



**Clear Track**



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## **Evaluation Briefing Paper: Clear Track**

**Phase IV Report EBPIV/03/09 March 2009**

Clear Track is a pioneering pilot project intervention, which combines the provision of a supportive and structured tailored regime aimed at addressing offending behaviour, with community-based residential supervision. Clear Track works to protect the public and reduce re-offending through establishing alliances with local partners in the delivery of a comprehensive innovative package of care. Established in September 2005, as a community-based custodial provision, Clear Track provides the courts with an alternative sentencing option to custody. Clear Track was funded for three years from stakeholders Invest to Save Budget (a joint HM Treasury and Cabinet Office venture), the Helen Hamlyn Trust, CSV, and the Springboard Sunderland Trust.

### **Key Points:**

- Clear Track forged a new way of thinking about intervention provisions by moving away from the more conventional one-size-fits all model towards a more diverse provision which offered a range of skills and expertise that provided a thorough and comprehensive strategy tailored to identify each individual's needs through an enhanced assessment processes.
- Clear Track was able to provide access to treatment, to enhance treatment effectiveness through regular reviews, and to manage relapsing conditions with respect to each individual's circumstances in a community setting. Clear Track also demonstrated that as a service it was able to provide continuing care for those individuals leaving the project in a bid to avoid relapse.
- During the 26 months that the project was live (November 2006 to February 2009), Clear Track worked with 31 young offenders aged 18 to 24, who would otherwise have received a custodial sentence.
- Through the development of effective working partnerships Clear Track, CSV and Springboard Sunderland, working alongside other organisations such as the Probation Service and NOMs, have been ideally placed to set the precedent in bridging the gap between custody-based and community-based offender management.
- The concluding evaluation report of Clear Track will be published in September 2009 and can be downloaded from <http://criminaljusticeresearch.ncl.ac.uk>

# 1. Introduction

1.1. During the 26 months that the project was live (November 2006 to February 2009), Clear Track worked with 31 young offenders aged 18 to 24, who would otherwise have received a custodial sentence. As a specified activity requirement within an overall community order, the courts were able to sentence an offender to Clear Track for up to 60 days<sup>1</sup>. Once assigned to the programme, a Clear Track participant worked towards challenging their offending behaviour through the delivery of a wide range of interventions tailored to addressing their individual needs.

1.2. On the whole, Clear Track provided a supportive and structured regime within a community setting for young adult offenders' who would have otherwise received a custodial sentence. Providing residential supervision combined with a tailored daily regime differentiates Clear Track from other community-based sentencing. What's more, the provision of residential supervision increases confidence amongst magistrates in utilising this sentencing option for offenders as an alternative to custody particularly when considering issues around re-offending, non-compliance, and the risk of absconding.

## 2. Background

2.1. The Prison Service is a fundamental element in serving and protecting the public by securely holding the most serious and dangerous, violent, prolific and repeat offenders and by keeping in custody those committed by the courts.

2.2. In 1999 the average prison population was 64,770 (Home Office 2008), by February 2009 this had risen to 82,305<sup>2</sup> (Ministry of Justice 2009), what's more, the Prison Service as a whole has been overcrowded in every year since 1994 (Prison Reform Trust 2008a).

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<sup>1</sup> Other additional requirements were included by the courts as part of the overall community order; these included a supervision requirement and/or a curfew or electronic curfew requirement.

<sup>2</sup> The number of prisoners in England and Wales had increased by 30% in the ten years from 1997 to 2007 (Ministry of Justice 2008a) and this is projected to reach a high of 89,410 by 2009 (Home Office 2006a).

2.3. With more people being sent to prison than ever before the Prison Service faces increasing pressures on 'running safer, controlled, decent prisons combined with effective interventions' (Ian Poree, Director of Operational Policy, Prison Service News 2007).

2.4. Current population pressures facing the Prison Service is further complicated by a growing and more complex prison population. This is partly because the Prison Service has experienced an increase in violent offenders, sex offenders, expectant mothers<sup>3</sup> and life sentences, as well as an aging prison population<sup>4</sup>, resulting in significant resource implications for a population that requires more social and health investment (Prison Service News 2007).

2.5. To combat current population pressures the government have proposed plans to commission three Titan prisons, designed to hold an average of 2,500 prisoners each, at a total cost of £1,352 billion (Ministry of Justice 2008c).

2.6. On the whole, Punitive focused interventions, for example imprisonment, have been widely and consistently shown to be a costly and a less effective means of reducing re-offending (RAND 2008). This is partly because, prison removes offenders from the negative influences and conflicting social ties that can contribute towards their criminal behaviour. However, upon release from custody, offenders are often returned to the same circumstances which they left, and are frequently too poorly equipped, personally and materially, to deal with the challenges which faced them previously. Where a custodial sentence 'excludes' an individual from society through removing them from their family and friends, and home and work environment, a community sentence represents a more *inclusive* approach towards rehabilitation and

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<sup>3</sup> Between April 2008 and June 2008, 49 women in prison gave birth, 23 births were to mothers aged 18 to 19. (Prison Reform Trust 2008a)

<sup>4</sup> People aged 60 and over are now the fastest growing age group in the prison estate. The number of sentenced prisoners aged 60 and over rose by 149% between 1996 and 2006 (House of commons 2007a, Ministry of Justice 2007c) and on the 31<sup>st</sup> august 2008 there were 2,405 prisoners aged 60 and over in England and Wales, of which 493 were over 70 (Prison Reform Trust 2008a,)

reparation (Campbell and Lewis 2005, Sections 7.6, p10).

