



**Clear Track**



**SPRINGBOARD  
SUNDERLAND**

# An Evaluation Report of Clear Track

**Phase II Report ERII/03/07**  
**March 2007**

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## 1. Summary

**1.1.** Since the project was established in September 2005, the Clear Track management team have been working closely with Northumbria Probation Service in the interests of resolving some of the concerns raised by the Probation Board in relation to the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act.

**1.2.** By working closely and collaboratively to resolve the predicament which faced Clear Track, Northumbria Probation Service, the Probation Board and Clear Track's management team, alongside the Cabinet Office, NOMS and CSV, have successfully negotiated a delivery strategy which respects the professional status and legal obligations/responsibilities of the Probation Service, the courts and Clear Track. In doing so, Clear Track accepted its first probation referral in November 2006 in accordance with a Clear Track and National Probation Service Northumbria Service Level Agreement.

**1.3.** Northumbria Probation Service are ideally placed to lend its professional expertise in guiding Clear Track through its implementation and service delivery. The primary role of the Probation Service in working alongside Clear Track lies in the referral process. Referrals<sup>1</sup> which are made to the Clear Track, will be assessed by Clear Track's management team for suitability to engage with the project.

**1.4.** The project's delay in 'going-live' has effected the project's progress to date, particularly in relation to the project's aim 'to

engage with up to 50 young adult offenders, aged 18-21, per year, over three years'. The project's first year was utilised in developing the necessary strategies and protocols for delivering an efficient and effective intervention. Progress over the last four months has also proved significant, which is evident in the seventeen probation referrals made to Clear Track at the time of writing.

**1.5.** At the time of writing, seventeen young offenders have been referred to Clear Track through the Probation Service; of which seven offenders were assessed as suitable and ten offenders were assessed as unsuitable to engage with the project by the Clear Track management team.

**1.6.** As a specified activity requirement of an overall community order, the courts can require that an offender attends Clear Track for up to 60 days. Once assigned to the programme, a Clear Track participant will work towards challenging their offending behaviour through the delivery of a wide range of interventions tailored to addressing the needs of the young offender.

**1.7.** Clear Track, who anticipated a strategic referral process to be in place by September 2005, received their first probation referral in November 2006. Since November 2006, the evaluation-research strategy has been implemented in conjunction with Clear Track's first participants.

**1.8.** The Clear Track project's delay in 'going-live' had significantly impacted upon the proposed research strategy timetable to such an extent that the evaluation-research data collection phase was postponed by one year. It is essential, in delivering a comprehensive, independent evaluation of Clear Track that the fundamental principles of implementing a

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<sup>1</sup> The referral process is outlined in more detail in section 12, page 17.

rigorous and robust research strategy are not compromised as a consequence.

**1.9.** In ensuring the validity of the research findings the evaluation-research requires the same time period to complete the research process as initially proposed in the 'Evaluation Proposal of Clear Track'; and to accommodate this an additional fifth phase (and fourth year) is needed.

## 2. Introduction

**2.1.** This report presents the bi-annual report of Phase II of the evaluation of the Clear Track project, following the management team's confirmation of the first annual report submitted at the end of August 2006<sup>2</sup>. The Annual Evaluation Report Phase I digressed from the original reporting structure and focused upon the challenges which faced Clear Track during its developmental and implementation stages of service delivery as a community-based intervention (Campbell and Lewis 2006).

**2.2.** During the first year of the project's life, Clear Track experienced considerable difficulties in relation to the implementation and service delivery of the project. This was partly due to the limitations of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and partly due to the difficulties in establishing an effective and efficient referral process in partnership with the local Probation Service.

**2.3.** Since the annual report was published in August 2006, Clear Track, the local Northumbria Probation Service and the

project's stakeholders have worked in partnership to resolve the legal technicalities and operational responsibilities which had previously delayed Clear Track's progress as a pilot intervention.

**2.4.** In November 2006, Clear Track received its first young offender referral, ultimately resulting in Clear Track officially 'going-live'.

**2.5.** As a result, the reporting structure and the overall rationale of the Clear Track evaluation will revert back to the original 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?* Presented under each of the key concepts is a series of detailed findings, these are:

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

**2.6.** The report will go onto review the proposed research timetable, as outlined in the evaluation proposal (Campbell and Lewis 2005:13-14), which has been influenced by the delayed progress of the Clear Track project.

**2.7.** Furthermore, the report will discuss relevant research findings to date and consider the recommendations made in the previous report in relation to the project's advancements (Campbell and Lewis 2006b:14-15).

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<sup>2</sup> A copy of the annual evaluation report entitled 'Annual Evaluation Report of Clear Track, Phase I Report, AERI/08/06, August 2006' can be downloaded from [http://criminaljusticeresearch.ncl.ac.uk/index\\_files/Page229.htm](http://criminaljusticeresearch.ncl.ac.uk/index_files/Page229.htm), viewed 06.03.07

**Table ERII 4.1: The Ten Most Overcrowded Prisons in England and Wales in February 2007**

Prison Name	Baseline CNA	In-Use CNA	Operational Capacity	Population	% Population to In-Use CNA
Shrewsbury	182	181	340	335	185%
Altcourse	614	614	1,108	1,105	180%
Swansea	248	240	428	425	177%
Leicester	206	206	385	348	169%
Preston	449	429	750	724	169%
Usk	150	150	250	250	167%
Durham	591	591	981	967	164%
Dorchester	147	147	260	240	163%
Lincoln	449	306	507	498	163%
Exeter	316	316	533	503	159%

## Theories of Change

### 3. Prison Overview

**3.1.** In February 2007, the prison population in England and Wales stood at 79,537, a rise of 2,859 from the year before. Fifty-seven prisoners were held in police cells under Operation Safeguard<sup>3</sup>; in January 2007 this figure was 271 (HM Prison Service 2006, 2007a). The highest prison population was recorded at 80,051 as of December 4<sup>th</sup> 2006 (HM Prison Service 2007b).

<sup>3</sup> Operation Safeguard is a contingency plan to deal with prison overcrowding in the United Kingdom; it involves using cells at police stations as accommodation for prisoners when the number of available cells in prisons becomes critically low. On 9 October 2006, the Home Secretary Dr John Reid announced the implementation of Operation Safeguard as the prison population had reached 79,843 leaving only 125 spaces. The policy is supported by the Association of Chief Police Officers and it outlined a list of criteria for prisoners who should not be held in police station cells under Safeguard, including among others: women, juveniles and those with mental health problems or those involved in a Crown Court trial.

**3.2.** In February 2007, the prison population was 112% of the ‘in-use Certified Normal Accommodation’ (CNA)<sup>4</sup>. At the end of February 2007, 83 of the 141 prisons in England and Wales were operating with a population which exceeded its ‘in-use CNA’ (HM Prison Service 2007a). Indicating that the majority of prisons were over-crowded, a further five prisons were operating with a ‘full-to-capacity’ (see table ERII 4.1).

**3.3.** In accordance with the most recent World Prison Population List, the prison population rate in England and Wales was 148 per 100,000 of the national population (Walmsley 2005) making it the 11th most carcerative jurisdiction in the European Union<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The total in – use CNA stood at 71,043, with a total operational capacity of 82,551. The total operational capacity includes 400 operational safeguard places.

<sup>5</sup> While England and Wales incarceration rate is 148 per 100,000, recent figures show rates of 95 in Germany, 85 in France, 104 in Italy and 128 in Holland. Only Spain among the larger European Union countries rivals England and Wales, with 145. Estonia – 333 per 100,000 – had the highest prison population rate in the European Union. The United States had the highest recorded prison population rate in the world, 738 per 100,000 of the national population.

(Walmsley 2007). England and Wales have a higher incarceration rate than the rest of the UK. Northern Ireland has a rate of 84 and Scotland 139 per 100,000 of the population.

**3.4.** Measures such as these can be misleading as they fail to take into account the relative level of crime in England and Wales. Except for Sweden, England and Wales has the highest rate of recorded crime (per head of the population) in Europe. However, England and Wales sends relatively few people to prison. In England and Wales, only around 12 people are in prison for every 1,000 recorded crimes<sup>6</sup>. England and Wales and Sweden both have high crime rates with low rates of imprisonment. Conversely, Ireland, Spain and Portugal have low crime rates with high rates of imprisonment (Johnston and Wilson 2007).

**3.5.** A comparative study of the crime rates of US and England between 1981 and 1996, showed that as the risk of being imprisoned rose in the US, the crime rate fell. Conversely, as the risk of being imprisoned fell in England and Wales during the same time period, the crime rate increased (US Department of Justice, 1998).

## **4. Overcrowding**

**4.1.** At the end of November 2004 17,677 prisoners were held in cells beyond their capacity, for example two prisoners were held in a cell designed for one person, equivalent to 23.5% of the prison population at that time (Prison Reform Trust 2006).

**4.2.** This level of overcrowding has remained relatively consistent over the past year with more than half of all prisons being overcrowded (Prison Reform Trust 2006).

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<sup>6</sup> The lowest in Europe is Sweden, with 4.7 per 1,000; Spain imprisons 48 people for every 1,000 crimes; and Ireland 33 people for every 1,000 crimes.

Baroness Linklater of Butterstone, in her move for Parliamentary Papers on crime and offending, stated *'overcrowding has reached the point where not only are prison places full to capacity but both police cells and court cells are having to be used to hold prisoners until a bed can be found. In desperation, the Home Secretary ordered back into commission a wing in Norwich Prison, which the Chief Inspector of Prisons had deemed unfit for habitation and which had sewerage overflowing down the walls in one area. He is also looking again at prison ships, discussed military camps and has felt it necessary to communicate with our judges to remind them of that part of their role which is to use custody as a last resort'* (House of Lords 2007).

**4.3.** Many of the problems which face the prison system stem from over-crowding. Some establishments have been operating at well over their CNA for several years, resulting in a strain on officers, prisoners and the regime itself. Overcrowding could be removed by a massive programme of prison building, however, this does not advocate the government message of moving away from custody as a 'last resort' and moving towards using custody for the more serious and dangerous of offences and offenders (United Nations 1990).

