren't ya? They [ISSP staff] was like doing things, like skills and all that, like learning ya how to cook, and do things on your own, put you in the right direction.

John

⁶² Programme integrity refers to the delivery of rehabilitative programmes so that they are delivered as consistently as possible in accordance with their theory and design (Hollin, 1995).

Meanwhile, perceptions of ‘the tag’ and the imposition of a curfew were fused with more punitive and punishing overtones. Since electronic monitoring facilities were typically managed by a specific and inflexible agency (Securicor/Reliance/the police), memories of surveillance were often disconnected from memories of supervision. In this sense, ISSP operated on a dual structure of care (supervision) and control (surveillance), the balance of which varied for each participant.

I hated it [the tag]...But I only hated it because you've got to be in at a certain time. And plus, the police were coming to my house every single day to see if I was there.

Chris

Relationships and care

The care and attention of a dedicated ISSP officer was reported to be the important factor in the compliance and subsequent break in offending for some of the interviewees. Two participants in particular (John and Jordan) had precise and very positive memories of ISSP on account of the good relationships developed with individual staff members. In both cases, these relationships mirrored the attention of a parent. For example, John enjoyed the homely aspects of his supervision – being picked up and dropped off, cooking, going to football and swimming, the sort of activities he said his parents never did with him.

Notably, both young people felt the relationship with their supervising officer was reciprocal – they considered the relationship genuinely close and that their respective officers had high expectations of them and instilled clear boundaries. It was the one-to-one time rather than certain activities that allowed these relationships to develop and flourish. Both John and Jordan said ISSP was one of the best resources they had had access to as young adults. Moreover, both were ‘surprise completions’, as they had been predicted to breach the programme early, but completed and sustained periods of desistance in the immediate period following ISSP. This underscores the importance of: keeping an open mind regarding referrals; the value of one-to-one contact time; the role of supportive, relationship-based supervision; and the demonstration of care in promoting change.

*I've never, never, never had a worker like that again. No-one as good as Lenny. No-one. The one I have now, he's alright, he's a good man, but no-one has been as good as Lenny. No-one. I don't know no probation officer mate, or anyone that has been as good as that man. He's the best one I could have had. He'd come round to the house and see me, check up on me. Ask me if I was ok. He was a good man. And he got on really well with me mum and me mum's fella. If I ever had a problem he'd speak to me mum...Even if I was in bits of trouble I could talk to him about it, and he'd come in, sometimes you know, he'd tell me off, like I was his kid or something. But I didn't ever tell him, "don't talk to me like that". You know, I just sat there and I took it...He'd help me, he'd help me a lot, mate...So I would never diss the man or tell him to f*ck off, I would never say to him, "you're just a probation officer, you're nothing to do with me..." He was more than that, do you know what I mean? He was a*

probation worker, or ISSP worker, but he was a mentor to me too.

Jordan

Contact with and suitability of staff

The substantial one-to-one contact time with ISSP staff facilitated the development of quality relationships and allowed young people freedom away from their peers to engage with professionals individually. However, this form of supervision was not a panacea: in other cases, trust issues remained insurmountable and some young people were simply unable to make connections with staff or engage with what the programme had to offer.

I think all it was, I just didn't want to listen to him [the ISSP officer], I just couldn't be bothered. I was just dead lazy, and back then, I was just a kid, so I was dead ignorant, dead cheeky, maybe that was just it, but I just didn't want to listen to him.

Aaron

Another important factor for the young people interviewed was the suitability of the officer. Jordan was very grateful to have an older black man, Lenny, as his officer, and the family bonded with him immediately over their shared heritage. Similarly, John, whose mother played a very distant role in his life, enjoyed having an older woman as his overseeing officer. Beyond this, there was some feeling that ISSP officers should be well-matched in terms of their social grouping.

Aaron and Mark both mentioned a desire to work with young offenders in the future. They felt they would be able to offer young people unique insights and might be respected and listened to because of their own personal experiences. Meanwhile, Aiden stated that he felt probation officers could not relate to him and that university education was an abstract qualification for working with persistent offenders. Clearly, developing a relationship was a delicate and emotional task and not all young people were motivated to commit to this type of supervision.

*They [staff] come into work thinking they can just tell me what to do and how my life is and they understand and all that...They understand nothing...What they should do, yeah, they should go and get f*cking probation workers, do you know what I mean, should use people who've been in trouble, at the end of the day, who know a thing or two about reality...*

Aiden

Pride at completion

It is notable that members of the sample who completed ISSP, even those who were not overtly positive about their experience, remembered completing the programme and expressed a sense of pride and achievement at doing so.

When I was going to college and that, I weren't partying, I weren't drinking all the time. I weren't going out robbing. I was alright 'cause I knew I was just going to college and getting paid for it, and I was happy with that.

Chris

The demanding transition towards desistance

Desistance: a many-splintered thing

As the quantitative data has revealed, there was evidence of both persistence and desistance within the sample. Three participants said that they had not offended for approximately two years prior to interview (Aaron, John and Wesley). This information was verified by the PNC data, but it is impossible to confirm whether any undetected crimes had been committed. Wesley's offending career was limited to a concentrated period in his youth, which resulted in an ISSP order. He had been convicted on one more occasion post-ISSP, for which he served a short probation order. Jordan and Howard sustained periods of desistance in excess of two years; in Jordan's case this was immediately following ISSP. These patterns were not, however, sustained.

The interview data suggests that the desistance process for the young people interviewed was a precarious one, and the desire to 'go straight' was often a very personal and occasionally temporary journey. Desistance was sometimes prompted after a young person experienced a personal crisis. In other cases, it was a conscious decision to change or simply a fleeting break from an otherwise consistently offending lifestyle.

Partial forms of desistance were established by some, whereby a particular activity was surrendered, while other forms of (often less serious) offending were maintained. What is clear is that, for persistent offenders in this study at least, desistance was an exceptionally difficult rite of passage and rarely happened independently. Indeed, the young people in this sample were overwhelmed by the changes they needed to make in order to turn their lives around. The move towards a crime-free existence invariably required an overhaul of their lifestyle: friendships were severed, relationships re-evaluated, some young people made the decision to move out of the area or face reprisal attacks, and others had to accept a significant reduction in their income and criminal status. In sum, desistance involved a large degree of personal, financial, cultural and physical risk.

Crisis – the tipping point

In this study, a concerted motivation to change was regularly born out of a crisis point. Aaron reached a point where he was effectively destitute before he considered giving up offending; Chris was facing the possibility of life behind bars due to drug-induced violence – a prospect that prompted him to seek help. David had been forced out of the city, following a series of gang-related shootings in which he and his best friend were targets. When his friend was indeed killed, he escaped the city and eventually sought drug treatment. He has never returned.

*The last five years of me life yeah, I've spent what – as a smackhead. I'm like what? I just hit rock-bottom...I was living on the street, and I was really ill. Like, you know, I was basically nearly dying. I told ya, I was using needles...I lost all touch with me family, none of them wanted to know...and like, all them, all them little pieces, you know, I decided for meself, it was time to do something different. I'd spent enough time, f*cking around, taking drugs, selling drugs, and you know, I'm 26 now. And it's about time, exactly, I thought about doing something different with me life.*

David

It would seem that for these young people – where offending had become part of an established routine – that it was a mounting sense of personal, financial, psychological and physical crisis that proved a decisive turning point in their lives. Indeed, at these crucial moments, where their personal resources were at their lowest ebb, the participants finally become receptive to the possibilities of change. Namely, in order to lead more contented lives, crucial choices would need to be made – including the decision to give up crime. There was no predictable time-scale for when these breakthroughs would occur.

Change does not happen independently

It is clear that, particularly for persistent offenders, whose lives are often saturated by crime, the process of desistance can be exceptionally demanding, demoralising and lonely. Moving away from an offending lifestyle highlights numerous resource gaps. The sample had precious few (if any) qualifications, limited education, and extensive criminal records. Some struggled with housing, drug addictions and other health problems, and many lacked adequate family or peer support.

In some cases, young people felt they had no option but to move from the city in order to resist offending (Kirk, 2008). For others, learning to adapt to a life on benefits when they had previously been able to earn good money required considerable commitment.

It is worth pointing out that, despite their desires to ‘go straight’ and their obvious attempts to better themselves, some young people simply had very little idea of how to negotiate everyday life, for example registering with a GP practice or employment service. With only modest experience of the non-criminal social world, they presented as incredibly dependent on their probation officers or other professionals. This was surprising, considering the resourcefulness and confidence some of them had shown in their criminal lives. Clearly, when persistent offenders are ready to change, substantial and intensive assistance is required – both practically and emotionally.

So, I was saying to me probation officer last week, like how are you going to help me when I get out if I am only on probation for six months. And he said you know: ‘It’s going to be hard, but you know, if you get your parole I’ll be able to help you a bit more, because you’ll be on licence for longer’. So I am hoping I do get me parole, just so I can get help when I do get out ‘cause if I am only on licence for six months, who knows where I am going to be? I am just going to be on me own again aren’t I? With no help ‘cause every other time I’ve got out of jail I’ve just gone to probation and they’ve just told me to sign on, and I’ve signed on and that’s it. I’ve never had no help before. But on this [prison] sentence I’ve had loads of help, with Carats⁶³ and things. I’ve never had none of that before. We’ll just wait and see.

Chris

⁶³ Carats is an abbreviation for the ‘Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare’ service – a drug treatment provision in secure establishments for young people and adult prisons.

A complete break

As described above, a complete break from their environment and offending networks was essential for young people who wanted to desist. Mark, Aaron and Jordan relocated to safer parts of the city, while David and Howard spoke about the need to put an even greater distance between themselves and home. Both David and Howard worried that remaining in the city would put their personal health and safety at risk, and that their ability to remain crime-free would be undermined by the need to carry weapons to protect themselves. Howard pointed out that, even if he were ready to lead a law-abiding life, many of the enemies he had made over the years would not allow him the space to do so.