2.7. Although recent re-offending Home Office statistics show a reduction in reconviction rates for 2004 (Home Office 2007), the Prison Service is arguably facing an unrealistic expectation in light of recent prison population trends against competing priorities of utilising resources.

2.8. With this in mind, the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales suggested that offenders who would otherwise be sentenced to a short-term prison sentence could benefit from a properly planned and resourced community sentence that focuses on the root causes of the offender's behaviour (Judiciary of England and Wales 2006). Furthermore, community sentences should be able to provide a visible demonstration of reparation to the community in which the offence occurred.

2.9. All of which presents a persuasive argument for the developments and implementation of community-based interventions such as Clear Track. On the whole, Clear Track is ideally placed as a comprehensive intervention to manage and supervise offenders in the community, whilst working in partnership with the local Northumbria Probation Service. Clear Track, as a community-based intervention focuses on 'inclusion' rather than 'exclusion'. Though embedded within a Community Order, Clear Track was able to provide access to treatment, to enhance treatment effectiveness through regular reviews, and to manage relapsing conditions with respect to each individual's circumstances in a community setting. Clear Track also demonstrated that as a service it was able to provide continuing care for those individuals leaving the project in a bid to avoid relapse. Opportunities such as this would be far more difficult to arrange should the offender be in custody.

### **3. Clear Track as a Service**

3.1. As a third sector, not-for-profit service, Clear Track has been able to combine both elements of community and custodial sentencing through punishment, reparation, rehabilitation, and

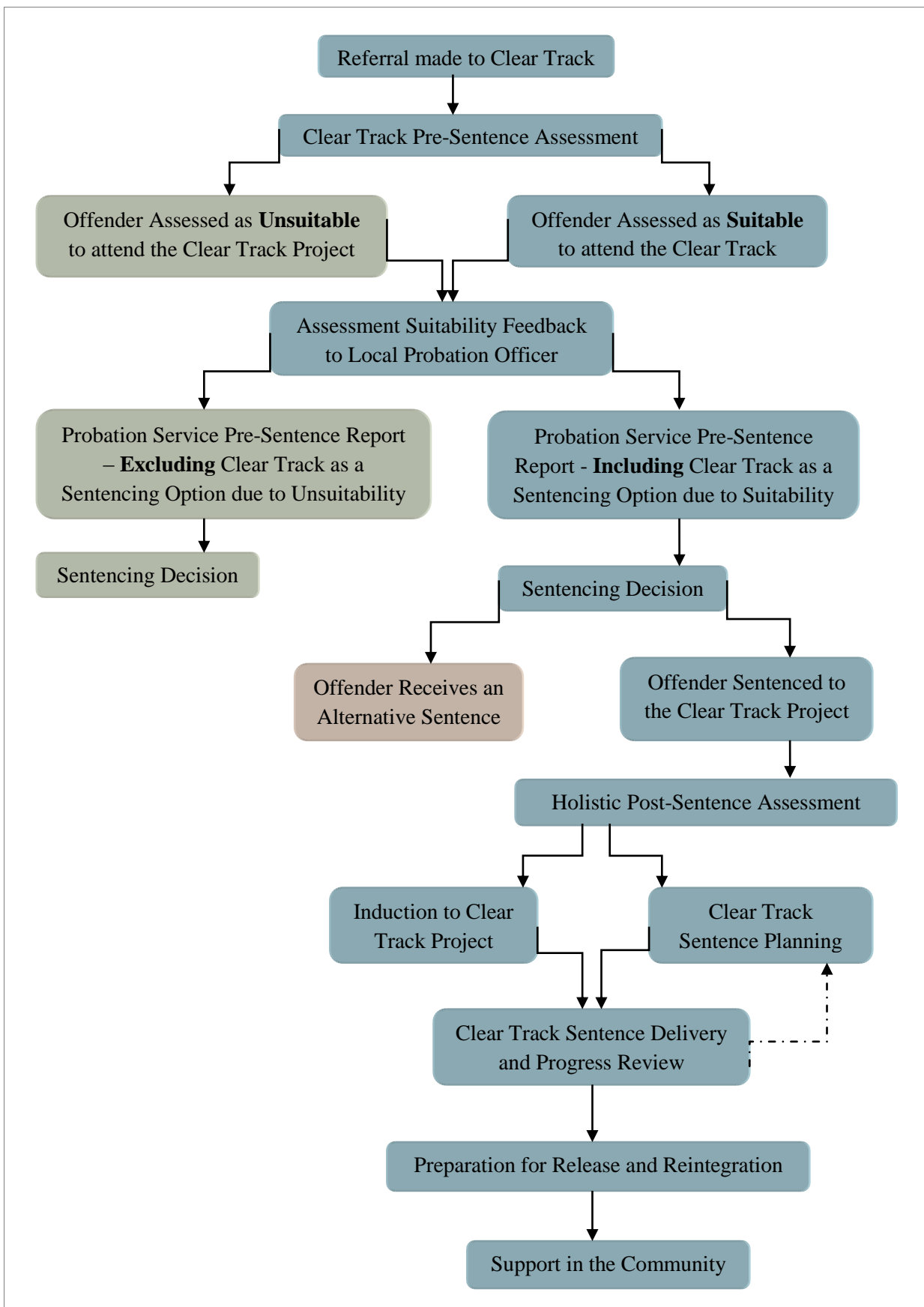
restorative justice by challenging offending behaviour, and patterns of offending behaviour, alongside compensatory measures that benefited the community and the victim.