**4.4.** Still, in a bid to alleviate some of the pressures which currently face the Prison Service, the Home Secretary, Dr John Reid, has commissioned an additional 8,000 prison places by 2012. In his speech on 'rebalancing the Criminal Justice System', the Home Secretary said *'as we make available additional capacity, we will ensure these new resources are focused on the serious, violent and prolific offenders who ought to be in prison. We will ensure that we have the places we need to protect the public. We are presently embarking on 900 prison places by autumn 2007. We will expand prison places by an additional 8,000 to keep*



*dangerous offenders in for longer*' (House of Commons 2006a).

On the one hand, building the additional 8,000 more prison places will cost the country £1.5 billion and each place will cost around £100,000 (House of Lords 2007). On the other hand, the latest Home Office prison population projection figures indicate that the rise in the number of prisoners will out grow the supply of places (see table ERII 4.2). Furthermore, the current prison population of 79,537 already exceeds the Home Office medium projection for 2007 (Home Office 2006a). Baroness Linklater of Butterstone suggests that *'this is a huge price to pay when building more and more prisons does not and cannot solve the problem'* (House of Lords 2007).

## 5. Sentencing Patterns and the Courts

**5.1.** A large proportion of Government literature in the UK suggests that the increasing imprisonment rate is largely owed to judges and magistrates sentencing more harshly (see House of Lords 2007, Judiciary of England and

Wales 2006, Home Office 2005a, Home Office 2005b).

**5.2.** Over the past ten years, the use of custody in the Crown Court has risen from 49% to 61%. In magistrates' courts, the use of custody has increased from 6% to 16% (House of Lords 2007).

**5.3.** Furthermore, the number of prisoners serving sentences of four years or more had more than doubled, from 15,660 in 1994 to 32,430 in 2004. Over the same period, the number of prisoners serving medium term sentences – twelve months to four years – increased by 53% and those serving sentences of less than twelve months increased by 31% (Judiciary of England and Wales 2006).

**5.4.** More significantly, receptions into prisons in 1994 of those sentenced to less than twelve months were 38,719; this had risen to 61,669 by 2004. Of the 61,669 receptions into prison in 2004, 53,676 (87%) received sentences of six months or less and 7,999 (14%) received sentences between six and twelve months (Judiciary of England and Wales 2006). The Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales argues that *'this obviously*

**Table ERII 4.2: Home Office Projected Prison Population\***

Year	High	Medium	Low
2007	80,420	79,380	78,380
2008	84,670	82,730	80,730
2009	89,410	86,290	83,320
2010	94,020	89,810	85,700
2011	98,310	92,970	87,590
2012	102,280	95,630	88,980
2013	106,550	98,190	90,250

- Note: these figures represented the projected prison population at the end of June for each year (Home Office 2006a).

reflects the six month<sup>7</sup> limit of jurisdiction of the magistrates' (Judiciary of England and Wales 2006). The Home Affairs Committee, in their second report on the Criminal Justice Bill, mentioned that they had serious concerns about some of the provisions put forward in the Criminal Justice Bill. In particular, they expressed concern over the proposals to increase magistrates' sentencing powers to twelve months, especially if implemented before the Custody Plus. They go on to say 'We are concerned that the proposed increase in magistrates' sentencing powers will only inflate the prison population unless it is implemented after the Custody Plus scheme is rolled out.' (House of Commons 2002).

**5.5.** Over the last 20 years, there has been a marked increase in the length of the average sentence imposed for more serious offences such as drug offences, criminal damage, sexual offences, violence and burglary. Amongst the sentenced prison population, other offences<sup>8</sup> (12% increase), violence against a person (11% increase) and sexual offences (10% increase) saw the largest percentage increase from December 2005 to December 2006 (NOMS 2006a).

**5.6.** Nevertheless, 2005 saw an overall reduction of 4% in the total number of offenders sentenced; with a reduction of 4% in magistrates' courts and a reduction of 1% in the Crown Court (Home Office 2007). Furthermore, the number of people found guilty by the courts has remained largely constant

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<sup>7</sup> The custodial sentencing jurisdiction for magistrates was set to increase from six months to twelve months in November 2006. However, the Home Secretary, Dr John Reid, postponed its introduction indefinitely together with the proposed custody plus sentencing option.

<sup>8</sup> The Home Office crime type definition of 'other offences' is explained in detail on the Home Office Crime Statistics website, for more details go to <http://www.crimestatistics.org.uk/output/page70.asp>, viewed 04.03.07

over recent years. This was 1,736,628 in 1993 and 1,816,676 in 2004 (Home Office 2005a). Thus, it could be suggested that the magistrates' courts and the Crown Court sentencing patterns are not the only factor influencing the rate of imprisonment. The Lord Chief Justice suggests that the number of criminals that have been apprehended and brought to justice has also impacted upon the prison population. In that, since 2002 there has been a 27% increase in offenders being brought to justice (Judiciary of England and Wales 2006).

**5.7.** Increases in the use of imprisonment often reflect policy changes rather than represent direct responses to increases in crime rates. It could be argued that the government sends out mixed messages to the public and the courts about sentencing. In aiming to reduce the prison population, the government has introduced policies and legislations which play a clear part in the upward pressure on sentencers. The last ten years has witnessed the introduction of tough legislation which has implemented mandatory custodial sentences for drink driving offences, for drivers who have three previous disqualifications over a ten year period, life for some sex and violent offences and a mandatory three years for a third burglary conviction (Rethinking Crime and Punishment 2003).

**5.8.** Still, one particular problem which faces the prison system has been the increase in the use of short-term custodial sentences. It is widely accepted that such sentences are too short to have any impact upon offenders and prison interventions are not long enough to meaningfully address offending behaviour. The Home Secretary and Lord Chancellor in 2002, criticised short custodial sentences on the grounds that they 'provide little opportunity to tackle re-offending and indeed can often make things worse – disrupting family and work life while putting offenders who have committed

*relatively minor crimes in the company of more serious offenders*' (Lord Chancellor's Department 2002).

**5.9.** Furthermore, one in four prisoners serving a short custodial sentence who previously had stable accommodation lose their homes whilst in prison (Prison Reform Trust 2005); two-thirds lose their jobs; and around 40% of prisoners lose contact with their families. All of these factors significantly increase the likelihood of re-offending (Coulsfield Inquiry 2004).

## **6. Re-offending**

**6.1.** 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. The Prison Service also plays an important role in the punishment and rehabilitation of offenders.

**6.2.** There are various ways of demonstrating the effectiveness of the Prison Service in its twin aim to punish and rehabilitate offenders. A commonly used indicator is that of reoffending<sup>9</sup>; partly because it demonstrates how well the public is being protected and partly because it demonstrates how well prisoners are being deterred from committing further offences (House of Lords 2007).

**6.3.** Over the past 10 years, re-offending has risen steadily and is now at an all time high with 67% of all prisoners reconvicted of another crime within two years of being released, for young adult men (aged 18-21) this

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<sup>9</sup> Re-offending means that the offender committed an offence within a two-year follow-up period and was subsequently convicted in court, as outlined by the Home Office (see Home Office 2005c)

figure rises to 78% (Home Office 2005c). Reconviction rates do vary by type of order; however, prisoners released after short-term sentences of up to twelve months tend to have proportionately higher reconviction rates than longer-term prisoners (Rethinking Crime and Punishment 2002).

**6.4.** In his speech entitled '*Where Next for Penal Policy?*', the former Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, emphasised the need to place the prevention of re-offending at the core of correctional services, stating that a reduction in the number of offenders who re-offend was a paramount aim of offender management. He goes on to say '*we have to make preventing re-offending the centre of the organisation of our correctional services. We have to make reducing the number of re-offenders the central focus of our policy and practice*' (Home Office 2005d).

**6.5.** The Home Office in their 'Five Year Strategy for Protecting the Public and Reducing Re-offending' suggest that for serious offenders rehabilitation must start in prison. In that '*we must do all we can to protect the public from serious, violent and dangerous offenders. This means using prison better, reserving it for more serious offenders but keeping the most dangerous in prison for longer*' (Home Office 2006b). However, careful consideration also needs to be given to those offenders for whom a short-term custodial sentence would be too short to impact upon their offending behaviour. The Home Office go on to state that '*prison in many ways asks less of offenders than community punishments, which can mean hard work on behalf of others, or a strict curfew while an offender holds down a job. And community punishments also give us better opportunities to rehabilitate offenders and get them going straight*' (Home Office 2006b).

**6.6.** With this in mind, the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales suggests 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 can provide a visible demonstration of reparation to the community in which the offence occurred.

## **7. The National Offender Management Service and the Offender Management Bill<sup>10</sup>**

**7.1.** Advancements within government penal policy have recognized that the prevention of re-offending and the management of offenders should be at the centre of the organisation of correctional services in order to significantly reduce crime and to increase public protection. On the whole, this has been driven by a dramatically increasing prison population (Prison Reform Trust 2006); a costly prison service (House of Commons 2005, Social Exclusion Unit 2002); and significantly high re-offending rates committed by those who have been through the Criminal Justice System (CJS) before (Home Office 2006b).

**7.2.** Although the Probation Service have improved their focus on reducing re-offending (Home Office 2005e), the large scale availability of beneficial initiatives and programmes, which are needed to work effectively in reducing re-offending, are often limited and restricted. This is partly due to catchment area divides and placement availability; partly due to the current balance of resources; and partly due to the significant

increase in Probations' management caseload<sup>11</sup>. These issues impact upon offenders, particularly those serving short custodial sentences, who are often competing for the limited practical support available in a bid to address their invariably complex and inter-related needs.

**7.3.** With this in mind, the Carter Report (Carter 2003) concluded that a new approach was needed in bringing together the delivery of custodial and non-custodial penalties under the single coordinating agency of the National Offenders Management Service (NOMS), with an overall view to introducing:

- end-to-end management of offenders, to ensure continuity both in prison and under supervision in the community,
- a purchaser-provider split for the delivery of non-custodial sentences, with regional managers contracting services,
- and greater 'contestability' (allowing the private and voluntary sector to compete to provide services) (House of Commons 2006b).

**7.4.** The NOMS, which was formed in 2004, has a clear objective to punish offenders and help reduce re-offending by ensuring effective end-to-end management of offenders both in the community and in custody. An 'offender management model' will be implemented to provide an integrated approach to offender management, with a single manager for each offender who in turn would be managed by one

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<sup>10</sup> The Offender Management Bill, Bill 9 of 2006-07, was published on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2006. On the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007 the Bill was brought from the House of Commons and presented to the House of Lords for its first reading. However, the bill is still to be passed as an Act of Parliament.