When ‘going straight’ is not straightforward

Desistance: a hiatus

Two members of the sample, Chris and Howard, described how a period of desistance occurred by virtue of an enforced break in their offending routines. For Chris, this happened during his ISSP, where the daily demands of the programme took him out of his usual cycle of offending. Unfortunately, this was only temporary. Bitterly disappointed at being unable to find work after completing a college course, he returned to offending. He articulated this disappointment in the initial and follow-up evaluations, five years apart.

When I was on that ISSP programme, and they got me into college, I was alright for 12 weeks, you know what I mean? I was getting paid, it weren't much but I was getting something and I was living off it. I was happy doing it, I didn't miss it, not once, I went every single day. But it was just a 12-week course and, once that finished, I asked them to try and get me into another college, or another placement, but it didn't happen. And so I was back to square one.

Chris

Howard, meanwhile, was forced to “lie low” after “going on the run” following an arrest for armed robbery. He described how much he enjoyed the more relaxed lifestyle afforded by his need to avoid police attention. A new environment, away from his co-offending peers provided a much needed break from the usual influences and situations of the city. Even if the main reason for such periods of desistance is circumstantial, opportunities arising from interludes which may take place during a period of supervision should be capitalised on to maximise young people’s understanding and experience of a non-offending lifestyle.

False positive desistance

It should be noted that two young people were contacted to take part in the study because they appeared, according to PNC data, to have desisted from crime in the years after ISSP. However, their lack of involvement in official statistics was not an indication of genuine positive change. As young adults, both became involved in serious and organised crime – beyond the immediate street-level reach of the police. After committing an armed robbery, Howard went on the run overseas for a number of years. His whereabouts were eventually exposed by a neighbour who saw his photo-fit on Crimewatch.

Arrangements to interview Peter fell through after he was remanded for grievous bodily harm. Further investigations through local print media⁶⁴ revealed that the assault Peter was arrested for at the time of interview, as well as an act of arson seven years previously, were related to a long-term feud between two well-established family gangs. Peter was associated with a family that was one of the main drug suppliers in the city and had been involved in high-profile disturbances including murder, car and nail-bomb attacks. It is impossible to know what broader role Peter played in this family. However, since it is common for gangs to avoid co-operating with the authorities (Howell, 1994; Porteous et al, 2007), even where their own safety is concerned, Peter may have been involved in further drug and violent crimes without coming to the attention of the police, although this is speculation. Nevertheless, this pattern underscores a well recognised limitation of official statistics, which do not offer a complete picture of crime because much of it – especially drug-related offences, as well as violence between criminals – goes unreported (Golding and McClory, 2008).

Offending patterns and partial desistance

Predictably, offending patterns changed as the young people grew up. Some of them transitioned from offences typically associated with adolescence, such as car-theft and criminal damage, to more adult pursuits. These trajectories represented both ends of the scale. In some instances, offending patterns transitioned into lower gravity offences, such as driving-related offences and petty theft while, in others, they demonstrated an intensification of offending behaviour, resulting in offences such as armed robbery, violence and domestic burglary. However, on further inspection, it was found that these patterns were extremely complex and unpredictable.

On a related note, the life stories of two participants, Mark and Chris, suggested that desistance was sometimes a frustrating, disjointed process. These young men were (separately) involved in organised car thefts during their youth, an activity both claimed to have given up in order to stay out of trouble. However, having developed drug or alcohol addictions as they were growing up, they often became embroiled in violent altercations as adults, which almost always resulted in lengthy convictions for violence. In these cases, desisting from crime was a slow and partial process, whereby particular offences were renounced before others.

I just decided I am not going to drive anymore, and I stay away from cars. It's been about four or five years since I've driven a car, I wouldn't even get in a robbed car now. So I've made a change in a way. But it's the violence that I can't get away from... The last three times I've been away... Yeah, I was back in in January for two racially aggravated assaults, then I got out – I think that was the autumn. Then I went back away at the end of last year – for another assault. So it's been violence all the time. I can't get away from it.

Mark

⁶⁴ A content analysis of local newspapers was conducted through LexisNexis. This database has access to approximately 12,000 publications including UK national and local newspapers.

Becoming fathers

While some studies have shown a link between becoming a parent and desistance (Graham and Bowling, 1995; Moore and Hagedorn, 1999), this small study found that having children failed to produce desistance in three of the five individuals who were fathers. Jordan presented as the only participant who was emotionally and practically connected to his offspring. The arrival of his daughter prompted him to find employment and, with the assistance of his family, he took seriously the need to provide time, care and resources for his child – all of which did, he said, have some, albeit limited, positive effect on his offending behaviour. Meanwhile, Aiden, Mark and David admitted that having dependants made little or no difference to their everyday life or behaviour. In fact, all three had very limited contact with their children. Two of Mark's three children were placed in foster care, Aiden had only met his daughter on a handful of occasions, and David lost contact with his son when he escaped the city.

I don't think it's affected anything that I do. I'll be honest, I know it's going to sound selfish, but it's never stopped me going to prison. I always thought it would, when me ex-partner was pregnant with me little girl, I always thought: 'Yeah, I'll make a change now, I won't go back away'. I thought, I'll be staying out of prison, but then, a couple of months later I got done for drink-driving and I was back in prison for it, and then, we had me little lad, and I went back to prison again. So, like, having kids just hasn't affected me at all, like, I haven't changed for them. I don't think I'll change for anyone.

Mark

Persistence

Only one young person in the sample admitted he had no desire to desist from crime (Aiden). He was not deterred by repeated custodial sentences – in fact he seemed to find pleasure in prison life. Moreover, he stressed that he enjoyed offending, and believed it was the only way for him to support himself financially.

I always say to me mum and dad: "Oh, this is the last time, this time, I mean it this time, I'm going to get a job" ...But I don't though. That's just the way it is. I don't know why. I'm just addicted to getting into trouble...I do it to survive, do you know what I mean? I don't like asking people for things, so, you know, I suppose that's why I rob. I don't have to rob like, me mum and dad would give me things, give me money, but it's not good living off your mum and dad, do you know what I mean? So I rob off the rich to give to meself.

Aiden

Mark and Howard indicated that they were planning to 'go straight', but it was uncertain whether these were realistic goals. Three key reasons were identified: Mark admitted that avoiding alcohol-related violence was very challenging and, although he recognised he had a problem, he had not sought any professional help for his addiction. He also acknowledged that he experienced prison as a place of respite (see below). Finally, as previously mentioned, Howard admitted it would remain hard to desist from crime, once he was released from custody, as he had made many enemies on the outside.

The role of the wider criminal justice system

The 'soft' option – youth custody

All but one member of the sample had spent time in YOIs from their mid-teens. One young man had also spent time in a secure children's home. What was striking about the group's experiences of youth custody was the distinct familiarity and casualness with which they regarded being 'sent down'. Asked about their first memories of going into the secure estate, their uniform responses were that, after a period of initial apprehension, all found it possible to adapt effectively. Many had friends, family or neighbours inside the same establishment, knew what to expect, met like-minded peers and, indeed, felt comfortable in these establishments.

Coming to jail [the first time], like, on the way in the sweat-box, I was scared. But, when I got there, I knew some of the people that were already there like, so, I just fitted in, kinda thing. Like there was always loads of people from home there, and like in for the same sorts of crime things, robbing cars and that, that I was into. So, it just came together and I just fitted in. I fitted in so easy, and then, all the other times, it's always the same faces. It's just like, every time I've been to jail, most of the people that you see, you already know. It's a big circle.

Chris

What was striking about the responses on this topic was the lack of punitive, deterrent or rehabilitative impact custody had on participants. Moreover, when one compares these memories with their experiences of probation, YOTs, education and social work, which many said they hated, it is somewhat surprising that custody failed to elicit similarly resentful attitudes. Upon further inspection, it is clear that custody occupied a unique space for the young people in this sample, distinct from all other criminal justice and welfare services. While many would admit they did not enjoy YOIs and were relieved to get out, custody was often the easy option in their opinion.

Specifically, custody was not as emotionally or cognitively demanding as alternative punishments, particularly ISSP, which required participants to set goals, review their behaviour, and reflect on their lives. The youth custody environment was not experienced as a service that was actively trying to change them. In fact, as Mark ironically but eloquently commented, prison actually afforded him more psychological freedom than other community-based orders did, as well as physical respite from his hectic life on the outside:

Sometimes I do like being in prison. I know it sounds strange, but I like, a bit of me own space, a bit of me own time. When I am in prison, I'm like, I can chill on me own. And, all me mates are there as well. So, it's the best of both worlds – so, I weren't really missing out on much, it weren't hard work really...At least in prison, you can just, you can just be as free as you want, even though you are locked up. I know it sounds strange...but you didn't have to turn up for interviews or you didn't have to go to probation, you didn't have to show that you were doing any better, you didn't have to show that you were staying away from crime, if you were in prison, you could always say: 'Well, as soon as I get out, I am going to rob someone and there's nothing you can do about it'...If I said that to someone on probation: 'I'm going to rob someone' – I'd get breached...And it does sound strange, you know, saying it out loud...I do wish now, like, I did try harder with

probation, because at least it tries to rehabilitate you and it does show you right from wrong. Whereas prison, well, you've probably heard this a hundred times, but it's a university for criminals...While probation is actually hard work.

Mark

In sum, the cultural and personal benefits of custody often outweighed the practical drawbacks. Many of the nine individuals interviewed achieved a valuable status among their peers, once they had been in custody; it strengthened their sense of criminal identity, increased their circle of friends and was an establishment they could fit into. Many were pleasantly surprised that custody was not as arduous as they had expected; in fact, it was surprisingly straightforward. In this, albeit limited, sense, custody represented an easy option for members of this sample. By contrast, ISSP was experienced as psychologically challenging and based on the concept of personal and social change. While it provided useful opportunities for the receptive candidates, others found it very difficult to relate to. Indeed, some considered it intolerable.

Recidivist premium sentences⁶⁵ – a deterrent?