3.2. The Clear Track project, through its parent companies CSV and Springboard Sunderland, was ideally placed for accessing wide-ranging, on-site support services, such as access to structured activities, vocational training, voluntary work, as well as many more constructive interventions and programme activities. This on the whole provided Clear Track and its management team with the flexibility needed in order to meet a wide range of needs, as well as the ability to respond adequately to the changing circumstances of a three year pilot.

3.3. In particular, Clear Track was committed to providing a community-based custodial sentencing option aimed at protecting the public and reducing re-offending through multi-agency organisational partnerships and established alliances with local partners. Such partnerships extend across the Home Office, NOMs, the Voluntary Sector Unit (VSU), Community Service Volunteers (CSV), and Springboard; as well as developed partnerships with the local Probation Service, the local magistrates' courts, local prisons and the local Youth Offending Teams (YOTs). Clear Track also established professional links with local voluntary and community organisations, for example, Millennium Volunteers, the community police, drug and alcohol intervention practitioners, Sunderland Housing Authority and Job Centre Plus, all of whom were actively committed to collaboratively delivering an effective programme of care for the Clear Track participants.

3.4. On the whole, Clear Track forged a new way of thinking about intervention provisions by moving away from the more conventional one-size-fits all model – where service provision tends to be based upon actuarial practices – towards a more diverse provision which offered a range of skills and expertise that provided a thorough and comprehensive strategy tailored to identify each

**Figure AERIII 7.1:** Diagram to Illustrate the Clear Track Project’s Assessment Model as a Process



## 4. Aims

4.1. Clear Track's overall objective as a community-based alternative to custody, was to provide a realistic, viable and effective 'third sentencing option' to justices by addressing the needs of young adult offenders in the community and by tackling some of the issues associated with short-term prison sentences (Campbell and Lewis 2006b).

4.2. Through the development of a holistic approach to supporting young adult offenders, Clear Track strategically aimed to provide a continuous and seamless approach to their service delivery. This approach to service delivery enabled Clear Track to dispense with the disparity of involving various facilities, avoiding gaps in provisions that are often associated with disjointed and fragmented systems of referring young adult offenders from one service to another.

4.3. Furthermore, Clear Track aimed to work closely with probation, magistrates, and other relevant organisations in order to address the needs of low-risk young adult offenders by delivering a holistic regime in a residential setting in a bid to fulfil their potential as citizens.

### Clear Track achieved this by:

- engaging with low-risk young adult offenders, aged 18-24<sup>5</sup>, who at the time of sentence would have otherwise received a custodial sentence,
- developing a holistic approach to supporting young adult offenders, addressing accommodation, employment, training and education and other needs such as social support,
- supporting offenders in a community setting.
- developing a partnership approach to the delivery of service for the participants of Clear Track,

<sup>5</sup> The Clear Track age range was increased from 18-21 to 18-24 (this is up to 25 years) in June/July 2008 in line with the recently revised NOMS proposals (refer to Campbell and Lewis 2006b, section 12.18 for more details).