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<sup>11</sup> On the 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2003, the Probation Service went on strike for the first time in twenty years due to the increased demands placed on the service and its workforce. See The Observer, 'Which moron mentioned the justice system?' by Nick Cohen, Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2003, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/crime/article/0,2763,877950,00.html>, Viewed 04/03/07.

of ten Regional Offender Managers (ROMs) (NOMS 2005a, House of Commons 2006b).

**7.5.** In bridging the gap between custody and community offender management, NOMS will be assisted by a new comprehensive National Offender Management Information database known as C-NOMIS, alongside the Offender Assessment System (OASys) and the Violent Offender and Sex Offender Register (ViSOR). The primary benefits of utilising offender management databases, such as those outlined here, lies in their ability in increasing communication throughout the CJS whilst at the same time providing end-to-end monitoring of offenders progress throughout the CJS (NOMS 2006b, NOMS 2006c).

**7.6.** In line with the new proposals and the National Standards (NOMS 2005a), the Probation Service<sup>12</sup> is required to contract out more of its services (House of Commons 2006b). The overall aim being to focus on the individual with a more effective and efficient assessment process, through providing a wide range of services from a mixed economy of organisations encompassing organisations from the, voluntary, private, community and statutory sectors (Home Office 2006b).

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<sup>12</sup> The Carter report (2003) envisaged that the existing National Probation Directorate and the National Probation Service including local Probation Boards would cease to exist in its present form with the introduction of NOMS. However, following concerns about the loss of local links, it was decided that the 42 probation boards would be retained, but would be directed to contract-out more. A bill, which would have put NOMS on a statutory footing and allowed the Secretary of State to direct local probation boards on how to perform their contracting-out functions, was introduced in the House of Lords in January 2005. However, it made no progress before the May 2005 General Election. A further bill was announced in the Queen's Speech for the following session, but did not materialise. Then a consultation paper, published in October 2005, proposed the Secretary of State himself should be given the statutory responsibility to commission probation services. Probation Boards would be replaced by trusts who, along with others, could be contracted to deliver probation services. The Government's proposals were confirmed in a 'contestability prospectus' published in August 2006.

**7.7.** With an overall aim of reducing re-offending by 5% by 2008 and 10% by 2010, NOMS aims to adopt a sharper focus on accountability for reducing re-offending which aims to be a fundamental key to making the system work (NOMS 2005a, House of Commons 2006b).

**7.8.** The National Probation Service<sup>13</sup> has improved its performance across a wide range of targets (Home Office 2005e, House of Commons 2006b). Despite this, the Government wishes to improve performance further through the involvement of the private and voluntary sectors. ROMS will have a key role to play in the continuing development of standards through the management of offenders and through increased public confidence in the effective supervision of offenders in the community (NOMS 2005a).

## **8. The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in NOMS**

**8.1.** 'Commissioning' is a fundamental component of NOMS strategic plans to improve the way in which offenders are managed, as well as increased public protection and reducing re-offending. To achieve this, NOMS will establish service level agreements with a wide range of 'public value partnerships' from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors (NOMS, 2005b, 2006d, 2007). In turn, these providers will aim to develop and deliver services to punish, support and reform offenders (NOMS 2005b, 2006c)

**8.2.** A primary benefit of the new commissioning framework will lie in its ability to provide *'a new process for allocating money to services and service providers. It will be the process NOMS uses to redistribute resources from less effective services in order to invest*

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<sup>13</sup> The National Probation Service was formed in 2001 following a major restructuring by the Government.

*resources in more effective services. As well as improving the mix of services provided, commissioners also intend to improve the provider mix by disinvesting from poorer performing providers and investing in more responsive and higher performing providers. Both of these commissioning actions will be undertaken to improve service provision, reduce reoffending and better protect the public' (NOMS 2007).*

**8.3.** As a not-for-profit project, Clear Track is ideally placed to provide a community custodial sentencing option aimed at protecting the public and reducing re-offending through establishing alliances with local partners working to deliver a comprehensive innovative package of care. Through improved multi-agency partnerships, Clear Track will work jointly with the local Probation Service, together aspiring to deliver an effective management referral process and successful intervention programme.

## **Process and Change**

### **9. The Criminal Justice Act and Community Sentences**

**9.1.** Key changes to the Criminal Justice Act (CJA) 2003 sentencing framework were introduced with the aim of increasing its effectiveness of reducing re-offending, as well as reserving custodial sentences for more serious offenders and providing the courts with robust powers to deal with dangerous offenders.

**9.2.** Changes implemented in 2005 included:

- the various kinds of community orders for adults were replaced by a single

Community Order with a range of possible requirements,

- serious violent and sexual offenders were given new sentences (Indeterminate or Extended Public Protection sentences), which ensure that they are kept in prison or under supervision for longer periods than previously,
- sentence lengths of 12 months or over are served in full, and with supervision extended to the end of the sentence rather than the 3/4 point as previously,
- a reformed suspended sentence (Suspended Sentence Order) was introduced,
- and in relation to juveniles, the Act extended the use of parenting orders by making them available at an earlier stage and introduced individual support orders, requiring young people with anti-social behaviour orders to undertake education-related activities (Home Office 2007).

**9.3.** Despite the new provisions within the Criminal Justice Act 2003, the sentencing framework fails to reflect the Home Office White Paper's advice (2002) which called for a '*genuine third option...that combines community and custody sentences*'. On the whole, this reduces the feasibility of the implementation of potential programmes such as Clear Track which aim to bridge the gap between community and custodial sentencing (see Campbell and Lewis 2006a:9).

**9.4.** Still, until matters are resolved at government level, negotiations between NOMS, Community Service Volunteers (CSV) and the Probation Service have facilitated an agreement to categorise Clear Track as an

activity requirement under the single generic community order<sup>14</sup>.

**9.5.** The new community order aims to combine punishment with reparation and rehabilitation through challenging offending behaviour, as well as providing compensatory measures for restorative justice. A community order can comprise of one or more of twelve possible requirements which are combined to produce a tailored sentence based on the severity of the offence, the risk of harm, the likelihood of reconviction and offending-related needs (see Campbell and Lewis 2006a:9)

**9.6.** As a specified activity requirement of an overall community order, the courts can require that an offender attends Clear Track for up to 60 days. However, the courts cannot sentence a young offender to Clear Track as an activity requirement unless it has been specified by the Probation Service in a pre-sentence report (PSR). Once assigned to the programme, a Clear Track participant will work towards challenging their offending behaviour through the delivery of a wide range of interventions tailored to addressing the needs of the young offender.

## **10. Clear Track as a Specified Activity Requirement**

**10.1.** An activity requirement in accordance with the Criminal Justice Act 2003, section 201 specifies that *'the offender must present himself to a person or persons specified in the relevant order at a place or places so specified on such number of days as may be specified and/or*

*participate in activities specified in the order on such number of days as may be specified'*. The Act also specifies that the offender is required *'while at any place, to comply with instructions given by, or under the authority of the person in charge of that place'*. However, the Act exercises several restrictions including *'a court may not include an activity requirement in a relevant order unless it has been consulted, in the case of an offender aged 18 or over, an officer of a local Probation board'* and that the number of days specified to participate in the activity requirement must not exceed 60.

**10.2.** Clear Track as an activity requirement will consist of a 16 week programme. As an intervention Clear Track will primarily focus on addressing offending behaviour and assisting with offender related needs through a structured weekly programme of inter-dependent concurrent activities as well as:

- discouraging participants away from crime whilst on the project,
- keeping participants occupied,
- 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 developing cognitive skills through challenging perceptions of self and

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<sup>14</sup> As defined under section 177, Chapter Two *Community Orders: Offenders Aged 16 or Over*, of the Criminal Justice Act 2003, Chapter 44, Part 12, *Sentencing*. Go to <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2003/30044--p.htm>, viewed 05/03/07

others, attitudes towards offending and motivational issues.

**10.3.** The weekly programme will comprise of a range of compulsory elements that will amount to the 60 day activity requirement, as outlined in the CJA 2003, section 201, and a complementary programme of voluntary activities. In essence, a typical Clear Track day may consist of both compulsory and complementary elements.

**10.4.** A compulsory element of the programme may include activities such as work-based learning, basic skills, or other such specified activities which are deemed as essential components of the participant's structured programme. Non-compliance of the compulsory aspects of the programme may result in a breach of the activity requirement of the community order.

**10.5.** A complementary element of the programme could include voluntary activities such as sporting, cultural and recreational pursuits and complementary therapies such as counselling, anger management, parenting skills and so on. Non-compliance of these elements of the order does not constitute a breach of the overall community order as participation is voluntary. However, compliance from Clear Track participants is essential at all levels of the order to ensure that the maximum potential benefits of the programme and, essentially, the community order are realised. Furthermore, Clear Track participants will be actively encouraged to engage with the programme at all times.

**10.6.** By working in close partnership, Clear Track and the local Northumbria Probation Service, will be able to closely monitor the content and quality of the requirements that are implemented as part of a Clear Track structured

weekly programme, as directed by the National Standards<sup>15</sup> (NOMS 2005a).

**10.7.** In achieving this, Clear Track will notify the local Probation Service of each participant's structured weekly programme in a timetable format. The Clear Track weekly programme will be forwarded to an assigned senior probation officer prior to the week's engagements. Upon completion of the weekly programme, a revised timetable will be forwarded to the Probation Service indicating any structural changes to the proposed programme and more importantly, indicating where participants were compliant and non-compliant with the programme.

**10.8.** This exercise clearly assists both the Clear Track management team and the Probation Service in monitoring the level and frequency of engagement in relation to the compulsory elements of the order, as well as the monitoring of non-compliance which could result in a breach of the order.

**10.9.** Each participant's weekly programme is organised around an Individual Action Plan (IAP) which is completed at an initial assessment stage. The IAP will assist in identifying individual needs that can be addressed through the application of a tailored programme. This is essential in meeting the needs of the young offender and in tackling those negative outcomes which can accompany short-term custodial sentences such as accommodation needs, employment needs and loss of family ties, whilst potentially impacting upon offending behaviour, challenging cognitive processes associated with such behaviours and subsequently re-offending rates.