There was some limited evidence among the sample of a deterrent effect of adult, but not juvenile, custodial sentencing. Two factors seemed to have an aversive influence, one of which – maltreatment – would be difficult to sanction formally. Indeed, some participants found adult prisons exceptionally harsh. Poor conditions, including overcrowding, slopping out and bullying were cited.

One participant was seriously assaulted and strangled during an adult custodial sentence, while another reported that he had been involved in two major fights and numerous altercations with prison officers. The second source of deterrence was the very real prospect of extended or life sentences two participants faced (Jordan and Chris). Perhaps because both participants had substantial experience of custody, the prospect of a life in prison was both intimidating and suitably galvanizing. However, it remained unclear whether (and to what extent) the threat of a recidivist premium sentence would have a lasting effect on these respective individuals.

Experiences of police harassment during childhood

One of the most significant relationships the sample had with the criminal justice system was with the police. The police effectively represent the front line of criminal sanctions as they are often the first agency young people come into contact with during the onset of offending. However, from a young age, the participants in this study reported a deep distrust of the local police, and described a warfare dynamic, which was equally rancorous on both sides.

⁶⁵ All jurisdictions, whether common or civil law, punish repeat offenders more severely. The recidivist sentencing premium holds that offenders with previous convictions should be considered more blameworthy and hence worthy of harsher punishments (Roberts, 2008).

While the causes of the young people's distrust of the police may be multifaceted (incorporating personal, cultural and practical influences), controversially, all but one young person interviewed as part of this study recounted direct experiences of police harassment or violence as children (under 18). In most cases, this took place before ISSP started, and continued into early adulthood. Chris spoke about the first time he was arrested, at the age of 11. He said a police car knocked him off his bike, and that he was then taken to the station and initially questioned without the presence of a parent or responsible adult.

Other examples included violent beatings, being picked up and dumped a long distance from home, and being subjected to unwarranted drugs and firearms raids involving CS gas – alongside everyday harassment. Respondents stated that such treatment was par for the course, and Chris explained that sometimes the police would administer assaults as alternative forms of punishment, which the young people accepted (at the time) as preferable to a conviction.

I was about 14. Me and me old mate we were in a robbed car, we've jumped out of the car there and run across the field. But when we've got across the other side of the field, they've [the police] been there, and they've jumped out on us, and they battered the both of us, you know, with their truncheons, and they didn't arrest us, 'cause they knew that they'd hurt us that bad. Do you know what I mean? We were only kids really. They left us on the field. But they proper battered us, like, I could just about walk. I remember that.

Chris

One young person reported making an official complaint about the harm this treatment had caused.

This study was not designed to address young people's experiences or views of the police, and these stories have emerged voluntarily as the participants recounted their life stories. As such, we must remain cautious about the findings. Nevertheless, they remain a cause for concern, since it was clear these memories had strongly influenced these young people's understanding of justice, fairness and respect for authority as they grew up (cf. Tyler, 2006).

The role of local cultural influences

The criminal climate

From childhood, crime was undoubtedly an ingrained part of the culture of the persistent young offenders interviewed for this study. Almost all had friends, family or neighbours who either made money or increased their social standing through crime. YOIs were often populated with people they knew, and the initial anxiety of going into custody was usually brief. Indeed, custody for some was an accepted, even welcome, aspect of their lifestyle. In this sense, as they were growing up, crime and the culture surrounding it occupied large portions of the young people's time – particularly since all had ceased going to school around the age of 12. Crime provided a means for making friends, progressing socially and financially, acquiring girlfriends and maturing at an accelerated rate. Many of the nine young men interviewed spent their teenage years with older peers in an effort to climb the criminal career ladder, forgoing more age-appropriate activities. Reflecting on their youth, a number of interviewees indicated that the

simplicity and innocence that they perceived other children to enjoy had eluded them after they became involved in crime.

A normal 15-year-old is going to school, playing football in the park. It's never been me, I've never ever done things like that. Like, I stopped going to school when I was 12...I wish I had stayed on at school, and got some qualifications or whatever. I think that now, but, at the time, I didn't think like that, I wasn't interested in stuff like that. But it's been the way it has.

Chris

The topic of gangs frequently punctuated interviewees' life stories. Participants reported that, in parts of the city, violent gang and drug networks were conspicuously influential. Indeed, there have been a number of high-profile gang-related murders in this area over recent years, often making national news headlines. Notably, of the ISSP cohort (n=65) from which the qualitative sample was drawn, three were in prison for gang-related murders, one had been shot dead in a much publicised revenge attack outside a local prison and, of those interviewed, four confessed to having direct experience of gangs and using firearms as teenagers.

*Some stuff I have been round and seen...even from young, some stuff has been bad mate...The worst things I've seen...have always been about drugs. Not just the drug itself. Drugs yeah, but everything around it. Or the way people fight over it...I've seen loads of mad sh*t mate. And I've seen a kid get shot one time up there. A kid got smoked mate. We was in the flat and we were just having a drink. It's where they sold drugs, and the bell went. And me mate said to the kid: 'Call downstairs and get the door'. And as the kid's gone downstairs to get the door, and there was a gate on the other side, and whoever it was shot the kid in the stomach. He was only a young kid, so you know, it was bad, 'cause he was only a young, young kid...*

Jordan

Data from these interviews portrays an environment in which crime is embedded in the local youth networks, and where violence ricochets back and forth. The nature of gang activity generated patterns of interaction, daily behaviour, and belief systems that influenced the activities of its members and local young people more generally. While there is much media speculation regarding the problems associated with gang crime in parts of the UK, further research is required to examine in detail how young people with extensive criminal histories are located in, and used and influenced by criminal networks.

Offending relationships

Offending behaviour would generally take place within the context of an offending group – be it friends, acquaintances or, often, more organised networks and gangs. However, these relationships were often fraught with competition, rivalry and suspicion. Criminal networks, particularly those in the drugs world, were portrayed as harshly Darwinian – hierarchies existed, whereby some young people were able to climb the criminal ladder quicker than others, leaving those at the bottom on the front line – taking the greatest risks for the least reward. Moreover, there was a precarious maze of alliances and codes, and a sense that co-offenders and even close friends might betray each other to the police or rivals. Almost all the interviewees expressed contempt as

they reflected on their childhood peer groups. Indeed, both those who wished to desist from offending, as well as those who simply wanted to avoid the attention of the police, realised that many childhood relationships were a liability.

*All types of paranoia sets in like, you know. You think to yourself, even though they're your boys and who you've been doing so much with, for so long, you do start, you do start to think, would he set me up? Would he, would he sell me out to another crew...all kinds of sh*t goes through your head.*

David

When the thrill of the chase ends

Asked about the onset of offending in their youth, the young people interviewed, with the exception of Wesley, spoke about enjoying offending, even if they experienced some regret or shame as adults. Being chased by the police, acquiring goods and money, driving stolen cars gave them an intense thrill or adrenaline rush. Offending often afforded them a sense of power and liberation – a feeling they were special. Mark, David and Howard used the words “being free to do what they want” and “running wild”. In comparison, non-offenders were perceived at the time to be boring and easily exploited.

There would never be a day go by when we were younger, from when I was about 14, that we weren't driving round in all different cars, like we got new cars – all other people's cars obviously. But we felt like, we were better than everyone else. I don't know, we just thought we were different, do you know what I mean? We weren't the sort you could tie down, we wouldn't go to school or go to the YOT or anything like that, we just thought: 'We're going to do what we want to do'. And we thought we could get away with it as well. But we never did!

Mark

However, as the young people grew up, these inflated ideas were increasingly challenged and adulthood brought some cold and stark realisations. Unable to find a dependable source of income (illicit or legitimate), few were in a position to support themselves financially, leaving them dependent on family or social welfare benefits. Banned from driving as youths, insurance premiums precluded the affordability of a car. Recreational drug and alcohol use in their teens had turned into addiction for three members of the sample by their early twenties. Finally, as adults, many of these formerly persistent young offenders were subject to regular attention from the police and high-premium sentences.

After they grow up, the outlook for persistent young offenders can be unexpectedly difficult emotionally, financially and practically.

The role of educational and welfare agencies

Education

Education among the sample was uniformly negligible. All participants had failed to complete secondary school in mainstream education, either because they had been expelled officially or had simply stopped attending. Alternative provision was occasionally attempted but rarely successful. This highlights the importance of keeping young people in mainstream services. The vast majority had stopped attending as pre-teens, following disappointing experiences of

primary education. Wesley had suffered serious bullying from a young age, while Aiden, Aaron, John and Howard had special educational needs (including dyslexia and visual impairment) that teachers were either not aware of or struggled to address.

However, it was also evident that education services had failed to inspire these young people. Learning was seen as boring, teachers were universally hated as authority figures, and the educational environment was not one many of these young people could relate to. Interviewees complained about having to “sit down with your head in a book” and preferred life on the street where they escaped to “run wild”. Many used the word “hate” in relation to their experience of school.

I hated school. I couldn't concentrate, do you know what I mean? By the age of 13, I had probably been to about six schools or something...The first time I got expelled from school. I threw a chair at the teacher, didn't !! He was trying to tell me to do work I couldn't do. I explained: 'Sir, I can't do this work, too hard for me'. 'Well, everyone else is doing it, you do it'...and I just got frustrated and I just got up and threw a chair at him. And that was it, and I never went back again.

Aiden

Nevertheless, as adults, a number of young people regretted not working harder at their education. Some were embarrassed about having no qualifications and lacked confidence in the workplace. It was telling that two young people from the sample were clearly reluctant to complete any forms or correspond by mail in relation to the study, possibly indicating reading and writing problems. Naturally, the thought of returning to education was a daunting one for most, although two members had undertaken national vocational qualifications in cooking (Aaron and Howard), while Mark displayed a keen interest in learning and completed a basic maths course at his local college.