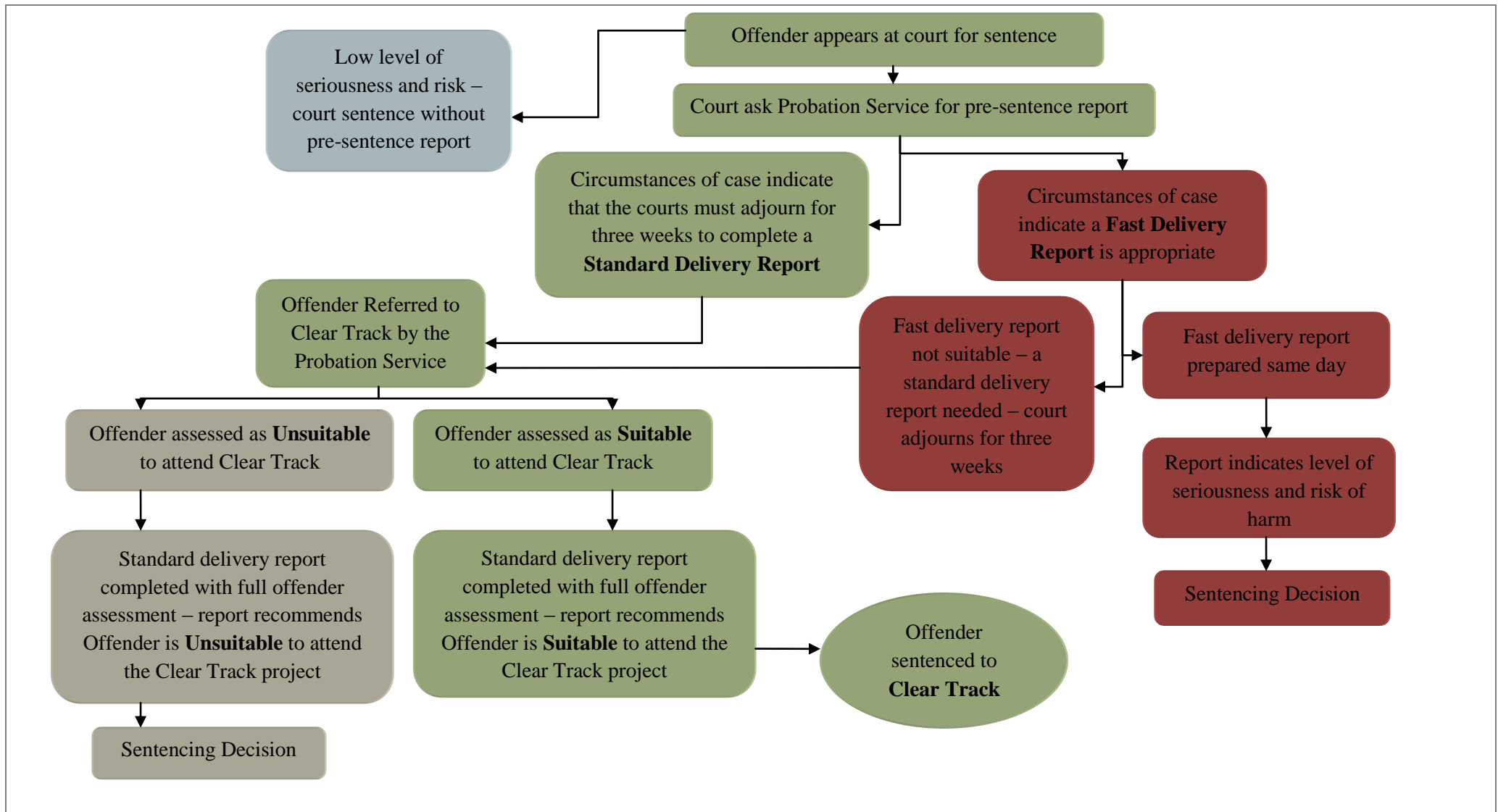
## 5. What Clear Track Did

5.1. As an intervention, Clear Track primarily focused on addressing offending behaviour and assisting with offender related needs through a structured weekly programme of inter-dependent concurrent activities as well as by:

- discouraging participants away from crime whilst they attended the project,
- keeping participants purposefully occupied, signposting paths to long term progression in qualifications and meaningful employment,
- providing participants with a sense of purpose,
- providing a range of work-based learning activities, interventions and voluntary work,
- helping and supporting participants with emotional, physical and mental health needs including substance misuse,
- rebuilding the confidence and self-esteem of participants in doing everyday things,
- helping and supporting the rebuilding of relationships with families and personal development,
- and by developing cognitive skills through challenging perceptions of self and others, attitudes towards offending and motivational issues (Campbell and Lewis 2007a, section 10, page 15).

5.2. The programme comprised of a range of compulsory elements that amounted to a 60-day activity requirement, as outlined in the CJA 2003, section 201, as well as a complementary programme of voluntary activities. In essence, a typical Clear Track day may have consisted of both compulsory and complementary elements. For example, a compulsory element of the programme included activities such as work-based learning, basic skills, or other such specified activities which were deemed as essential components of the participant's structured programme. A complementary element of the programme included voluntary activities such as sporting, cultural, and recreational pursuits and

**Figure AERIII 7.2: Offenders Progression through the Court System and Referral onto the Clear Track Project (Revised)\***



complementary therapies such as counselling, anger management, parenting skills and so on<sup>6</sup>.

5.3. Each participant's weekly programme was organised around an Individual Action Plan (IAP) which was completed at the initial assessment stage. The IAP assisted in identifying individual needs which were able to be addressed through the application of a tailored programme. This was a fundamental component to Clear Track's outlook in meeting the needs of the young offender and in tackling negative outcomes which can often accompany short-term custodial sentences such as accommodation needs, employment needs and loss of family ties, whilst potentially influencing their offending behaviour and challenging cognitive processes associated with such behaviours.