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<sup>15</sup> Section SS8.5 of the National Standards 2005 states 'specified activities will be delivered in accordance with any content and quality requirement defined by the National Probation Directorate' (NOMS 2005a)



**10.10.** As an activity requirement Clear Track will be one of several requirements under the provision of an intensive community order under the CJA 2003 (National Probation Service 2005). Essentially, this means that as a 16 week activity requirement, Clear Track would 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 could comprise of :

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

**10.11.** This poses several concerns for the Clear Track project. Firstly, the young offender at Clear Track may become confused or anxious by the varying requirements of the order which may result in a breach of the order or a failure to complete the order. Secondly, for Clear Track and its stakeholders, the purpose of piloting the intervention would be to monitor its efficiency and effectiveness in challenging offending behaviour. However, as a requirement and part of an overall community order the project would be unable to accurately differentiate its success or failure from other requirements, which in turn contradicts the overriding aim of the pilot programme. Furthermore, a 60 day requirement which can be completed within a six month timescale, may impact upon the overall effectiveness and intensity of the order as a punishment and its potential to assist in the rehabilitation of the young offenders.

## **11. Clear Track's Delay in 'Going-live'**

**11.1.** Since the project was established in September 2005, the Clear Track management team have been working closely with the local Northumbria Probation Service in the interests of resolving some of the concerns raised by the Probation Board in relation to the provisions of the CJA.

**11.2.** Key changes to the sentencing framework available to sentencers came into effect in April 2005 as a result of the revised CJA. The newly revised sentencing framework failed to reflect the White Paper's advice (Home Office 2002) which called for a '*genuine third option....that combines community and custody sentences*' (Home Office 2002, Campbell and Lewis 2005:2) as well as the advice given in the Home Office five year strategy emphasising the '*need to develop community prisons*' (Home Office 2006b).

**11.3.** Furthermore, the local Probation Board has a responsibility for ensuring that working relationships in the delivery of service provisions are embedded within current legislation and statutory frameworks. Thus, both organisations faced a fresh challenge in working closely to resolve the predicament which stemmed from the restrictions of the CJA 2003.

**11.4.** Clear Track, as a pilot intervention was placed in an ambivalent position; on the one hand, being restricted by the provisions of the CJA; and on the other, the legislative frameworks which bind the Probation Service as a responsible and accountable statutory organisation. The conflicting requirements of legislative and organisational responsibilities, which underpinned the project's progress in relation to its implementation and service delivery as a community-based intervention,

are somewhat more complex than are allowed for here<sup>16</sup>.

**11.5.** Nonetheless, by working closely and collaboratively to resolve the predicament which faced Clear Track, the local Northumbria Probation Service, the Probation Board and Clear Track's management team, alongside the Cabinet Office, NOMS and CSV, have successfully negotiated a delivery strategy which respects the professional status of the Probation Service, the courts and Clear Track. In doing so, Clear Track accepted its first probation referral in November 2006 in accordance with a Clear Track and National Probation Service Northumbria Service Level Agreement.

## **12. Criteria for Service Delivery and Good Practice**

### **▪ *Criteria for Inclusion: The Referral Process***

**12.1.** Northumbria Probation Service are ideally placed to lend its expertise in guiding Clear Track through its implementation and service delivery. The primary role of the Probation Service in working alongside Clear Track lies in the referral process.

**12.2.** The referral process works on several levels;

- firstly, the Probation Service must recommend eligible candidates for Clear Track;
- secondly, the Clear Track management team would then need to consider the suitability of

the project in addressing the needs of referred candidates;

- thirdly, should a candidate be deemed eligible and suitable and be willing to participate with the project, the Probation Service would accordingly advise magistrates and judges as outlined in a pre-sentence report (PSR).
- Finally, given the advice of the PSR, magistrates and judges must then consider appropriate sentencing in relation to the severity of the offence committed in light of the offender's level of risk and previous convictions.

**12.3.** All candidates who are referred by probation to the Clear Track management team will be assessed at the various levels of the referral process as outlined above. However, because a candidate has been referred to the Clear Track management team, this does not automatically infer that the young offender will be deemed as suitable for the project. A young offender will need to be assessed as suitable at all stages of the referral process before they will be able to engage with the Clear Track project.

**12.4.** Such procedures are vital particularly when considering the level of 'risk' the offender may pose in terms of the severity of the offence and the likelihood of re-offending. As a result, custody may be the only option available in some circumstances. Thus, this level of communication could ultimately act as a protective proviso, the accuracy of which is partly dependent upon the appropriate considerations within pre-sentence reports. However, this should not be misunderstood as a subjective filter, eliminating those candidates deemed as likely to fail.

**12.5.** By adopting a joint referral process Clear Track will be in a position to liaise with one of three allocated Probation Offender

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<sup>16</sup> For further discussion in relation to the limitations of the Criminal Justice Act refer to Campbell and Lewis 2006a, 2006b.

Managers, the benefits of which will be evident in the consistent successful selection of appropriate candidates. The Probation Offender Managers will follow a prescribed eligibility criterion as prescribed by Clear Track. The eligibility criteria is outlined as follows:

- offenders must be aged between 18-21 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.

▪ ***How will Offenders be Selected for Clear Track?***

**12.6.** Selecting appropriate candidates for Clear Track is an essential component to successfully addressing offender related needs, challenging offending behaviour and reducing re-offending. A system for the assessment of offenders (OASys) is currently used by the Probation Service and the Prison Service throughout England and Wales (Home Office 1999).

**12.7.** Compiling a complete OASys assessment of potential Clear Track referrals will ensure that appropriate candidates are selected in accordance with the eligibility criteria. Furthermore, such information will then be used to prepare a PSR, making a clear proposal for sentence, outlining the sentence plan, its requirements, a timescale and how the sentence is likely to be implemented (NOMS 2005:SS2.5 - SS2.13).

**12.8.** Thus, on the whole a PSR writer will consider the eligibility criteria of a potential

referral, alongside a thorough probation assessment prior to recommending Clear Track as a suitable intervention to either the offender or the courts.

▪ ***Suitability Criteria for Clear Track***

**12.9.** For some candidates Clear Track will be deemed inappropriate, for example those offenders assessed as a high risk of harm to the public, sex offenders, violent offenders, those offenders with severe mental health problems and those offenders where custody is the most suitable punishment. However, given the stringent probation assessment process, such candidates should be ‘screened-out’ of the referral process at the initial eligibility stage. The suitability screening criteria is outlined as follows; Clear Track will be inappropriate for those offenders:

- 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.

**12.10.** Referrals which are made to Clear Track will be assessed by Clear Track’s management team for suitability. This will generally take place within five working days with a decision on suitability within twenty-four hours of the assessment; however, this may need to be extended in the case of remanded offenders given the complexities of gaining access into prison to conduct the assessment.

**12.11.** From the outset, the aims of the pilot project will be fully explained to the potential participant, including Clear Track rules, regulations and expectations, particularly in

relation to compliance. This initial assessment will also form the basis of the IAP.

**12.12.** Clear Track staff members, when assessing the suitability of candidates, recognise that potential candidates can decline an invitation to attend Clear Track as part of their sentence. This is primarily because Clear Track, as a pilot-intervention, is not legally recognised as an enforceable sentencing option; therefore willingness to engage with the project is entirely voluntary. However, once the young offender has agreed to engage with Clear Track and the sentence has been passed by the courts, Clear Track then becomes part of an overall enforceable community sentence and non-compliance would be taken seriously.

**12.13.** Of interest here, however, is that the screening criterion provides no detailed guidance to Clear Track staff and Probation Offender Managers for the identification of 'suitable candidates'. That is, 'suitability' tends to refer to those candidates who are deemed *inappropriate* rather than suitable per se. Thus, the suitability screening process becomes subjective, potentially resulting in an 'ad-hoc' selection process of those referrals who have been deemed as suitable.

**12.14.** Furthermore, the eligibility selection criteria refers to four broad areas of classification which, on the whole, provides limited guidance and assurance for Probation Offender Managers who are responsible for selecting appropriate candidates. This could potentially result in inappropriate referrals.

**12.15.** Eligibility and suitability decisions such as these will be made in support of informal discussions, professional judgements, practitioner experience and professional expertise. However, it is recommended that the Clear Track management team revise the eligibility and suitability criteria with a view to providing robust and comprehensive detailed

criteria aimed at producing an effective and efficient referral process.

**12.16.** Overall, this would be of benefit to both Probation Offender Managers and Clear Track staff members in the selection of appropriate referrals. More importantly however, it would benefit new staff members who would be unfamiliar with the selection criteria, and it would be transferable to future potential projects in the development and implementation of service delivery. Furthermore, a detailed eligibility criterion would assist those practitioners who could recommend Clear Track as a possible sentencing option independently of the Probation Service, i.e. magistrates, judges, legal representatives, and so on, by providing a clear knowledge-base and a consistent process in identifying potential participants.

▪ ***Criteria for Exclusion: Breach Proceedings***

**12.17.** With respect to implementing eligibility and suitability criteria, Clear Track aims to adopt a 'no exclusion' approach to its structured activities by encouraging individuals to partake in the daily regime of their tailored programme; however, there may be times when an individual can no longer be included in the project due to a breach of the court order. Breach of a court order is viewed as a serious offence by the courts and the Probation Service.

**12.18.** Through providing 'joint-supervision', Clear Track and the Probation Service will work together in monitoring non-compliance of the court order. Non-compliance of the order can occur at many levels including non-attendance of the compulsory elements of the activity requirement, non-compliance with residence, non-compliance with curfew requirements, absconding and breach of the order through offending. Therefore, an element of responsibility lies with Clear Track's staff

members in supporting its participants and in informing them of the expectations, boundaries and rules of the project, for example, a participant may not fully appreciate an infringement of their curfew if the boundaries of appropriate behaviour are not made clear to them.

**12.19.** In determining failure to comply, the National Standards 2005 clearly states *'for all offenders any failure to attend an appointment or any other failure to comply with any requirement of a sentence should be deemed unacceptable unless the offender provides an acceptable explanation'* (NOMS 2005a:SS9.1). Should no explanation be provided within a total of seven working days, or should the explanation be unacceptable, the offender manager will issue a warning in the form of a letter considering the incident as an unacceptable failure to comply (NOMS 2005a:SS9.2 – SS9.6).