Employment

Given that no-one in the sample had completed their education, the traditional transition from school into employment was not evident in the interviewees' life stories. While all participants had been able to find employment during their adult years (excluding Chris, who had spent most of his early adulthood in prison), none of the sample was in full or part-time employment at the time of interview. Aaron had trained as a chef, but had not succeeded in staying in employment for any length of time. Others had managed to find temporary and low-paid casual work in manual trades such as plastering, removals and gardening. Engagement in sporadic and minimum-wage work failed to provide routes away from poverty and crime. These jobs did not provide a stepping-stone to better employment or a means for consistently supporting oneself. Informal contacts were the most effective source of work, confirming young people's perceptions that qualifications were irrelevant to getting a job. Wider aspects of disadvantage were also a barrier to finding employment, largely because the local job market offered few opportunities.

Residential care and social housing

Five of the nine interviewees experienced disrupted living arrangements as they were growing up. Relationship breakdowns led John, Mark and David to move in with other family members or friends during their teenage years. Both Aaron and Aiden were taken into local authority care as pre-teens (before ISSP), with the agreement of their parents, who said they could not manage their increasingly disorderly behaviour. Being placed in care was emotionally traumatic for both individuals. They were moved around numerous residential placements in and out of the city, disrupting their schooling and fracturing family relationships in both the short- and long-term.

In Aiden's case, it led to extremely negative and distrustful attitudes towards all professionals, with whom he clashed and physically fought. He also claimed he had been sexually abused by a member of the care staff, an allegation he eventually reported to the police in his twenties, although the case was not pursued. It is clear all participants with unstable living arrangements required considerable and timely support with the practical aspects of housing and independent living. Where this was not received, the additional issues they had to contend with – such as substance abuse or relationship breakdown – would intensify and tip the balance against them establishing a crime-free life.

If I went to jail now, I'd lose me flat...and I have worked so hard to get that flat, I've waited so long. Four years it took me. I was on property pool for four years before I eventually got me flat...It's just, it's given me more independence...getting me own flat has given me more stability, I can look for work, and like, in hostels, you've got to pay about £75 for all of the extra services, staff and meals, so getting me own flat, it's easier, I can make what I want, do what I want, it's more homely, and it's more, like back to normal, back to normal life.

Aaron

Other health and welfare agencies

Young people in this study typically came into contact with a broad range of agencies and staff across all social welfare domains, from childhood through to adulthood. The experience of this sample was that there were often lengthy delays in accessing and responding to their needs. There appeared to be few mechanisms for the joined-up exploration of issues arising from individual cases or for feeding this into strategic planning and preventive work. In fact, a number of young people commented on how they were released from custody or probation orders with very little support, despite critical needs such as homelessness and addiction.

Strengthening the validity of evaluative studies

One of the stated goals of this study (see 'Methodology' above) was to reflect critically on the evaluative research process. Indeed, evaluative research has been a popular feature of contemporary criminology. It has aimed to understand how effective and efficient criminal justice interventions can be, and why and how the processes involved operate (McGuire, 1995; Pitts, 2003). Some commentators, however, have argued that the political desire for this type of research has frustrated the provision of a robust, theoretically informed body of work, in favour of short-range management statistics that ignore important individual and social factors (Pitts, 2003; Moore et al, 2006).

Moreover, the methodological rigour of much evaluative policy research has been criticised (Tilley, 2000; Tilley, 2002) and studies which claim to find positive signs of change with offenders tend to occur when samples are small, or when there is no suitable comparison group (Sherman et al, 1997; Merrington, 2006). While this study has sought to find answers to 'what works?' questions, it has also intended to consider how research can find these answers more reliably. In light of this, we believe that researchers conducting future reconviction studies – particularly with a persistent offender population – may benefit from the following points that have emerged during this study.

- **Locating a well-matched control group**

The data presented in this study has revealed some important features about the sample's behaviour and circumstances:

- We learned that there are statistically significant differences in the broader criminal characteristics of the ISSP and comparison samples, as members of the ISSP group have longer offending histories, which started at a younger age.
- It is possible that, as offenders with longer criminal trajectories, the ISSP group may have been exposed to more frequent convictions and harsher sentences than the comparison group, i.e. they may not only be different in terms of their offending backgrounds, but they may have been treated differently by the criminal justice system.
- The statistical analysis revealed that offenders who were classified as persistent (who made up a greater proportion of the ISSP sample) were more likely to have longer and more serious offending patterns in following years.

In short, this poses a significant challenge in that we may not be comparing like with like, and indicates that locating a suitable control group is both more difficult and more important than previously thought. Future studies should not only focus on matching participants' immediate criminal histories one year prior to an intervention – as we did for the initial reconviction studies of ISSP (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005) – but should also incorporate variables on participants' exposure to crime and criminal justice sanctions in the course of their lives.

- **The challenge of modelling extreme variables**

It is well recognised that youth crime has personal, social, psychological, historical and cultural dimensions that require interdisciplinary analysis (McGuire, 1995; Sherman et al, 1997). Building a robust and sophisticated statistical modelling strategy is not easy. By definition, serious and persistent young offenders register extreme and erratic scores in relation to their criminal histories, and many are also in complex personal circumstances that need to be taken into account. Indeed, the simple multivariate analyses conducted during this study have not been able to explain much of the variance within the models – the R_2 values⁶⁶ of the initial regression analyses were modest. Much more consideration needs to be paid to the development of statistical models and analysis where persistent young offenders are concerned.
- **The need for longitudinal quantitative data**

Many pertinent questions relating to persistent offending turn out, on closer inspection, to contain a chronological element. For example, is persistent offending limited to adolescence? Does offending behaviour get progressively worse, or can people turn around their lives quickly? In this regard, longitudinal panel or cohort designs are able to address some of the most challenging research questions – helping to determine the antecedents, correlates and consequences of a phenomenon. They can evaluate whether individuals differ in these processes, and, if so, determine the sources of the individual differences. These methodologies can also capture group statistics to examine aggregate-level developments (Duncan et al, 2006). Moreover, recent analytic advances allow greater headway to be made in identifying multiple populations within longitudinal samples (see Nagin, 2005).

⁶⁶ In statistics, R_2 is the proportion of variability in a data set that is accounted for by the statistical model. It provides a measure of how well future outcomes are likely to be predicted by the model and therefore is a measure of model fit.

Conclusions

The data discussed in this report suggests that there was a steep downward trend in the frequency and seriousness of offending within the ISSP sample. However, there was also considerable variation and almost half the ISSP sample desisted from offending, while others continued to pose a challenge for the youth justice system and, later, the adult criminal justice system. Moreover, these patterns are not historically unusual for this population of offenders (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Sherman et al, 1997; Smith, 2005; Moore et al, 2006) and, certainly, in terms of its overall effect on future offending patterns (i.e. both frequency and seriousness of offending),⁶⁷ ISSP proved no better and certainly no worse than other community or custodial disposals. Considering this, it is useful to assess the possible merits (or otherwise) of ISSP – as gleaned from a wider consideration of the quantitative and qualitative data used in this study.

- **A cost-effective alternative to custody**
ISSP appeared to have provided a cost-effective way of dealing with some of the most challenging young offenders who might otherwise be facing a custodial sentence. It is difficult to say with any certainty, however, whether a young person is genuinely diverted from custody – or for how long.⁶⁸ If policymakers want to reduce the custodial population, the provision of credible alternatives to custody is only one of a number of steps that need to be taken.
- **Perception of ISSP as tough, robust and geared towards change**
With its combination of daily supervision and evening surveillance based on the idea of personal change, ISSP was perceived as caring and tough by the interviewees in the qualitative element of this study. Critically, it was also experienced as more challenging than custody. In fact, many preferred custody to ISSP, since detention was described as making fewer demands on the young people cognitively and culturally. This data challenges the idea that custody deters or rehabilitates high-tariff or persistent offenders, as well as highlighting the role of intensive programmes in encouraging the concept of change.
- **Relationship-based supervision**
The question of what works for young people does not involve an easy or universal solution. Nevertheless, ISSP afforded some young people a unique and occasionally transformative opportunity to create a positive

⁶⁷ Up to four years post intervention.

⁶⁸ The 24-month reconviction study (Gray et al, 2005) looked in detail at the role of ISSP in diverting young offenders from custody. It concluded that, while ISSP had diverted some young people from custodial disposals, this reduction had taken place in both non-ISSP and ISSP areas. Moreover, ISSP had also replaced some less intensive community disposals. This suggests that the drop in the use of custody during the study period cannot be attributed solely to the introduction of ISSP. It was probably influenced by a range of national policies and initiatives to reduce the levels of custody for young people, as well as by local factors such as sentencing decisions by youth courts.

high-quality bond with a responsible adult (Gray et al, 2005). These connections were described as having a strong influence on some participants' behaviour during the ISSP programme and for some time afterwards. It was, however, very difficult to predict who might respond to this aspect of ISSP, or at what point in their offending careers. Keeping an open mind about referrals is essential – as is the consistent nurturing of good one-to-one relationships. The value of these relationships with professionals has been highlighted elsewhere in relation to other adult disposals and disposals for young people (Burnett and McNeil, 2005; Howard League, 2011).

- **The desistance process requires support**

The road to giving up offending was shown to be a long and arduous one for the offenders in this study, as they required considerable external and flexible support. The role of ISSP was particularly pertinent in many cases, as this group of persistent and serious young offenders were demonstrated to have slipped through the net of the usual welfare services for children and young people. Most had disengaged from education, had vulnerable housing situations and suffered breakdowns in family relationships. The generous time afforded by the ISSP programme allowed staff to provide tailored support and access to vital community services. As Smith (2005) stresses, the importance of meeting the needs of young offenders is such that programmes which successfully address social and welfare requirements may be considered effective regardless of the consequences in behaviour change.

- **Opportunities to desist**

ISSP provided unique opportunities outside standard youth justice supervision for young people to adopt a non-offending lifestyle while under close supervision in the community. Being regularly occupied with education, placements and activities, together with an evening curfew, allowed the young people time away from their usual offending patterns and relationships, while avoiding the ultimate disruption caused by custodial sentences. ISSP staff were able to take advantage of these breaks in offending and encourage new models of behaviour.