#### **Clear Track as an Activity Requirement:**

As an activity requirement Clear Track was one of several requirements within the wider provisions of an intensive community order under the CJA 2003 (National Probation Service 2005). Essentially, this meant that Clear Track could be implemented alongside further community order requirements, for example a supervision requirement, a curfew requirement, and/or a residence requirement. Therefore, an intensive community order may have comprised of:

- a 12 month supervision requirement,
- a 60 day Clear Track activity requirement,
- a 6 month curfew requirement,
- and/or a residence requirement.

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<sup>6</sup> Non-compliance of the compulsory aspects of the programme were taken very seriously and may have resulted in a breach of the activity requirement of the community order. Non-compliance of a complementary element of the order does not constitute a breach of the overall community order as participation is voluntary. However, compliance from Clear Track participants was essential at all levels of the order to ensure that the maximum potential benefits of the programme and, essentially, the community order were realised. Furthermore, Clear Track participants were actively encouraged to engage with the programme at all times.

## **6. The Clear Track Referral Process**

6.1. The primary role of the Probation Service in working alongside Clear Track was developed around the referral process. The referral process operated on several levels (refer to figure AERIII 7.1 and AERIII 7.2);

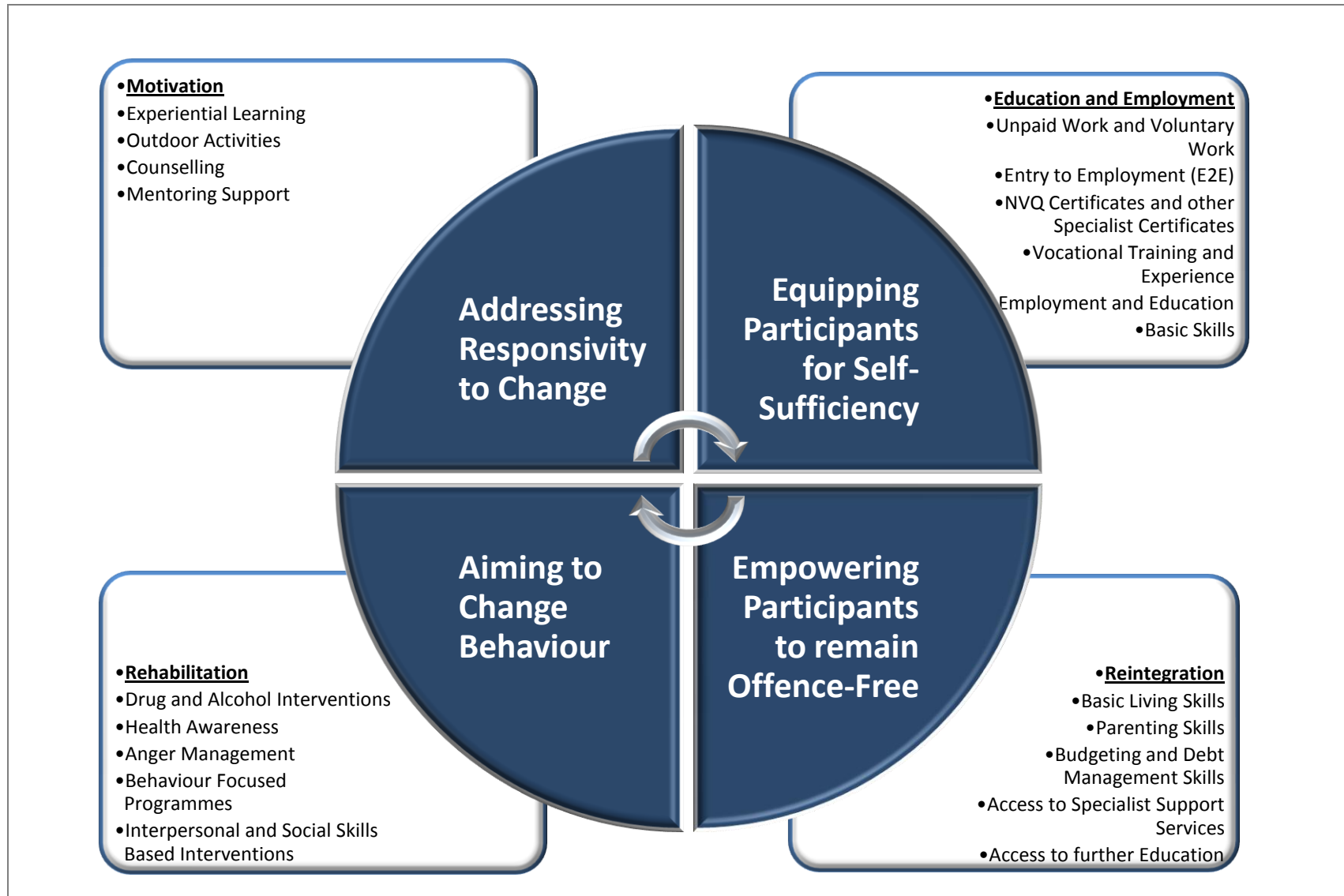
- firstly, the Probation Service recommend eligible candidates for Clear Track;
- secondly, the Clear Track management team considered the suitability of the project in addressing the needs of referred candidates;
- thirdly, the Probation Service would accordingly advise magistrates and judges as outlined in a pre-sentence report (PSR) of an eligible and suitable candidate who was willing to participate with the project,
- Finally, given the advice of the PSR, magistrates and judges would consider appropriate sentencing in relation to the severity of the offence committed, in light of the offender's level of risk and previous convictions.