**12.20.** For offenders on a community sentence, the National Standards 2005 goes on to state *'the offender manager will give only one warning in any 12 month period of a sentence before commencing breach action'* (NOMS 2005a:SS9.9). Furthermore *'where breach proceedings are required, the offender manager will instigate these proceedings within ten working days of the relevant failure to comply, or sooner if the offender poses a risk of harm to the public. The offender manager will normally arrange further contacts in relation to the sentence requirements pending breach unless it is clear that the offender is completely uncooperative or disruptive...'* (NOMS 2005a:SS9.14 – SS9.15).

**12.21.** As can be seen, stringent procedures are in place to deal swiftly and effectively with the failure to comply with the requirements of an order or a breach of a community order. With this in mind, it is essential that Clear Track staff members carefully consider non-compliance on an individual basis in the context of the

offender's explanation for failing to comply before initiating breach proceedings with the relevant Probation Offender Manager.

**12.22.** Still, Clear Track staff members must ensure that the Probation Offender Manager is informed of non-compliance in all instances, at which time explanations can be put forward on the offender's behalf. Should breach occur the court would still have the option to allow the order to run if continued engagement with Clear Track was deemed the most appropriate action.

## **The Impact Assessment of Clear Track**

### **13. The Impact of Clear Track as an Activity Requirement**

**13.1.** Clear Track aims to provide an intensive, supportive structured regime for young adult offenders' who would have otherwise received a custodial sentence. This will take place in a community setting, providing enhanced residential supervision which acts as a fundamental key to the overall outcome of the project's aims. Furthermore, providing enhanced supervision within a residential setting differentiates Clear Track from other community-based sentencing. The provision of enhanced supervision increases confidence amongst magistrates in using this sentencing option for offenders as an alternative to custody particularly when considering issues around re-offending, non-compliance with the order and the risk of absconding.

**13.2.** As an activity requirement Clear Track will be one of several requirements within the provision of an intensive community order under the CJA 2003 (National Probation Service 2005).

**13.3.** Ideally, this means, in considering the PSR, a court could sentence an offender to a community order, imposing several additional requirements, one of which would be to engage with Clear Track as a 16 week activity requirement within six months.

**13.4.** To date, seventeen young offenders have been referred to Clear Track through the Probation Service; of which seven offenders were assessed as suitable and 10 offenders were assessed as unsuitable to engage with the project by the Clear Track management team.

**ERII 4.3:** A Two-way Table to Show the Number of Offenders Assessed as Suitable by Clear Track

	Number of offenders referred by the Probation Service
Number of offenders assessed as suitable by Clear Track	7
Number of offenders assessed as unsuitable by Clear Track	10
Total	17

**13.5.** Of the seven young offenders who were assessed as suitable for Clear Track and subsequently made subject to a community order, six were sentenced by Sunderland magistrates' courts and one was sentenced by Newcastle Crown Court. Four of the offenders were subject to court bail<sup>17</sup> and three of the offenders were remanded in custody<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> At this stage it is unknown whether this was conditional or unconditional bail.

<sup>18</sup> The decision to remand in custody is made when the courts consider the offender to be at risk of failing to

**ERII 4.4:** A Two-way Table to Show the Number of Offenders Sentenced to Clear Track by Court Type

	Sentenced to Clear Track
Crown Court	1
magistrates' court	6
Total	7

**13.6.** Six of the seven young offenders who were sentenced to a community order were also sentenced to Clear Track as an activity requirement. One young offender was not sentenced to Clear Track as an activity requirement, however, it was agreed by the courts that this young offender should reside at the project due to their accommodation needs. This offender was not made subject to an activity requirement or a residence requirement, thus the participant engaged with Clear Track on an entirely voluntary basis. Whilst at Clear Track this offender breached their order and was resented by the courts.

**ERII 4.5:** A Two-way Table to Show the Number of Offenders Sentenced to Clear Track by Community Order Requirement Type

	Sentenced to Clear Track
Activity Requirement	6
Residence Requirement	1
Total	7

attend court, commit further offences, and/or interfere with witnesses or obstruct the course of justice.

**13.7.** Two young offenders who were sentenced to Clear Track as part of an activity requirement were not required to reside at the project. For one offender this was because the courts felt confident that living in a stable family environment would benefit the offender more than the possible disruption of transferring to Clear Track accommodation. Whilst attending Clear Track, this offender breached their order and was resentenced by the courts. Similarly, for the second offender who acts as a carer for his mother, the courts felt that removing this offender from their home environment would benefit neither the family nor the young offender. It was later deemed inappropriate for this individual to remain in the family home whilst his mother was being cared for in hospital, thus in consultation with the courts<sup>19</sup>, he was transferred to Clear Track accommodation. All of the offenders who were required to attend Clear Track were considered as ‘high-risk’ or ‘so serious’ in relation to the seriousness of their offending<sup>20</sup>.

**ERII 4.6:** A Two-way Table to Show the Number of Sentenced Offenders Residing at Clear Track

	Sentenced to Clear Track
Resident at Clear Track	4
Non-resident at Clear Track	2
Total	7

**13.8.** The Clear Track management team should carefully consider and monitor the

<sup>19</sup> To vary the requirements of an order, an offender or a representative must seek permission from the courts.

<sup>20</sup> This is outlined in the pre-sentence reports of those offenders who were required to attend Clear Track.

impact of the project upon those participants who are not required to reside at Clear Track and the effect that this may have upon those participants who are required to reside at Clear Track. Supervision within a residential setting may be the crucial difference between motivating offenders to engage in the project, or in challenging their offending behaviour, and the risk of non-compliance or re-offending.

**13.9.** In addition, the Clear Track management team need to consider what difference can be made, if any, in challenging the offending behaviour of those young offenders who are not sentenced to a Clear Track activity requirement. When taking into consideration a community order as a sentencing option, report writers and the courts carefully consider *which* requirements have the potential to address *which* of the offenders’ needs. It is likely, in the event of sentencing an offender to Clear Track as an activity requirement, that the courts and report writers recognise the need for Clear Track in addressing these concerns. Thus, it is more likely, for those offenders who are not made subject to such a requirement, that this is because the Clear Track intervention may not actually address the offender’s needs, or that such a sentence may be considered an inappropriate judgement. In any event, the Clear Track management team need to consider the impact that such decisions may have upon future sentencing, Clear Track participants, financial and resource implications, as well as the potential impact upon the overall aims of the project.

**13.10.** Of the six<sup>21</sup> research participants who completed a stage one questionnaire<sup>22</sup>, all six

<sup>21</sup> Of the seven participants who attended Clear Track, one offender breached their order within the first week of arriving and therefore did not complete a stage one questionnaire.

<sup>22</sup> Stage one questionnaires are completed in the second week of arriving at Clear Track.

respondents were unsure exactly what their sentence was. Furthermore, four offenders did not view Clear Track as a punishment, whilst two offenders thought that it was a punishment. However, all six offenders added that they thought Clear Track was there to help. Comments from some young offenders included:

*"the tag is the punishment, Clear Track is to help"* [Questionnaire 1]

*"yes in a way, in another way it's there to help us, get us into a routine and not getting locked up all the time"* [Questionnaire 3]

*"they are trying to help you and keep you out of jail"* [Questionnaire 5]

**13.11.** When asked, all offenders expressed that they had received information about what was going to happen to them before they arrived at Clear Track. Three offenders mentioned that they had not received an induction pack; however, all six offenders had expressed that they had received an induction course within a maximum of one week of arriving at Clear Track. When the respondents were asked, what they would change about the induction course, one respondent commented *"when they were asking the questions, some of them were a bit difficult"* [Questionnaire 6]. Other comments about the induction course included:

*"good, informal, it clearly explained the rules and procedures ok"* [Questionnaire 1]

*"okay – boring"* [Questionnaire 2]

*"fine, felt really comfortable"* [Questionnaire 6]

**13.12.** All six respondents mentioned that they had an individual action plan for their time at Clear Track. On the whole, participants felt that they had been involved in the development of their action plan. However, three participants mentioned that they did not know

what targets had been set for them in relation to their action plan.

**13.13.** Similarly, all six respondents mentioned that they had signed a contract and that the contract<sup>23</sup> had been fully explained to them before they signed it. Two respondents mentioned that they were unsure about what was to be expected of them whilst on the project, and a further two respondents mentioned that they were also unsure what they could expect from Clear Track.

**13.14.** The four respondents who were residing at Clear Track at the time the first stage questionnaire was conducted expressed that they felt safe during their first few nights there. All six respondents expressed that they felt settled by the end of their first week at Clear Track.

**13.15.** When the respondents were asked how they felt they were treated when they arrived at Clear Track, all the young offenders expressed that they felt they had been treated well. Comments from some young offenders included:

*"with respect, like a person rather than someone they were just gonna work with, some people treat you like a number rather than just a person"* [Questionnaire 1]

*"I was treated well"* [Questionnaire 4]

*"alright, welcome"* [Questionnaire 5]

*"really good, really helpful"* [Questionnaire 6]

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<sup>23</sup> A contract is an agreement between the participants and Clear Track which focuses on their behaviour and what is expected of them during their time on the project.



## 14. Impact of the Referral and Breach Process

14.1. To date, seventeen referrals have been made to Clear Track, with seven participants having been assessed as suitable to attend the project<sup>24</sup>. Only three of the seven participants who were assessed and sentenced to attend Clear Track still remain. This means that four Clear Track participants were considered to have breached seriously enough to warrant that their sentence be revoked in order to be resentenced by the courts.

14.2. This poses several concerns for Clear Track. Firstly, of the seventeen referrals made to the project through the Probation Service, less than half were selected as suitable by the Clear Track management team. This may be due to the absence of detailed and specific guidance made available to probation and Clear Track staff members in selecting eligible and suitable participants possibly resulting in inappropriate referrals (see section 12.14). Secondly, of the seven referrals that were assessed as suitable to attend Clear Track, less than half still remain on the project. Furthermore, when observing offenders breach behaviour it can be noted that offenders have displayed a tendency to breach before reaching the half way point of the 16 week programme. Of the four participants whose breach was serious enough to warrant that their sentence be revoked, one breached within the first week of arriving at Clear Track and the remaining three participants breached their order at week seven of the programme.