- **Managing expectations**

ISSP teams had substantial responsibilities to treat, process, and encourage vulnerable and chaotic young people to participate constructively in society. That many of the nine participants from the qualitative element of this study had received inadequate and often harsh treatment by elements of the criminal justice system is a cause for concern. The majority of these young people and their families had disengaged from other important social welfare providers long before starting ISSP. They lived in areas suffering long-term deprivation, with few opportunities for them to support themselves financially or practically. It was not unusual for trust issues to create obstacles for ISSP staff to overcome, as young people found it difficult to relate to staff and the aims of the programme. It is imperative, therefore, that the success of ISSP is considered beyond the context of reconviction results to incorporate additional social and welfare goals (Smith, 2005).

In sum, ISSP dealt with some of the most excluded and deprived sections of society, at some of the most chaotic times of their lives, and must be appraised in light of this. Providing a community-based, welfare-led alternative to custody is a significant achievement. Combining modes of control and restriction (by virtue of the tag), ISSP provided a robust, tailored and multifaceted response to persistent youth offending. Indeed, an expectation that ISSP should reduce offending behaviour should be recognised as just one element in its evaluation, given a youth justice system that has many complex, urgent and occasionally conflicting priorities.

Policy recommendations

The following recommendations are based on findings from the three research reports published about the 2001 ISSP cohort (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005; and this report).

1. **Focus ISS on the most persistent offenders**

Since the inception of ISSP in 2001, the eligibility criteria have been broadened several times. Relaxing the previously strict and nationally consistent rules runs the risk of ISS being used with young people who would have previously received a conventional community penalty rather than with those who would otherwise have received a custodial sentence. Furthermore, in terms of reducing the risk of reoffending, the data generated by this study shows that young people with the most prolific offending histories present the greatest challenge to the criminal justice system in both the short and long term. They also typically have the most entrenched social, personal and educational needs. It is therefore recommended that magistrates and YOTs should limit the use of ISS to the small population of very persistent young offenders.⁶⁹

2. **Monitor potential net-widening**

The recent lowering of the ISS threshold should be monitored carefully by the YJB. If the use of ISS is not limited to young people at genuine risk of custody, there may be a risk of it replacing less intensive community disposals, in a process known as net-widening, rather than custodial remands and sentences.

3. **Protect relationship-based supervision**

The offender-officer relationship should be protected within ISS practice. ISS staff should have limited caseloads in order to provide sufficient and flexible one-to-one support for the young person and their family.

⁶⁹ Empirically, the average number of offences committed one year (at liberty) before starting ISSP was 7.7. Similarly, the mixture modelling exercise suggested that around half of the young people on ISSP presented the biggest challenge to the criminal justice system in terms of future offending (Groups 3 and 4 in the mixture modelling analysis). These young people had, on average, committed at least eight offences in the year prior to starting ISSP (at liberty). Therefore, the current working guidelines of 'around three' offending episodes in the prior 12 months (Sentencing Guidelines Council, 2009:11) may be pitched too low and risk expanding an intensive programme to those whose behaviour, although problematic, might not warrant (or benefit from) a high-tariff sentence (c.f. Merrington, 2006).

4. **Provide ‘routes out’ support**
Where appropriate, youth justice teams and adult probation services should consider and seek access to opportunities outside their clients’ immediate neighbourhood in order to help them disconnect from criminal networks and peer influences.
5. **Maximise the role of restorative justice**
Teams who provide ISS should seek to maximise the role of restorative justice in their provision, where appropriate.
6. **Use custody as a last resort**
The current evaluation has shown ISS to be a robust alternative to custody, so ministers, policymakers, magistrates and YOTs should continue to use custodial detention as a last resort. Indeed, alternatives to custody should be considered appropriate even for the most persistent young offenders, who often do not consider custodial detentions a deterrent, and for whom they are not a credible rehabilitative intervention or a punishment (c.f. Gyateng et al, 2013).
7. **Provide co-ordinated multi-agency support**
Persistent young offenders are often affected by a complex poverty trap as they reach adulthood and few young people manage the transition away from crime without considerable multi-agency support. ISS staff and YOTs should seek to form close and effective working relationships with all mainstream social welfare services and to continue support for young people beyond their ISS sentence.
8. **Support evidence-based policy by:**
 - a. **calculating full economic costs**
As the financial costs of criminal justice interventions become a greater issue, the full economic costs of programmes and custodial placements need to be collated by criminal justice agencies so that well-informed comparisons can be made.
 - b. **strengthening evaluative research**
Quantitative policy evaluations could be strengthened by the adoption of more sophisticated statistical models and longer term evaluations. Indeed, future research should emphasise the importance of valid and reliable research design in order to provide policymakers with reliable information. In particular, reconviction results should not be the sole measure of a programme’s success in relation to persistent and serious young offenders. Markers of success should also include wider social and welfare goals. Finally, careful consideration must be given to research employing a control group of persistent young offenders. This project suggests that locating a well-matched comparison group requires comprehensive offending data in excess of two years prior to the intervention, as well as data on a range of personal, social and offending characteristics.

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Appendix A: Results tables from quantitative data

Table A: Frequency of offending by young people in the ISSP and comparison groups from three years prior to and up to four years post-intervention⁷⁰

	ISSP group					Comparison group				
	Number	Min	Max	Mean	Standard deviation	Number	Min	Max	Mean	Standard deviation
3 years prior	1,789	0	28	1.88***	3.09	704	0	14	1.35	2.38
2 years prior	1,789	0	25	2.97***	3.36	704	0	29	2.18	3.14
1 year prior	1,789	1	46	7.71	4.72	704	1	57	7.64	4.95
1 year post-	1,789	0	28	4.06	4.11	704	0	34	3.58	4.40
2 years post-	1,789	0	27	3.23	3.77	704	0	24	2.90	3.63
3 years post-	1,789	0	20	2.62***	3.24	704	0	26	2.09	3.05
4 years post-	1,789	0	24	2.24***	3.11	704	0	19	1.78	2.79

Tests of significance used are t-tests. Asterisks indicate whether pre- and post- changes are significant (confidence levels *<.05, **<.01, ***<.001).

Table B: Seriousness of offending by young people in the ISSP and comparison groups from three years prior to and up to four years post-intervention

	ISSP group					Comparison group				
	Number	Min	Max	Mean	Standard deviation	Number	Min	Max	Mean	Standard deviation
3 years prior	1,789	0	7	2.02***	2.05	704	0	7	1.63	2.03
2 years prior	1,789	0	8	3.10***	2.03	704	0	7	2.56	2.16
1 year prior	1,789	3	8	5.33	0.97	704	3	7	5.33	0.92

⁷⁰ Sample sizes here are reduced from previous studies because repeat cases have been removed. This analysis treats a case as an individual who might have been subject to ISSP more than once. See Appendix D for further discussion of sample sizes and analysis.

1 year post-	1,789	0	7	3.65***	2.16	704	0	7	3.14	2.23
2 years post-	1,789	0	7	3.20***	2.25	704	0	7	2.79	2.25
3 years post-	1,789	0	7	2.93***	2.29	704	0	7	2.38	2.27
4 years post-	1,789	0	8	2.67***	2.40	704	0	7	2.30	2.34

Tests of significance used are t-tests. Asterisks indicate whether pre- and post- changes are significant (confidence levels *<.05, **<.01, ***<.001).

Table C: Parameter estimates – frequency of offending up to four years post-intervention

		Estimate	Standard error	Critical ratio	Significance
Intercept (starting point post-intervention)	Gender	-0.247	0.045	-5.495	***
	Ethnicity	-0.191	0.045	-4.259	***
	Age at first offence	-0.057	0.009	-6.658	***
	Persistent offenders	0.248	0.033	7.623	***
	Serious offenders	-0.265	0.056	-4.763	***
	ISSP/comparison case	-0.076	0.031	-2.463	0.02
	Asset score	0.017	0.002	8.909	***
	IMD	0.002	0.001	2.117	0.034
Slope (trajectory)	Gender	-0.026	0.02	-1.313	0.189
	Ethnicity	0.075	0.02	3.786	***
	Age at first offence	-0.002	0.004	-0.635	0.525
	Persistent offenders	-0.065	0.015	-4.503	***
	Serious offenders	-0.016	0.024	-0.659	0.51
	ISSP/comparison case	-0.008	0.014	-0.543	0.587
	Asset score	-0.004	0.001	-4.864	***
	IMD	-0.002	0	-4.597	***

Confidence levels ***<.001

Note: N=2,493 (1,789 ISSP cases, 704 comparison cases).

Table D: Parameter estimates – seriousness of offending up to four years post-intervention

		Estimate	Standard error	Critical ratio	Significance
Intercept (starting point post-intervention)	Gender	-0.25	0.039	-6.361	***
	Ethnicity	-0.197	0.04	-4.939	***
	Age at first offence	-0.046	0.008	-6.071	***
	Persistent offenders	0.109	0.042	2.624	0.009
	Serious offenders	-0.38	0.038	-10.003	***
	ISSP/comparison case	-0.116	0.027	-4.221	***
	Asset score	0.012	0.002	6.678	***
	IMD	0.002	0.001	2.052	0.04
Slope (trajectory)	Gender	-0.052	0.02	-2.576	0.01
	Ethnicity	0.102	0.021	4.939	0.01
	Age at first offence	-0.006	0.004	-1.439	0.15
	Persistent offenders	-0.019	0.02	-0.959	0.338
	Serious offenders	0.011	0.02	0.573	0.566
	ISSP/comparison case	0.011	0.014	0.776	0.438
	Asset score	-0.003	0.001	-3.225	0.001
	IMD	-0.001	0.001	-2.679	0.007

Confidence levels ***<.001

Note: N=2,493 (1,789 ISSP cases, 704 comparison cases).