#### **Eligibility Criteria for Clear Track Referrals**

The Probation Offender Managers took account of a series of eligibility criteria as proposed by Clear Track, which is outlined as follows:

- offenders must be aged between 18-24 years of age,
- the court must be considering a short-term custodial sentence or a high-community band order,
- offenders must be assessed as low or medium risk of harm,
- offenders must reside in the Sunderland and Houghton area.

**Figure AERIII 7.3:** Diagram to Illustrate a Sample of Clear Track’s Programme Activities and Interventions





### Clear Track was not suitable for those offenders who were:

- assessed as a high or very high risk of harm to the public,
- sex offenders,
- violent offenders,
- and/or offenders with severe mental health problems.

## 7. Clear Track Sentence Management and Assessment

7.1. Reviews and assessments played a key role in determining how an offender was managed in the context of the Clear Track project; furthermore, they provided a mechanism for monitoring an offender's progress and their individual response to the proposed interventions and programme activities.

7.2. Clear Track's assessment process model (refer to figure AERIII 7.1) provides a detailed and thorough account of how an individual offender was able to be managed according to their sentence requirements and needs. The assessment process model provided Clear Track with a process by which its staff members could determine how best to identify and manage an individual offender's needs, as well as identifying follow-up support once an individual had been sentenced to the project.

7.3. The information gathered at each assessment phase was drawn together to develop a structured and specific *Action Plan* that was implemented throughout the offender's sentence at the project. An essential component within the sentence management process was the identification of specific needs and the organisation of those interventions and programme activities that are *needs matched*. An holistic assessment included areas of focus such as mental health needs, sexuality, social well-being, cultural and religious behaviours, physical impairment, as well as other assessed needs which significantly contribute towards quality of life (WHO 1986).

## 8. Effective Interventions

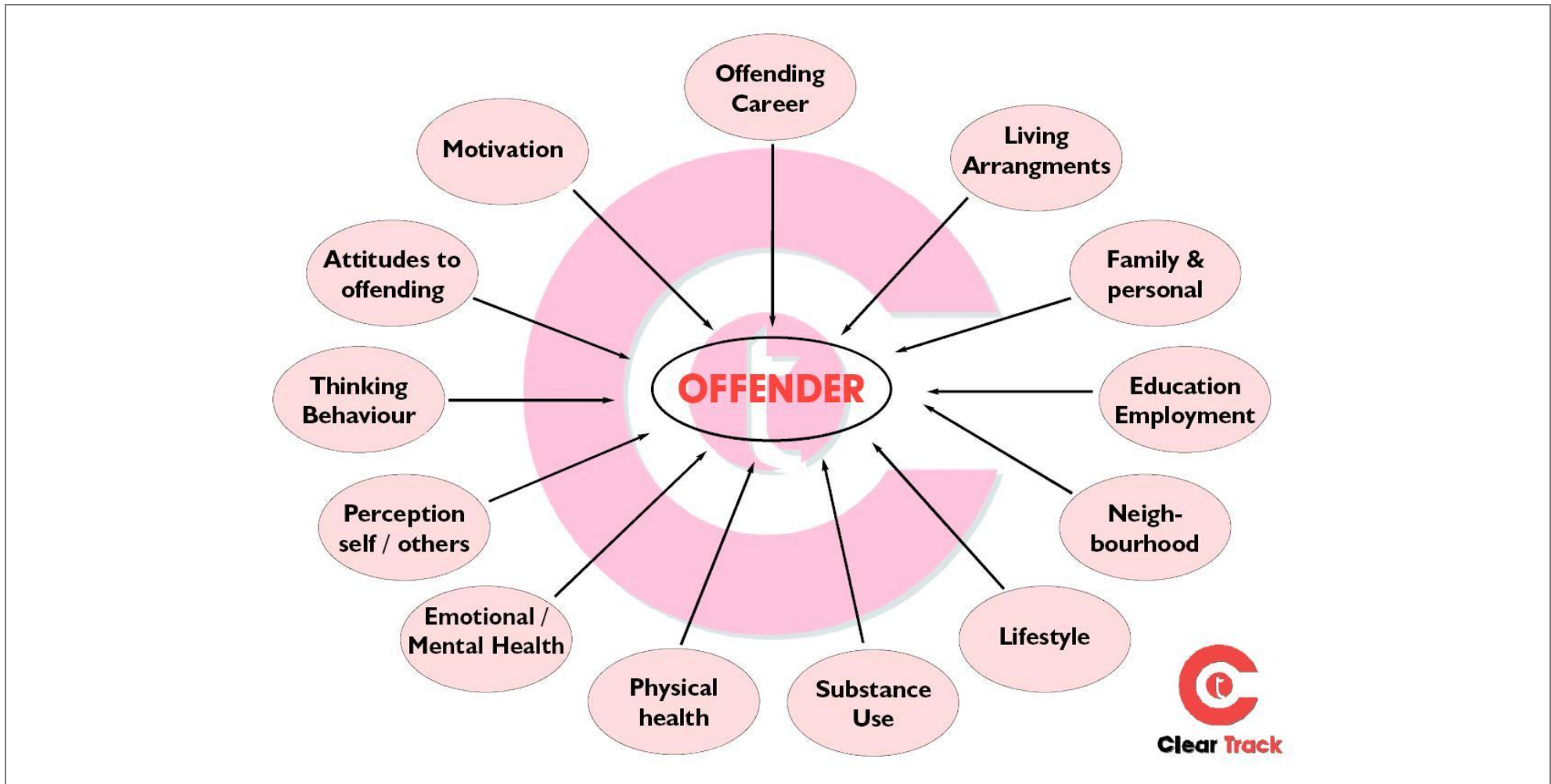
8.1. Clear Track was motivated to ensuring the delivery of a wide range of interventions tailored to address the needs of its participants, whilst regularly monitoring and reviewing the developments and progress of individual offenders in order to be able to effectively challenge offending behaviour and reduce re-offending. To accomplish this, Clear Track offered an intense, structured programme of interdependent concurrent activities which overall aimed to offer offenders with the opportunity to make constructive use of their time as well as the opportunity of learning new skills in order to enhance their employability and thus reduce the risk of re-offending.