14.3. Of the six<sup>25</sup> research participants who completed a stage one questionnaire<sup>26</sup>, five respondents mentioned that they had breached their community order. Of these, four respondents mentioned that they had breached their curfew with electronic monitoring and one respondent mentioned that they had breached a compulsory element of the Activity requirement. Three of these young offenders went on to have their sentences revoked, whilst the remaining two young offenders still attend the project. When the five young offenders were asked why they had breached their community order, three young offenders mentioned that it was because they were drunk; one young offender mentioned it was because of bad influences; and another young offender mentioned that it was because of family problems.

14.4. At this point in the evaluation the findings are based upon a small sample, from which it would be difficult to determine the significance or strength of these emergent patterns. Still, it would be in the interests of the Clear Track management team to take advantage of these preliminary findings in attempting to identify or highlight the conditions which give rise to breach behaviour.

14.5. On the whole, this should alert the Clear Track management team to a possible weakness, given that more than half of all those assessed as suitable for Clear Track have failed to complete the programme; and given that patterns in breach behaviour appear to emerge from preliminary research findings.

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<sup>24</sup> Of the seventeen referrals, ten referrals were assessed as being unsuitable to attend Clear Track. The referral process is explained in more detail in section 12, page 17.

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<sup>25</sup> Of the seven participants who attended Clear Track, one offender breached their order within the first week of arriving and therefore did not complete a stage one questionnaire

<sup>26</sup> Stage one questionnaires are completed in the second week of arriving at Clear Track.

## **15. The Steering Group and Practitioner Group Committee**

**15.1.** The Steering Group and Practitioners Group Committee will be able to provide continual support in their commitment to establishing Clear Track as a pilot intervention. Representation from a range of agencies forms the Steering Group, such as the Probation Service, NOMS, CSV, Springboard and the Clear Track Management team. The level of commitment that is often required to contribute to such committees could prove difficult for stakeholders and senior managers to negotiate. Representation from the magistrates' courts is one particular agency whose input to the Steering Group Committee would be of an advantage to the Clear Track project, given that the majority of referrals are made via the magistrates' courts. Referrals have also been made via the Crown Court; therefore, it may be advantageous for the Crown Court to be represented at Steering Group Committee meetings.

**15.2.** With respect to the Steering Group Committee, the Clear Track Management team have identified the need to draw together members of supporting agencies within the community to establish a Practitioner Group Committee. In December 2006, the project held its first Practitioner Group Committee meeting. A practitioner group of this kind proved essential in drawing together a multi-agency support network during the development and implementation of Clear Track. Since this date, no further committee meetings have been held. In the interests of promoting a multi-agency support network and in the interests of bringing together wide-ranging expert support and advice it is recommended that the Clear Track management team continue in facilitating practitioner group meetings. Overall, efforts should be made to continually strengthen multi-

agency partnerships in the strategic planning and development of Clear Track.

## **16. Staffing at Clear Track**

**16.1.** Providing an intensive activity requirement with enhanced supervision is partly dependent upon the staffing structure of the project and the project's accommodation. During 'occupancy' it is expected that the Clear Track staffing structure will comprise of an average of three staff members per day shift and two staff members per evening and night shift.

**16.2.** The number of staff members required is dependent upon the number of Clear Track participants in any one property at any one time; it is also dependent upon the number of properties occupied at any one time. Clear Track is currently housing residents in two properties<sup>27</sup> which means current staffing levels require six staff members in a twenty-four hour period<sup>28</sup>.

**16.3.** The project's delay in 'going-live' had a considerable impact upon the staffing structure. In February 2006, Clear Track offered employment to twenty-two candidates as part

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<sup>27</sup> Two male Clear Track participants are currently being housed in one property, which requires two-day staff members and two evening and night staff members. One female Clear Track participant is currently being housed in another property, which requires one-day staff member and one evening and night staff member.

<sup>28</sup> A twenty-four hour period is broken down into three shifts. A day shift which commences at 8am and finishes at 5pm (with a hand-over period at the start and end of the shift); an evening shift which commences at 5pm and finishes at 11pm (with a hand-over period at the start of the shift); and a night shift which commences at 11pm until 8am (with a hand-over period at the end of the shift). Day and evening shifts are paid at an hourly rate; whereas a night shift is classified as a 'sleep-in' shift and employees are paid a set rate. Currently, staff who are required to work an evening shift are also requested to work a 'sleep-in' shift.

of a 'sessional' staff member pool<sup>29</sup>; however the project was unable to offer immediate employment which led to several candidates seeking employment elsewhere. Given the intense staffing structure which is advocated by the project in their commitment to providing a quality intervention, a second recruitment campaign was undertaken in a bid to increase the sessional staff employment pool. As a result, a further twelve candidates were short-listed and interviewed<sup>30</sup>, all of whom possessed the necessary skills and experience of working with a young offender client group.

**16.4.** In ensuring the safety and welfare of staff members and Clear Track participants, and as a responsible and accountable organisation, it is essential that the Clear Track management team commit to providing appropriate training opportunities. Specialist training should aim to develop and build upon those skills that are essential when working with young offenders. For example, motivational techniques, anger management techniques, crisis intervention techniques and conflict resolution techniques, alongside the project's basic operational practices such as risk assessment, Individual Action Plan and offender management and supervision. Overall, this will ensure that staff members are working within specified guidelines and procedures, providing a consistent and

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<sup>29</sup> In February 2006, twenty-two successful candidates were offered employment at Clear Track as part of the sessional-staff pool. The project went 'live' in November 2006. In-between this time several staff members applied for employment elsewhere, partly because Clear Track was unable to offer employment due to the lack of active participants and partly because it was unclear at that time when the project would 'go-live'.

<sup>30</sup> The interviews took place on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2007, the 12 candidates who were short listed for interview were deemed as suitable and were offered a position as a Clear Track sessional-staff member.

professional approach to engaging with Clear Track participants

**16.5.** Furthermore, staff members should be equipped with intervention techniques that will aid in responding to violent or aggressive situations, or in the case of incidents of self-harm or suicide attempts. Staff members must ensure that they are able to respond appropriately to such incidents with speed and certainty. As accountable and responsible practitioners, it is in the interests of each individual staff member to raise any training needs or concerns that they may have in achieving this with the project manager.

## Efficiency Analysis

### 17. The Delivery of a Cost-effective and Efficient Project

**17.1.** Crime imposes a huge cost on society. The total cost of crime in England and Wales in 1999-2000 was estimated at around £60 billion<sup>31</sup> (Home Office 2000). The Centre for Criminal Justice estimated that the 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).

**17.2.** The socio-economic costs of crime are essential in measuring the impact of crime on society, as well as measuring the impact of policies aimed at reducing crime and its consequences. Which in turn contributes towards an understanding of how to allocate resources that are intended to tackle crime, whilst ensuring that the current balance of

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<sup>31</sup> This figure does not include costs such as the fear of crime or the impacts upon the quality of life.

resources are allocated to those measures which effectively and efficiently prevent or reduce re-offending. On the whole, estimates of the costs of crime and the costs of crime reduction measures equips policy and decision-makers with the necessary judgments needed to make informed decisions about which policy measures are the most effective and have the biggest impact.

**17.3.** Clear Track as an intervention will not be regarded as cost-effective simply because it ‘works’ in reducing the re-offending behaviour of its participants. Similarly, because Clear Track offers the greatest impact in reducing re-offending behaviour does not necessarily mean that it offers the most cost-effective way of utilising its resources. In other words, the success of Clear Track as an intervention is not only determined by its effectiveness, it is also determined by its cost-efficiency.

**17.4.** Clear Track is currently at a disadvantage given the project’s delay in ‘going-live’. That is, the project will be unable to demonstrate its effectiveness during the first year due to the lack of participants that engaged with the project. Furthermore, the cost of running a ‘ghost’ service<sup>32</sup> during the project’s first year could impact upon the project’s overall cost-efficiency. With this in mind, Clear Track will have to take steps towards proving its effectiveness and efficiency.

**17.5.** In a bid to increase the project’s cost-efficiency and to compensate for the lack of participants during the project’s first year, the Clear Track management team recognise the need to increase the frequency and number of referrals during year two and three. However,

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<sup>32</sup> The implications of running a ‘ghost’ service meant that Clear Track incurred expenses such as, privately leased rental fees, salaried staff members, the general running and up-keep of properties with no residents, and the general expense of the day-to-day running of a business.

the management team will also need to judge the cost implications, the impact upon resources and the potential impact upon Clear Track participants that this may have in delivering an effective intervention.

## **18. Recommendations**

**18.1.** In relation to the recommendations made in the annual report and previous reports, Clear Track has made considerable progress in relation to the referral process (table R3).

**18.2.** The recommendation of Custody Plus (table R7) has become invalid since the project’s service delivery in November 2006. This is partly due to the fact that the project is currently receiving referrals through the local Northumbria Probation Service; and partly because the Home Secretary, Dr John Reid, has postponed the implementation of Custody Plus as a sentencing option until such a time that the Probation Service and the Prison Service are able to cope with the additional workload (House of Commons 2006c).

**18.3.** Progress made by Clear Track as recommended in previous reports can be seen in tables R1 to R5. It is encouraged at this stage that the Clear Track management team pay particular attention to the progress made in relation to the referral process (Table R3) and the Clear Track requirements and activities (table R4) recommendations.

## **19. Clear Track: Moving Forward**

**19.1.** The project’s delay in ‘going-live’ has affected the project’s progress to date, particularly in relation to the project’s aim ‘to engage with up to 50 young adult offenders, aged 18-21, per year, over three years’. The project’s first year was utilised in developing the necessary strategies and protocols for delivering an efficient intervention. Progress

**Table R1: Accommodation and Supervision\***

Accommodation and Supervision Provisions	Recommendations	Progress made by Clear Track
<p>Careful consideration needs to be given to the structure of the accommodation process and supervisory measures in terms of impact, efficiency, and effectiveness. There is also a need to be aware of and reduce the negative effects that community residential supervision may have upon victims and the public.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To monitor and assess the accommodation and supervision needs of participants.</li> <li>➤ To accordingly provide enhanced residential supervision for participants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Accommodation policy in place.</li> <li>➤ Event log, information exchange policy, and community interaction policy in place.</li> <li>➤ Established links with Sunderland Housing Group and Homewood.</li> <li>➤ Advice and guidance on accommodation strategies drawn upon from similar organisations.</li> <li>➤ Conducted thorough market research to establish which properties would best suit the needs of the project whilst creating minimal disruption to the local community.</li> <li>➤ Sessional workers in place to supervise offenders who are to be referred to the project.</li> <li>➤ <i>Regular communication with Group 4 Security regarding supervision of offenders on the Clear Track programme</i></li> </ul>

\*Note: The latest Progress made by Clear Track is shown in italics.