Appendix B: Extraction of reconviction data from the Police National Computer

The Police National Computer (PNC) is increasingly being used as a source of data, because greater detail is available – offence dates, for example – and records are more up-to-date than alternative offender indices. At the time of data collection, the updated Ministry of Justice (MoJ) extraction and counting procedure (MoJ, 2011) had not yet been established for researchers. This appendix describes how data on frequency and seriousness of offending was extracted from the PNC for a highly persistent group of young offenders.

Timescale

The first ISSP orders were made in July 2001. Cases had the total frequency and gravity of their most serious offence calculated (see Appendix C for details of counting rules) at one year intervals for three years before the start of their order and up to five years after. Each year interval was determined from the start of ISSP, which meant the bail date (Bail ISSP), order date (Supervision Order or Community Rehabilitation Order ISSP) or release date (Detention and Training Order ISSP). As persistent and serious offenders, many of the sample spent time in custody during the follow-up periods before or after the start of their order. Each time period had to be extended individually to compensate for this – further details are provided below. The equivalent dates and principles also applied to the comparison group. At the time of the fieldwork, the Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate advised leaving a three-month period for data on convictions to be entered on the PNC. Data was extracted in mid-July 2008, which allowed a maximum follow-up period up to and including mid-April 2008.

Submission of data to the Police National Computer

The Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate requires details of offender names, dates of birth and PNC numbers in order to extract criminal history data from the PNC. A total of 2,881 ISSP cases and 906 individual comparison cases were submitted with full details.

Matching Police National Computer output against our data

The Home Office Research Development and Statistics Directorate was able to provide us with criminal histories on 94% of the submitted ISSP cases and 97% of the comparison cases. The next stage was to compare this output with our own records in order to determine whether there was an acceptable match. The main way of judging this was by checking whether the PNC data contained a court disposal that corresponded to the ISSP (or comparison) case in respect of date and disposal type. The following guidelines were used.

- In bail ISSP cases, the court disposal date was not known to us, so it was not possible to be sure of a match. In many cases, it was clearly correct because a disposal (often a Supervision Order ISSP) was made a few weeks later. Where there was no court disposal within two months, the match was rejected as unreliable, although it is possible that the reason for no disposal being made within this time frame was a not-guilty finding, resulting in termination of the ISSP.
- In Supervision Order and Community Rehabilitation Order ISSP cases, the disposal was frequently entered into the PNC as a Curfew Order. Sometimes it showed as a Detention and Training Order. If the date was correct, it was accepted as a match. Or, if the disposal was correct, and the date matched to within two weeks, it was accepted.
- In Detention and Training Order ISSP cases, the disposal date was sometimes not known. If this could be estimated from the ISSP start date and matched against a PNC disposal date and sentence length, the match was accepted.

Using these criteria, a further 3% of submitted ISSP cases and 2% of submitted comparison cases were discarded.

Allowing interval periods at liberty

As mentioned above, as highly persistent and serious offenders, many of the sample spent time in custody during the follow-up periods before or after the start of their order. Each time period had to be extended individually to compensate for this. Since the PNC does not contain release dates, these were estimated. It was assumed that half the sentence period was spent in custody on Detention and Training Orders and adult prison sentences. On the advice of the Parole Board, adult sentences in excess of four years were calculated at 60% of the total, and minimum recommendations for life sentences for individuals were sourced through media outlets where life sentences were applied.

Appendix C: Counting rules

Counting number of offences

Offences (i.e. rows in the PNC output) were counted separately, even if they occurred on the same day. However, an exception was made where the offences were part of the same event. In practice, this was restricted to cases where there were linked motoring offences such as unauthorised vehicle-taking, dangerous driving, no insurance, driving while disqualified, all committed on the same day. These were counted as one offence.

In counting the number of offences in the pre- and post-intervention periods, the date of offence rather than the date of disposal was used. This meant that offences resulting in the ISSP disposal were counted in the pre-period, as were offences committed before the ISSP disposal, but sentenced only after the start of ISSP. The latter are sometimes known as ‘pseudo reconvictions’ or ‘false positives’. Offences occurring within the follow-up period but sentenced after it were also included – these are in effect ‘false negatives’.

Breach offences were not counted as criminal offences, in order to achieve greater comparability between ISSP and non-ISSP disposals. It could be argued that breaches resulting from the intensive demands of ISSP should be included in an assessment of its impact. However, it was felt that a distinction should be made between offences against the public and technical offences.

Identifying offence seriousness

Offence seriousness could be measured in several ways. The YJB developed a definition of serious offences in order to define eligibility for the ISSP serious crime shortcut.⁷¹ Other ways of defining seriousness commonly used in reconviction studies are to define specific types of offence (e.g. violence) or disposal (e.g. custody) as serious. For this study, the YJB’s eight-point offence seriousness scale was used, because this was applied during the original evaluations. However, the 2001 version of the scale was used, which was current when this study began. Although this has been superseded, the current version is identical in 85% of offence types.

In each time period, the most serious offence was identified using this scale. Where several offences had the same gravity, the court disposal was used to resolve which was the more serious (e.g. custody was more serious than a community sentence). Where young people had not committed an offence in the relevant time period, they scored a zero.

⁷¹ The serious crime shortcut applies where the offence would require a sentence of 14 years or more if committed by an adult.

Appendix D: The sample – composition, size and suitability

Composition of the sample

The study encompasses the first 41 pilot ISSP schemes, covering those cases commencing from the start-up in 2001/2 until April 2003. A total of 3,882 ISSP cases (2,924 individuals) were recorded (an individual might have been subject to more than one ISSP order or case in the study period). Indeed, multiple ISSP cases for a single young person were common. While 75% of the ISSP cases corresponded to the first such case for an individual young person, 19% of cases related to a second ISSP, and 6% related to a third or more ISSP.

The comparison sample comprised all young people who:

- met the eligibility criteria for ISSP, but were sentenced to either a Supervision Order, a Community Rehabilitation Order or a Detention and Training Order during the time frame of the original 24-month reconviction study (from July 2001 until April 2003)
- came from YOTs that did not take part in the initial ISSP pilot (phases three and four schemes).⁷²

To ensure the integrity of the comparison sample, it was important to verify that young people in the comparison sample did not receive ISSP in the follow-up period – any who did were excluded from the study. As mentioned above, it was also essential to remove repeat cases from the comparison sample (i.e. young people who received more than one comparable sentence) for the purposes of the statistical analysis used in this study. Eventually data on 997 individuals was collected.

Sample sizes

Because this reconviction study involves a longitudinal design looking at both aggregate and individual change, it was necessary to focus only on individuals, and to remove repeat cases from the database. Previous evaluations of the programme have included a new case for each new order on ISSP (Moore et al, 2004, 2006; Gray et al, 2005). Consequently, as described below, sample sizes in this study have been reduced from previous evaluations. While repeat cases have been removed, it was possible to calculate the total number of days individuals spent on the programme through multiple orders to reflect each participant's full exposure to the intervention. For consistency, the first order provided the original time point for before and after analyses.

⁷² ISSP was introduced nationally in four phases. Phases three and four did not receive funding to provide ISSP until one to two years after the pilot schemes started. They were, therefore, ideal YOTs from which to recruit a comparison sample, as they had large numbers of young people who were eligible for ISSP, but would have received an alternative disposal at the time of the evaluation.

There were a number of additional reasons for attrition from the reconviction study (see Table G). In order to ensure the sample was made up of persistent and/or serious offenders, any young person who was not eligible for the programme was excluded from the analysis. As noted above (Moore et al, 2004; Gray et al, 2005), there were very few ineligible ISSP sentences, and the vast majority of disqualified cases were on ISSP bail (65%, n=241), where charges were subsequently dropped or not proven. Cases were also excluded on account of poor data quality. This could be identified through comparing PNC data with information collected by the original ISSP regional evaluators or the presence of charges brought in Scotland, where insufficient detail is collected. Lastly, in a small number of cases PNC numbers were not available.

Table E: Sample sizes

Case decision	ISSP group		Comparison group	
	Number	%	Number	%
Valid individual case	2,415	62	869	64
Repeat case	924	24	373	27
Poor data quality	114	3	29	2
No data returned from PNC	111	3	8	1
No PNC number available	77	2	91	6
Not eligible	241	6	0	0
Total	3,882	100	1,370	100

Obtaining PNC data requires careful matching using personal details and the disposal date for the offence leading to ISSP. Ultimately, reliable matches were obtained on 94% of ISSP cases and 97% of comparison cases submitted to the PNC. To capture a fuller picture of the participant's exposure to criminal justice sanctions both pre- and post-order, data was collected for the period up to three years before the start of the original order. Table F provides the percentages of the sample involved in offending over each of the three years prior to the start of their orders. It highlights an important, statistically significant and previously unknown finding – that a larger proportion of the ISSP group have longer criminal histories than their comparison counterparts. This is a crucial difference between the samples. If the members of the ISSP group have longer, more entrenched criminal trajectories, it is also likely that they will have experienced greater exposure to the criminal justice system, be better known to the police and sentencers, and, as such, may have developed harder, more notorious reputations as recidivist offenders.

Table F: Percentage of sample involved in offending prior to order

	ISSP group (n=2,415)	Comparison group (n=869)
	% of sample	% of sample
Year 3 prior to order***	58	46
Year 2 prior to order***	87	77
Year 1 prior to order	100	100

Chi-square test confidence levels: *=95% level, **=99% level, ***=99.9% level.

Cases needed to be followed up, year on year, at liberty⁷³ post-intervention or at release from custody. Table G demonstrates the attrition levels (percentage of the sample lost to custody) for each year following the intervention.

Favourably, six years on from the original studies almost 100% of the sample was available for follow-up in years one and two (28% of the ISSP and 27% of the comparison sample were lost in the original 24-month reconviction study, Gray et al, 2005) and respectable levels for years three and four.