8.2. Clear Track interventions and programme activities were designed to address those factors underlying offending behaviour by focusing upon motivational, rehabilitative and reintegrative requirements (refer to Table AERIII 7.3).

8.3. Motivational-based programme activities were designed to identify needs, concerns and aspirations relating to a young adult offender's self-confidence, self-image and self-control. A range of art and sports based activities, such as cooking, hill walking, caving, raft building and other leisure, recreational and domestic activities, were implemented to build self-confidence and to bring about awareness of how best to channel energies in a constructive direction.

8.4. The Clear Track project encouraged participation with an emphasis on positive choices as a way to engage the young adult offenders as they worked towards addressing and promoting a healthy and responsible lifestyle. The underlying philosophy within the practice of motivational-based activities aimed to emphasise the relationship of the individual with their social and cultural environment, and to improve their moral and self-awareness of identity, self-esteem and values, this assisted Clear Track participants in becoming motivated to address their offending needs. Other motivational-based activities included counselling and mentoring (refer table AERIII 7.3).

Clear Track Documentation to Illustrate the Working of Clear Track Interventions



8.5. Rehabilitative-based programme activities focused on behaviours that contribute towards offending and antisocial behaviour. Behavioural focused programmes, such as drug and alcohol use programmes, required Clear Track participants to deal with factors relating to their offending behaviour. Activities such as these act as a catalyst in helping young adult offenders learn how to identify, analyse and solve problems, as well as how to make constructive decisions, realistically appraise the consequence of their actions and how to assert more control over their behaviour and subsequently their lifestyles (refer Figure AERIII 7.3).

8.6. Participants benefitted from their involvement in rehabilitative-based programmes in a number of ways, such as gaining accredited vocational training, educational and employment opportunities, awareness of the implications associated with drug and alcohol use, as well as developing anger management techniques and advanced awareness of specialist issues such as domestic violence and parenting skills.

8.7. Reintegrative-based programmes on the whole were designed to help Clear Track participants successfully reintegrate into the community upon completion of their Clear Track sentence, whilst empowering individuals with the opportunity to contribute to their environment and to improve community relations (refer Figure AERIII 7.3).

## 9. Effective Partnerships

9.1. As crime and offending have become a 'cross-cutting' area of public policy and service delivery, criminal justice strategies as a whole, have moved away from the more traditional concepts of multi-agency partnerships with a strong emphasis on moving towards a multi-sectoral approach. The idea being that multi-sectoral partnerships, including multiple service providers, community and voluntary groups, are ideally situated to significantly challenge the multi-layered issues which arise from crime and offending (Cassin and O'Mahony, 2006). This is largely owed to recent government Ministers' interest in engaging with the third sector to improve policy development and the design of public services (Ministry of Justice 2007a and 2007b).

9.2. In recognition of the invaluable role non-government organisations actively play in strengthening communities and creating change, the government envisages a thriving, independent and diverse third sector at the heart of a successful modern democracy, whose role in supporting the effective management of offenders will become a vital contribution towards a shared goal of reducing re-offending, protecting the public and contributing to making communities safer (HM Treasury and Cabinet Office 2007).