**Table R2: Multi-agency Partnerships\***

Multi-agency Partnerships	Recommendations	Progress made by Clear Track
<p>Developing strong multi-agency partnerships is an essential key to the success of Clear Track when delivering a wide range of interventions tailored to address the needs of young adult offenders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Overall, efforts should be made to continually strengthen multi-agency working throughout the strategic planning and development of the project.</li> <li>➤ There is a need to establish mechanisms which aid the negotiations of strategic planning and the decision making progress.</li> <li>➤ Formal procedures need to be established in relation to information sharing and storage between multi-agency partnerships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Clear Track has established strong links regarding networking with Sunderland Drug and Alcohol Forum and Sunderland Housing Group.</li> <li>➤ Multi-agency Steering Group meetings are held monthly.</li> <li>➤ Monthly practitioner meetings are currently being negotiated.</li> <li>➤ Policy and procedures are in place to ensure the security and confidentiality of information sharing and data protection between multi-agency partnerships, particularly the local Probation Board.</li> <li>➤ <i>Clear Track are awaiting the allocation of local Probation Officers from each Sunderland office, this will form part of Clear Track's referral process. Once Clear Track has been allocated the officers, the project will be in a position to hold regular Practitioners meetings.</i></li> </ul>

\*Note: The latest Progress made by Clear Track is shown in italics.

**Table R3: The Referral Process\***

The Referral Process	Recommendations	Progress made by Clear Track
<p>In order for Clear Track to consider the suitability of referrals from the Crown Court, the project will need to closely monitor the referral process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To ensure an eligibility and suitability criteria is established for the referral of young adult offenders to Clear Track.</li> <li>➤ To monitor the referrals of young adult offenders from the Magistrates' courts.</li> <li>➤ To fully explore, with relevant partners, the sustainability of referrals of young adult offenders being made from the Crown Court.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Clear Track staff will attend the initial pre-sentence assessment with Probation and the potential referral to determine if the offender is eligible and suitable to be referred to Clear Track.</li> <li>➤ Clear Track has the relevant assessment protocols in place to monitor offenders from the initial pre-sentence meeting.</li> <li>➤ A young person's guide is in place to offer advice and guidance to newly referred participants.</li> <li>➤ <i>Information given to potential referrals at the assessment stage, such as an information booklet</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Clear Track has established good communication links with Probation Officers and PSR writers.</i></li> </ul>

\*Note: The latest Progress made by Clear Track is shown in italics.

**Table R4:** Clear Track Requirements and Activities\*

Clear Track Requirements and Activities	Recommendations	Progress made by Clear Track
<p>In order for Clear Track to be able to effectively reduce re-offending, the project would need to ensure the delivery of a wide range of interventions tailored to address the needs of young adult offenders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The different partners involved in the delivery of interventions and activities need to work closely together to maximise the range, quantity and quality of care.</li> <li>➤ For Clear Track management team to regularly monitor and review the development and progress of its participants.</li> <li>➤ To closely monitor and measure client satisfaction through the implementation of evaluation questionnaires.</li> <li>➤ To devise and implement an ‘exit’ strategy to ensure positive re-integration into society including progression into education, employment and accommodation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Clear Track has developed Individual Action Plans (IAP) and reviews to monitor and review the progress of the offender.</li> <li>➤ Questionnaires are in place to give offenders an opportunity to anonymously feedback to staff, as well as a complaints structure.</li> <li>➤ An exit strategy is in place to assist with offender related needs as they exit the programme. This will include multi-agency partnerships to tackle issues such as education, accommodation, training and employment needs.</li> <li>➤ <i>Regular communication takes place between Clear Track and Probation to monitor the quality of the project’s activities and the compliance of Clear Track participants.</i></li> </ul>

\*Note: The latest Progress made by Clear Track is shown in italics.



**Table R5: Staffing and Staff Development\***

Staffing and Staff Development	Recommendations	Progress made by Clear Track
<p>In order to maximise potential benefits of the project, Clear Track will need to consider levels of basic and related training needed for the development of staffs' professional skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To ensure all staff are sufficiently skilled in working with the demands of the project and its participants.</li> <li>➤ To ensure all staff have sufficient training and are confident to undertake their role and responsibilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The training needs of Clear Track staff have been carefully identified, alongside the recent development of a training manual.</li> <li>➤ Practitioner specialist will be recruited when needed to deliver in-house training sessions.</li> <li>➤ Sessional workers have been carefully recruited through an application process and an interview panel to meet the needs of both the project and its participants.</li> </ul>
<p>As part of the pilot of Clear Track, the management team could consider implementing an in-house audit. The benefit here is in providing evidence-based practice identifying the range of available staff skills, experience and staff training needs. This will help in creating and sustaining a culture of work suited to the objectives of Clear Track and future projects, as well as task-appropriate allocation in maximising the utilisation of the diverse skills available.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To explore and analyse staff application forms to identify staff skills.</li> <li>➤ To monitor and analyse staff training needs to identify areas of expertise needed to implement the project.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Many of the sessional workers were selected due to their previous experience of working with offenders and young people with challenging and emotional needs.</li> <li>➤ Clear Track has explained the current delay with 'going-live' to sessional workers.</li> <li>➤ Clear Track has compiled a thorough database of its staff, including their qualifications and experience describing areas of strengths and weaknesses.</li> <li>➤ <i>Through meetings with sessional staff, Clear Track has identified training needs, this includes managing challenging behaviour and dealing with emergencies.</i></li> </ul>

\*Note: The latest Progress made by Clear Track is shown in italics.

**Table R6:** Clear Track’s Business Plan\*

Clear Track’s Business Plan	Recommendations	Progress made by Clear Track
<p>A business plan would assist Clear Track and its stakeholders to determine its goals and targets in order to effectively monitor the project’s progress and development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To devise a business plan with clear and achievable goals and targets, both long-term and short-term.</li> <li>➤ To monitor the project’s progress in relation to each goal and specified targets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Clear Track discusses goals and targets with stakeholders at Steering Group meetings.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>The Director of Training and Enterprise for CSV, the Manager of Sunderland Springboard, the Home Office and the Clear Track Management are updated regularly with the project’s progress.</i></li> </ul>

\*Note: The latest Progress made by Clear Track is shown in italics.

**Table R7: Custody Plus\***

Custody Plus	Recommendations	Progress made by Clear Track
<p>Clear Track as a Custody Plus provision would be able to demonstrate the project's potential as a community-based element to the sentence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To initiate negotiations with the Prison Service with regard to developing the project as a Custody Plus prototype.</li> <li>➤ To continue in the development of negotiations with the Chief Officer of the Probation Service with a view to developing a referral process between Probation and Clear Track</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Due to going-live in November 2006 Clear Track have been unable to pursue this issue</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Clear Track have given presentations to all Sunderland Probation offices to increase awareness of Clear Track as a sentencing option. Every local probation office has a Clear Track information pack. Clear Track are awaiting the identification of Senior Practitioners from local Probation Service offices to form a constant link between Clear Track and Probation for referrals.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Clear Track has distributed relevant information to the local Northumbria Probation Service electronically. This will enable Probation Officers to access information via internal IT systems.</i></li> </ul>

\*Note: The latest Progress made by Clear Track is shown in italics.

**Table R8:** Eligibility and Suitability Criteria

Eligibility and Suitability Criteria	Recommendations
<p>Selecting appropriate candidates for Clear Track is an essential component to successfully addressing offender related needs, challenging offending behaviour and reducing re-offending. The eligibility and suitability criteria are objective measures used in the selection of appropriate referrals</p>	<p>➤ To revise the eligibility and suitability criteria with a view to providing robust and comprehensive detailed criteria aimed at providing an effective and efficient referral process.</p>

over the last four months has also proved significant, which is evident in the seventeen referrals<sup>33</sup> made to Clear Track at the time of writing.

**19.2.** However, it is not possible to determine the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the project at this stage. This is partly due to the engagement with a small number of Clear Track participants to date, and partly due to the limited time that Clear Track has had to engage with its young offenders.

**19.3.** With this in mind, this report suggests a further recommendation in the interests of evaluating Clear Track’s progress (see table R8).

<sup>33</sup> Of the seventeen probation referrals made to Clear Track, seven were assessed as suitable and ten were assessed as unsuitable to engage with the project. The referral process is outlined in more detail in section 12, page 17.

## Research Methodology

### 20. Researching Young Offenders<sup>34</sup>

**20.1.** Researching young people, crime and offending behaviour has become a major growth area for sociology and criminology research within policy and practice. This has been largely influenced, particularly more recently, by the general concern around the increase in youth crime, re-offending rates and anti-social behaviour to the extent that government departmental bodies have called for an advanced understanding of how young

<sup>34</sup> In much of the dominant discourse which debates conducting research with young people, children and young people are not always differentiated, as they are viewed as suffering from the same form of exclusion within social science research. Furthermore, in much legislation, youth does not officially exist. For example, in the Children’s Act (1989), all young people under the age of 18 are defined as children. Yet policy and practice within the Criminal Justice System has recognised a difference, suggesting that at different age stages offenders should be managed appropriately (see Campbell and Lewis 2006:12)

people construct and live their lives (Home Office 1997, Social Exclusion Unit 1998).

**20.2.** Since 1997, with the election of New Labour, there has been a growing interest in listening to young people to such an extent that policy developers have adopted a more direct approach to understanding young people (France 2004), the benefits of which are evident in new approaches to bridging the policy to practice gap in a bid to produce effective intervention policies and efficient interventions such as Clear Track.

**20.3.** Evaluation–research in this sense, not only improves our knowledge base in understanding a young offender’s transition into adulthood, it also increases our understanding of how such policies and practices can effectively challenge such offending behaviours.

## **21. Situating Empirical Research**

**21.1.** The particular value of scientific research in social science lies in its ability to aid researchers and policy makers in developing a sound knowledge base that distinguishes it from other professions and disciplines, with an overall aim of enriching understanding. Knowledge which stems from evidence-based research asserts a level of significance to the findings that other forms of knowledge do not share (Fraser 2004). Thus, the process of ‘knowing’ becomes a central concern for social science researchers (May 2004) when constructing a sound knowledge base that can be rigorously tested and re-tested (Prior 2003).