However, by year five, the sample size noticeably dropped, introducing some bias by removing some of the most troublesome offenders. Moreover, a greater proportion of the ISSP sample was lost (this was statistically significant), highlighting previous concerns that there were underlying differences between the two groups in terms of their protracted criminal histories. It was therefore decided to limit the analysis to four years' post-intervention, for which we had 74% of the ISSP sample (n=1,789) and 81% (n=704) of comparison cases.

In addition, while not all participants had committed (recorded) offences in the two and three years prior to starting their principal order, a decision had to be made whether to track the whole sample for three years prior (whether they had started offending or not), or to only include cases once they had begun their offending careers (i.e. only use 58% of the ISSP sample three years prior to order).

It was decided that, as long as young people were over the age of criminal responsibility, periods of non-offending before ISSP should be recorded for three reasons. Firstly, any episodes of non-offending before or after were considered meaningful for the purposes of this research project and it would allow the analysis to capture individual differences and naturally occurring

⁷³ As a sample of highly persistent and serious offenders, many spent time in custody during the follow-up periods before and/or after the start of their order. Each time period had to be extended individually to compensate for this. Since the PNC does not contain release dates, these were estimated. We assumed that half the sentence period was spent in custody on Detention and Training Orders and adult prison sentences. On the advice of the Parole Board, adult sentences in excess of four years were calculated at 60% of the total, and minimum recommendations for life sentences for individuals were sourced through media outlets where life sentences were applied.

interruptions in the offending trajectories of this diverse group of offenders. Secondly, it would maximise the sample size for each stage of the analysis. Thirdly, it would simplify the modelling process by keeping the sample as consistent as possible, rather than repeating processes for different samples. As such, the analyses includes individuals whether they had begun their offending careers or not, and follows them up for seven years (four years post-ISSP).

Table G: Attrition rates: percentage of sample available for follow-up (not in custody) post- intervention

	ISSP group (n=2,415)	Comparison group (n=869)
	% of sample	% of sample
Year 1 follow-up	100	100
Year 2 follow-up	99	99
Year 3 follow-up	93*	96
Year 4 follow-up	74***	81
Year 5 follow-up	42***	52

Chi-square test confidence levels: *=95% level, **=99% level, ***=99.9% level.

Matching socio-demographic characteristics

The original ISSP reconviction studies were based on an experimental design, employing a well-matched comparison group. In addition to ensuring that all comparison cases were eligible for ISSP, the sampling strategy controlled for various criminal history variables and personal characteristics one year before the principal order. Table H shows the extent to which the matching was successful. The two groups are very well matched in terms of age, and the frequency and gravity of their immediate criminal histories. Their index offences were broadly similar, except for car theft, which the ISSP group had committed more frequently. There were also some statistically significant differences between the groups. The comparison sample includes fewer serious-only offenders and more young women – groups at lower risk of reconviction. The members of the ISSP group, meanwhile, are more likely to have registered special educational needs, as well as a higher mean *Asset* score, suggesting that they are at greater risk of reoffending.

Perhaps the most notable difference is the age at first conviction. This variable had not been recorded in previous ISSP studies, but has revealed a further statistically significant difference between the samples, chiefly that the ISSP group's criminal careers began at an earlier stage. Thus far it is known that the members of the ISSP group have, on average, longer criminal careers (see above), starting at an earlier age. Such characteristics may affect the likelihood of future offending, as well as magistrates' sentencing decisions. This finding highlights the considerable difficulty of securing a well-matched comparison group of persistent and serious offenders.

Table H: Socio-demographic characteristics of the ISSP and comparison groups⁷⁴

Demographics	ISSP group	Comparison group	Confidence*
Mean age	16.2 (n=2,405)	16.2 (n=869)	
% Female	7.5% (n=2,415)	12.7% (n=869)	***
% White	82.8% (n=2,291)	84.9% (n=868)	
% SEN recognised with statement	28.9% (n=915)	17.7% (n=623)	***
% Name on child protection register	18% (n=1,043)	17.5% (n=733)	
Criminal history			
Mean Asset score	23.4 (n=1,487)	22.2 (n=743)	*
Mean age at first offence	12.6 (n=2,375)	13.1 (n=869)	***
% Received previous custodial sentence	36.7% (n=2,415)	40.1% (n=869)	
Number of offences in prior 12 months	7.9 (n=2,415)	7.7 (n=869)	
Mean gravity score in prior 12 months	5.3 (n=2,415)	5.3 (n=869)	
Eligibility for ISSP			
Qualified by seriousness	15.7% (n=2,415)	21.6% (n=869)	***
Qualified by persistence	51.7% (n=2,415)	51.7% (n=869)	
Qualified by both persistence and seriousness	32.6% (n=2,415)	26.7% (n=869)	**
Index offence			
% Robbery	20.3% (n=2,415)	19.6% (n=869)	

⁷⁴ Sample sizes differ here as Asset data was not available on all individuals, and those over school age often did not have the education section of Asset completed.

% Burglary	24.1% (n=2,415)	28% (n=869)	*
% Violence	15% (n=2,415)	15.7% (n=869)	
% Vehicle theft	12.8% (n=2,415)	8.8% (n=869)	**

Chi-square or T-test statistics. Confidence levels: *=95% level, **=99% level, ***=99.9% level.
 Note that 'n' refers to the total sample size for each particular point.

Appendix E: Mixture modelling estimates

Table I: Mean number of offences and mean gravity scores of the four identified groups

	Mean	Standard deviation	Convergence statistic	95% Lower bound	95% Upper bound
Group 1 (24%)					
Number of offences 3 years prior	1.25190	0.17290	1.00000	0.91490	1.58980
Number of offences 2 years prior	2.00270	0.16930	1.00000	1.67210	2.33560
Number of offences 1 year prior	5.33510	0.23480	1.00010	4.87410	5.79480
Number of offences 1 year post-	0.31040	0.16600	1.00000	-0.01450	0.63440
Number of offences 2 years post-	1.50350	0.16000	1.00140	1.18790	1.81340
Number of offences 3 years post-	1.25220	0.10990	1.00010	1.03790	1.46850
Number of offences 4 years post-	1.23980	0.14530	1.00000	0.95280	1.52320
Gravity score 3 years prior	1.64660	0.10490	1.00000	1.44080	1.85230
Gravity score 2 years prior	2.66170	0.10210	1.00010	2.46150	2.86240
Gravity score 1 year prior	5.72010	0.04840	1.00000	5.62420	5.81480
Gravity score 1 year post-	0.39670	0.06800	1.00010	0.26300	0.53000
Gravity score 2 years post-	2.02520	0.08230	1.00030	1.86410	2.18580
Gravity score 3 years post-	2.03060	0.10890	1.00010	1.81790	2.24430
Gravity score 4 years post-	1.86660	0.11150	1.00030	1.64730	2.08570

	Mean	Standard deviation	Convergence statistic	95% Lower bound	95% Upper bound
Group 2 (20%)					
Number of offences 3 years prior	1.86220	0.21630	1.00010	1.43290	2.28460
Number of offences 2 years prior	2.75930	0.19840	1.00000	2.37250	3.14810
Number of offences 1 year prior	7.48530	0.27200	1.00000	6.95500	8.01560
Number of offences 1 year post-	3.62530	0.19690	1.00000	3.24030	4.01130
Number of offences 2 years post-	0.47330	0.18220	1.00020	0.11980	0.83460
Number of offences 3 years post-	1.15190	0.14000	1.00250	0.88820	1.43870
Number of offences 4 years post-	1.35650	0.17420	1.00040	1.01420	1.69810
Gravity score 3 years prior	1.99050	0.12510	1.00010	1.74570	2.23570
Gravity score 2 years prior	2.96040	0.12120	1.00000	2.72330	3.19930
Gravity score 1 year prior	5.31170	0.05950	1.00000	5.19500	5.42870
Gravity score 1 year post-	4.75670	0.07510	1.00010	4.60940	4.90510
Gravity score 2 years post-	0.64800	0.12450	1.00060	0.41290	0.90080
Gravity score 3 years post-	1.84590	0.13970	1.00070	1.57100	2.11690
Gravity score 4 years post-	1.86060	0.14130	1.00030	1.58230	2.13480
Group 3 (48%)					
Number of offences 3 years prior	2.06180	0.12700	1.00000	1.81270	2.31100
Number of offences 2 years prior	3.30070	0.12240	1.00030	3.06030	3.54160
Number of offences 1 year prior	8.65500	0.17390	1.00160	8.30560	8.99290

	Mean	Standard deviation	Convergence statistic	95% Lower bound	95% Upper bound
Number of offences 1 year post-	5.52540	0.13030	1.00190	5.26290	5.77640
Number of offences 2 years post-	4.47750	0.19520	1.01400	3.75100	4.73740
Number of offences 3 years post-	2.60930	0.09420	1.00320	2.43610	2.80880
Number of offences 4 years post-	2.59080	0.10920	1.00000	2.37880	2.80550
Gravity score 3 years prior	2.14390	0.07450	1.00010	1.99640	2.28990
Gravity score 2 years prior	3.36580	0.07200	1.00040	3.22520	3.50740
Gravity score 1 year prior	5.19660	0.03560	1.00050	5.12700	5.26700
Gravity score 1 year post-	4.71240	0.04410	1.00020	4.62630	4.79880
Gravity score 2 years post-	4.61720	0.06100	1.00010	4.49620	4.73510
Gravity score 3 years post-	3.53760	0.08140	1.00010	3.37860	3.69700
Gravity score 4 years post-	3.20100	0.08260	1.00000	3.04080	3.36380
Group 4 (8%)					
Number of offences 3 years prior	2.72870	0.30980	1.00010	2.11890	3.33860
Number of offences 2 years prior	4.39930	0.32550	1.00010	3.76290	5.03980
Number of offences 1 year prior	9.74510	0.45970	1.00270	8.86980	10.69410
Number of offences 1 year post-	7.57560	0.32410	1.00030	6.94410	8.21610
Number of offences 2 years post-	7.65910	0.77570	1.01800	6.90730	11.00540
Number of offences 3 years post-	10.72160	0.71640	1.01910	7.56300	11.33000
Number of offences 4 years post-	5.36040	0.35600	1.00500	4.56030	6.00350

	Mean	Standard deviation	Convergence statistic	95% Lower bound	95% Upper bound
Gravity score 3 years prior	2.40960	0.18720	1.00010	2.03960	2.77550
Gravity score 2 years prior	3.12000	0.18990	1.00270	2.75880	3.51050
Gravity score 1 year prior	5.01290	0.08830	1.00090	4.83730	5.18470
Gravity score 1 year post-	4.32070	0.11090	1.00100	4.10000	4.53460
Gravity score 2 years post-	4.42440	0.15720	1.00530	4.14110	4.78800
Gravity score 3 years post-	4.66300	0.19920	1.00340	4.24130	5.03700
Gravity score 4 years post-	3.90820	0.20100	1.00090	3.51090	4.30000

Appendix F: Qualitative research methodology

Sampling frame

The sampling strategy concentrated on retracing young people from a single north-western region for two reasons. Firstly, during the pilot evaluation, the researcher was based in, and familiar with this area, the ISSP scheme, the participants and their families. Secondly, concentrating on one location would afford the analysis some regional specification. Of course, the aim is not to make national generalisations based on this local data. Instead, the study seeks to develop a more coherent understanding of the subject by collecting detailed grounded data with strong interpretive validity.