9.3. It is against this backdrop that it has become increasingly necessary for intervention provisions such as Clear Track to be fully utilised, locally and nationally, to ensure steps are taken to make good use of existing services and resources to efficiently and effectively rehabilitate offenders and reduce re-offending. Through the development of effective working partnerships Clear Track, CSV and Springboard Sunderland, working alongside other organisations such as the Probation Service and NOMs, have been ideally placed to set the precedent in bridging the gap between custody-based and community-based offender management. The overall aim has been to focus on the individual with a more precisely targeted and tailored assessment process, which makes effective and efficient use of a wide range of services delivered through a mixed economy of organisations and by encompassing organisations from the voluntary, private, community and statutory sectors (Home Office 2006b).

## 10. The Delivery of a Cost Effective and Efficient Project

10.1. Crime imposes a huge cost on society. The total estimate of the economic and social costs of crime in England and Wales against individuals and households in 2003/04 was around £36.2bn<sup>7</sup>. The most costly crimes were estimated to be those with a large estimated emotional and physical impact - homicide, wounding, robbery and sexual offences (Home Office 2005, 2000). The Centre for Criminal Justice estimated that the

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<sup>7</sup> This represents a decrease of around 9% from the estimated total cost in 2000 after accounting for inflation and methodological improvements

proportion of offending which could be attributed to the young adult group (aged 18-24 years) would have a social and economic cost in the range of £16.8 - £20 billion (Centre for Criminal Justice 2005).

10.2. The total prison expenditure in 1995 was £2.843bn, which had risen to £4.325bn by 2006 (Lord Carter's Review of Prisons 2007). In 2005-06, the average cost of a private prison place was £33,722 pa and the average cost of a public prison place was £28,486 pa (House of Commons 2007b), however, costs do vary depending upon the type of prison establishment an offender is sentenced to. When this is compared to the average cost in the National Probation Service of a community sentence, which was estimated at £2,400 for 2005-06 (House of Lords 2007), it becomes apparent that prisons are expensive to run with little benefit. On the whole prison has a poor record of reducing re-offending with an average of 47% of adults reconvicted within one year of being released. For those offenders serving a sentence of less than 12 months this figure increases to an average of 59% (Ministry of Justice 2008b). Furthermore, offending and reoffending impacts considerably on the cost of running the Prison Service. There is also a high financial cost to the Police, Probation, the CJS more widely, victims of crime, the national economy, and society as a whole.

10.3. On the whole, the points raised here create a persuasive argument for the involvement of the voluntary sector (in this instance, CSV and Springboard) and the development of innovative projects such as Clear Track, which seek to provide a not-for-profit, cost-effective and efficient intervention.

10.4. The concluding evaluation report of Clear track will present the final conclusions in relation to Clear Track's effectiveness and efficiency as a community-based intervention in recognition of each of the project's aims. The report will also present concluding recommendations relating to the potential of Clear Track as a service and future similar projects.

## 11. The Evaluation of Clear Track:

11.1. Throughout the pilot period Clear Track was independently evaluated by the University of Newcastle.

11.2. The overall rationale of the Clear Track evaluation was organised around four levels of analysis which are capable of measuring and monitoring *what works; which mechanisms and processes are effective; under what conditions; and for which participants?* The concluding evaluation report of the Clear track project will assess the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the project, presenting a series of detailed findings under each of these key questions:

- theories of change,
- process and structure,
- impact assessment of Clear Track,
- and efficiency analysis

11.3. In order to determine Clear Track's efficiency and effectiveness to *establishing whether young adult offenders (aged 18-24), who would have otherwise received a custodial sentence, have a better chance of developing themselves as effective and productive citizens by attending Clear Track as a community custodial sentence*, the evaluation will assess how far the following targets, as proposed by Clear Track, have been met:

- Clear Track's ability to engage with up to 50 young adult offenders, aged 18-24, per year, over three years.
- Clear Track's ability to provide an average length of stay of up to 16 weeks.
- Clear Track's ability to provide a range of work-based learning activities, interventions and unpaid voluntary work for participants at Clear Track.
- Clear Track's ability to provide participants with the opportunity to engage in constructive activities, such as voluntary

work, education and training upon leaving Clear Track.

- Clear Track's ability to network with stakeholders and other organisations.
- to measure and compare the cost of Clear Track with the estimated cost of a prison establishment holding young adult offenders aged 18-24.
- to measure change in behaviour and attitudes which occur throughout the treatment period.
- to measure and compare the reconviction rates of participants leaving Clear Track with the estimated reconviction rates of offenders leaving prison.
- To establish whether Clear Track effectively addressed the offending behaviour of its participants.

- To establish whether Clear Track demonstrated a cost-effective and efficient community-based custodial sentencing option.

11.4. The concluding evaluation report of Clear Track will be published in September 2009 and can be downloaded from <http://criminaljusticeresearch.ncl.ac.uk>, alternatively copies of the report can be requested from Dr Elaine Campbell, School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, Newcastle University (Elaine.Campbell@ncl.ac.uk). For more information on previous Evaluation reports relating to the Clear Track project and its evaluation, visit [http://criminaljusticeresearch.ncl.ac.uk/index\\_files/CriminalJusticeResearchPublicationandReports.htm](http://criminaljusticeresearch.ncl.ac.uk/index_files/CriminalJusticeResearchPublicationandReports.htm)

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