Tracing and contacting the cohort

Attempts were made to trace each participant from the cohort in the single north-western ISSP team (n=65). This was achieved through a variety of sources. Contact details were available for 55 individuals, which provided a useful starting point. In addition, the following sources were used to retrieve reliable, current contact information:

- the Prisoner Location Service
- Tracesmart (an online research tool which includes information from numerous electoral roles and the Land Registry)
- social networking sites, such as Facebook and Myspace
- court reports
- a media analysis tool (LexisNexis)
- Directory Enquiries (www.192.com).

Information confirmed that one young person was deceased. Matches were found for 33 young people (51%). Home addresses were eventually secured for 29 participants, although not all were from the most recent electoral register.⁷⁵ In 13 of these cases, contact information via Facebook was also available. An additional three were found on Facebook (with no residential information). Six individuals, who were known to be in prison, were contacted through the Prisoner Location Service. A common reason for not successfully tracking a participant was due to a name being very common (e.g. Smith), so reliable matches could not be confirmed, along with a general lack of up-to-date information.

⁷⁵ Since 2002, only an edited electoral roll has been available for purchase. It is updated annually, but citizens can opt out of having their information made public from each register.

Email was the preferred method of contact because it was thought to increase the likelihood that the person to whom the information was directed would receive it. A Facebook page for the project was set up so that potential participants could view a photo of the researcher and see information about the study. It also allowed them to reply easily and free of charge. Where email addresses were not available, information was sent via Royal Mail.

In the first instance, 28 of the most reliable matches were contacted. All available women (n=4) and all young people from Minority Ethnic groups (n=12) were invited to interview. No young women agreed to take part in the study: two declined – one had relocated to Ireland, and the other said she had a young family and did not want to revisit her criminal past. Her PNC history showed that she had desisted completely after ISSP. Two letters to the remaining female sample were returned to sender unopened.

Final sample and interviews

Eventually, 11 young people agreed to be interviewed (39% response rate). All participants were male, and four were of dual heritage (one British Chinese and three Black British). One interviewee refused to participate on the day of interview – he was on a life sentence in a high-security prison and had been involved in a disturbance a few days earlier. At the time, prison officials did not consider it safe or appropriate to continue with the interview. A second young person was arrested and remanded on grievous bodily harm charges before the planned interview could take place. Each of the remaining nine participants was interviewed on two occasions. All interviews bar one were conducted face-to-face, either in prison or at a premises hired for the purposes of the study. One set of interviews was conducted over the phone, since the young man had relocated to a hostel over 250 miles away and it was not possible to organise a face-to-face meeting. While the arrangement was not ideal, two full and frank interviews were completed.

Analysis

In the early stages of the analysis, all transcripts were read through and initial notes were taken on anything that appeared important or of interest. The second stage of analysis consisted of a more thorough reading of the interview transcripts, involving an expansion of the relevant themes and identifying psychological and theoretical abstractions. Each theme was given a descriptive label that conveyed the conceptual nature of its dynamics. The third stage consisted of further organising the data by establishing connections between the themes and linking them appropriately. In this manner, Smith (2004:71) suggests that researchers “imagine a magnet with some of the themes pulling others in and helping to make sense of them.” Finally, we began to think about how the various issues raised by the participants could be conceptualized theoretically.

The central concern of this work was to explore participants’ subjective experiences and responses to the youth justice system, with particular relevance to ISSP, as they were growing up. Investigating how events are experienced and given meaning requires interpretive activity on the part of the researcher – described by Smith and Osborn (2003: 51) as a dual process in

which “the participants are trying to make sense of their world” and “the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world”.

Indeed, in order to produce an authentic picture of what ISSP, other criminal justice sanctions and crime actually meant to respondents, the study sought to minimise the potential for measurement errors. The interviewer carefully, but persistently, probed the relationship between what people thought (cognition), said (account), actually did (behaviour) and felt (emotions). Moreover, the analysis goes into considerable detail to help understand, represent and make sense of people’s ways of thinking, their motivations and actions. This allows for a detailed and sophisticated understanding of what happens to young people, classified as persistent young offenders, as they grow up.

The topics discussed in each interview were broad-ranging, concerned with both substantive and theoretical issues. There was, for example, frequent discussion of respondents’ experience of ISSP and other youth justice sanctions, as well as broader apparatus of the criminal justice system. Respondents spoke about their memories of education, social work, living in care, homelessness and drug rehabilitation services. Discussion of their involvement in crime and delinquency, criminal networks and the cultural climate was also customary. Of course, discussion of their friends, neighbours and family was common, although for some, these topics were sensitive and their responses guarded. Indeed, how respondents chose to represent themselves and their sense of individual and group identity was a key matter for the researcher to make sense of.

By sharing stories on the topics above, these narratives invariably touched on wider questions, such as justice, welfare, politics, the economy, the media, security and the roles and responsibilities of local citizens, all of which lie at the heart of how we, as individuals, relate to crime and our neighbourhoods.

Appendix G: Consent form for qualitative study

The following consent form was fully explained and completed with each participant – in person – at the start of all interviews.

Research Consent Form: A follow-up study of the first recipients of Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme

Name:

Date:

Please tick the appropriate boxes

I have read and understood the project information sheet.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being interviewed and recorded (audio or note-taking).

I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I will not be asked any questions about why I no longer want to take part.

Select only one of the next two options:

I do not want my name used in this project.

I would like my name used where what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in research reports and any other publications so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised.

I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project.

I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs but my name will not be used unless I requested it above.

I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of that data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.

I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to [name of researcher].

Name of Participant Signature Date

Researcher Signature Date

Appendix H: Ethics

Before the study commenced, full ethical clearance had to be agreed with Keele University Ethics Committee and the Home Office (specifically for access to Police National Computer data). The ethical process required the principal investigator to ensure the work was carried out in strict accordance with relevant legislation, namely the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, to ensure the impact on participants and anyone approached to take part in the qualitative study was minimised and that all data from the study was held securely and appropriately.

Full clearance was agreed prior to the research being conducted.

Data protection procedures

The procedures below were followed for data protection purposes.

- All data was kept in password- and username-protected files, on a secure server at Keele University. Once data was collected, it was not transferred onto any portable devices, and did not leave the secure facilities/premises of Keele University.
- All data was kept on secure electronic facilities. Ms. Gray's computer was not a shared machine and was password- and fingerprint-protected. Keele University Research Services have a research governance officer to ensure all data is kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and any other relevant requirements or updates. Keele University's computer amenities are subject to regular security checks and anti-virus updates. All servers are kept in locked facilities.
- Upon completion of the study, the research governance officer at Keele University will ensure the electronic data is securely removed and disposed of. Any remaining paper-based material will be destroyed (shredded).
- Participants in the qualitative element of the study were asked if they agreed to their interview being digitally recorded. If they agreed, they were advised that, under the guidelines of the British Society of Criminology and the Economic and Social Research Council, the researcher must abide by 'duty of confidentiality' and, if any undisclosed offences, either committed by the participant or other persons, were revealed to the researcher, the information would be passed to the police (see 4iii and 4iv of the Code of Ethics, British Society of Criminology).
- The possession of audio material and transcripts raises additional data protection responsibilities, since audio files can identify people, even if pseudonyms are used. All participants were asked not to disclose their or any other person's personal details during the recording. After the interview, the files were kept in a digital format and encrypted on a secure server. After completion of the study, all audio files will be destroyed.

Retracing the qualitative sample

In selecting participants to interview, we needed to trace people who were subject to ISSP over six years earlier. It was possible that individuals or their families might have since moved and their mail could be received by others. It was also possible that potential participants did not wish to be contacted. Therefore, we exercised considerable sensitivity in the wording of the invitation; it made no reference to the criminal justice system and required interested individuals to actively respond to the request. If no response was forthcoming, the researcher did not pursue the individual any further. All efforts were taken to ensure the letters/ emails were sent to the correct addresses. Where individuals did respond to the letter, they were asked to confirm personal details known to the study and not included in the letter (such as date of birth, middle name, mother's name) to ensure they were the intended recipients.

Post-interview support

Given the sensitive nature of the interviews, it was important to provide all available contact details of the researcher (email, mobile, office number, website) so participants were able to direct any questions and concerns to the researcher. Details of support agencies were also provided to every participant after the completion of an interview. These were tailored to the individual's needs and location. However, in general, these included agencies such as the local social work emergency helpline, the local probation team, local drugs counselling teams, Saneline, The Samaritans, The Listening Service (in prison), community legal service helplines (for details of local solicitors and advisers), The Independent Police Complaints Commission, the Nacro resettlement helpline, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Shelter.

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