**21.2.** As knowledge can be found in various forms and constructed in various ways, careful consideration needs to be given to the selection and application of the research methods which are employed to represent the different ways in which knowledge can be obtained, particularly

when researching vulnerable groups such as the young adult offenders at Clear Track (May 2004).

**21.3.** With this in mind, the choice of method is crucial in gaining an understanding of reality through rational enquiry. Furthermore, the onus is upon the researcher to determine the purposefulness of the methods employed (Langston, Abbott, Lewis and Kellet 2004). In other words, whilst different methods can produce varying perspectives of the research data, the researcher needs to consider the extent to which a complete understanding and knowledge-base can be developed, alongside a detailed understanding of the interconnections or links which may be generated within the findings when selecting an appropriate research method (Coffey and Atkinson 1996).

**21.4.** For these reasons, a rigorous and robust scientifically underpinned research strategy has been devised to provide a comprehensive, independent tailored evaluation of Clear Track. A mixed-method approach will be employed including both quantitative and qualitative research methods to establish whether such links can be supported by the research findings. This will take the form of an interrupted time series which will observe and compare changes that occur over time; and the use of video diaries and in-depth interviews which will provide valuable data in recording these changes as they occur within the intervention period. These will be complimented by self-completion evaluation forms that will monitor the activities which take place as part of the intervention treatment period and their impact.

## **22. A Mixed Method Approach to Researching the Clear Track Participants**

**22.1.** Successful research with young people has often involved the design of specialised methods due to the delicate nature of working

with vulnerable groups such as young offenders (Langston, Abbott, Lewis and Kellett 2004).

**22.2.** The use of quantitative approaches, such as the interrupted time series, in relation to the research aims will be employed to explain patterns of offending behaviour through the development of objective knowledge (Noaks and Wincup 2004, Hale 1999). In other words, the interrupted time series aims to provide a wealth of information in understanding the complexity of criminogenic and social behaviours through examining a wide range of factors such as:

- attitudes towards crime,
- attitudes towards authority,
- self-esteem
- morals and their understanding of right and wrong,
- their involvement with the Criminal Justice System,
- relations with their family,
- views on the importance of family, education and work,
- their drug and alcohol use,
- their aspirations and their views on the future.

**22.3.** Qualitative research approaches are now firmly established in criminology<sup>35</sup>. However, the use of video diaries as a research method is innovative and enterprising in social science

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<sup>35</sup> The qualitative tradition in criminology owes a great deal to the work of the Chicago School, which was particularly influential in sociology between 1892 and 1942. Drawing their inspirations from developments within sociological theory, the Chicago School researchers pursued innovative qualitative work making use of participant's observation, life histories and documents. This work began to influence British criminologists in the 1960s (Deegon 2001).

research. By offering a young adult offender an opportunity to keep a video diary the researcher is provided with a visual record of the young person's views, attitudes and opinions in relation to their offending behaviour and in relation to their involvement in Clear Track. A video diary also offers the young offender an opportunity to express themselves by verbalising and visualising their thoughts and opinions without criticism or ridicule, when they otherwise might not have had such an opportunity. In a bid to identify shifts away from offending behaviour, the video diary may help capture the subtle occurrence of behavioural change which may not be cognitively apparent to the young persons themselves.

**22.4.** Overall, the use of video diaries and in-depth interviews aims to develop an understanding of the socially constructed nature of the young offenders' lifestyles, outlooks and behaviour, as well as the meanings attached to such behaviour.

**22.5.** However, the use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques does not present such clearly divided boundaries. That is, it is possible to derive some quantitative data from techniques typically associated with the generation of qualitative data and vice-versa. Furthermore, there are numerous advantages to combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies<sup>36</sup>.

**22.6.** By bringing together different methods with their own blend of strengths and weaknesses, it is envisaged that the weaknesses

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<sup>36</sup> The process of combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies is one aspect of triangulation, namely method triangulation (Jupp 2001), which was first used in the context of social science research by Campbell and Fiske (1959), but was used more frequently following the publication of Webb et al text on unobstructive measures and social research in 1966. Academic literature also refers to this approach as mixed-method or multi-method approach.

of one method will be counter balanced by the strengths of the other (Maguire 2000). Denzin (1970) also suggests that the use of mixed methods is the key to overcoming inherent bias that could occur as a result of using a single method.

**22.7.** When researching young people and their offending behaviour, Coleman and Moynihan (1996) suggest that there are some areas of criminological enquiry that are difficult to investigate when using quantitative methods such as the interrupted time series. Thus, it is suggested that other qualitative methods, such as the use of the video diary, should be employed to complement the interrupted time series as a means of researching these areas.

**22.8.** Furthermore, quantitative research techniques can be used to test the generalisability of the findings in the wider population as well as providing objectifiable and quantifiable data about the young offenders at Clear Track. Whereas qualitative data will contribute to our understanding of the participants' experience of Clear Track, what it means to be a young offender and the meanings attached to behaviours such as offending.

## **23. Researching the Clear Track Participants**

**23.1.** Historically, much research has marginalised the voice of young people, on the grounds that children and young people are not competent to understand or describe their world due to cognitive and linguistic immaturity<sup>37</sup>. Such beliefs could generally undermine the status of the evaluation-research, especially if those who are not listened to are competent in a way that has previously been ignored, then it

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<sup>37</sup> For example, a common interpretation of Piaget's developmental theory is that children have limited competence to understand, formulate or express ideas and thoughts (Piaget 1929).

could be suggested that the evidence-based policy and practice drawn from such research findings would not be viewed as scientifically grounded research (Fraser 2004).

**23.2.** There is now a revised way of thinking that young people are capable of providing worthwhile data from a young age (Armato and Ochiltree 1987, Fine and Sandstrom 1988), this is partly due to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children<sup>38</sup> (1994) '*you have the right to say what you think and you must be listened to*'; partly due to Article 10 of the Human Rights Act<sup>39</sup> (1988) '*everyone has the right to have their own opinion and show it in a way they want. No one can stop anyone else from doing this unless the person is not allowed to express opinion by law*'; and partly due to a critical piece of UK legislation, the Children's Act<sup>40</sup> (1989); all of which advocate actively involving children in issues that affect them. Collectively, these developments have resulted in increasing attention being given to directly obtain the views and experiences of children and young people.

**23.3.** Understanding the world from the perspective of the research participants at Clear Track involves the researcher recognising that it is the Clear Track participants who are the 'experts' in understanding their offending and risk-taking behaviour. In a sense that they are the keepers of the knowledge and insights into understanding their offending and risk-taking behaviours (Pattman and Kehily 2004). The

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<sup>38</sup> For more information go to <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm>, viewed 06/03/07

<sup>39</sup> For more information go to <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/80042--d.htm>, viewed 06/03/07

<sup>40</sup> For more information to go [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1989/Ukpga\\_19890041\\_en\\_1.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1989/Ukpga_19890041_en_1.htm), viewed 06/03/07

importance of young people's voices in understanding their world in relation to the research process is at the core of the critical issues that define the qualitative methodological approaches of the evaluation-research process.

## **24. Informed Consent and Confidentiality**

**24.1.** Informed consent and confidentiality also have a particular resonance in working with young offenders. Achieving informed consent is commonly promoted as a fundamental guiding principle for an ethically informed approach. In such a way that participants have complete understanding, at all times, of what the research is about and the implications of being involved (Shaw 2003).

**24.2.** To achieve this, the researcher is required to give the research participants detailed information about the aims and objectives of the research so that they can make an informed decision. Each research participant was verbally asked if they were willing to participate in the research study. However, in order to ensure that the young research participants at Clear Track consented fully to their participation in the study, the researcher explained in person (following a prescribed script to ensure consistency, see table ERII 4.7) to each participant the purpose of the evaluation study. This allowed the researcher to clarify any concerns, especially in relation to anonymity (De Vaus 2002) and confidentiality (Little 1990). At which point, a signed consent form would be retained by the researcher, and a duplicate copy would be given to the research participant.

**24.3.** Good practice should also include a continual review of consent to ensure that the young research participants remain happy with their involvement. Furthermore, it is equally important that the right to withdraw is

emphasised regardless of the implications around the loss of potential data.

Research confidentiality usually entails taking considerable care not to pass information to those connected in any way with the participant; it also entails disclosing information in ways which protects the identity of those who provided the data. Furthermore, facts which might otherwise identify participants are changed or omitted. However, it is essential to recognise that confidentiality does have its limits especially when conducting research with young offenders (France et al 2000, British Sociological Association 2003).

**24.4.** There are ethical considerations in research with young offenders which may mean that the same degree of confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. There are three areas of particular concern that relate to assuring confidentiality to young offenders, these are:

- where a young offender discloses anything that might put themselves at risk or any other person, e.g. self harm, that they are being seriously harmed or ill-treated or that they intend to harm others,
- where young offenders disclose information relating to a crime for which they have not been convicted,
- and where a young offender discloses anything that compromises Clear Track's security, e.g. threats of violence or terrorism, threats to harm staff members or other participants or compromised key security.

**24.5.** Informing young participants of these caveats allows them to make an informed decision around what they wish to disclose or if they choose not to participate in the research.

**24.6.** Dr Campbell, the Principle Investigator, is available to give advice and guidance to the



**Table ER11 4.7:** A Sample Consent Form for Clear Track Research Participants



### Consent Form

*(To be read to the participant by the researcher before the beginning of the session. One copy of the consent form is to be left with the participant for reference; another copy should be retained by the researcher; both copies must be signed by the participant)*

My name is Danna-Mechelle, and I am based at Newcastle University. I am doing an independent research study on Clear Track.

We want to know more about what young people think and do when they commit crimes and how Clear Track could help stop young people from committing more crimes. We would like you to help us by telling us about your time at Clear Track and your offending behaviour.

We would like to thank you for agreeing to take part in the research. Before you start I would like to emphasise that :

- Being part of this research is entirely voluntary,
- You are free to refuse to answer any questions,
- You can withdraw at any time if you wish. You don't have to give a reason and there will be no penalty.

All you have to do is tell us about your time at Clear Track, the effect it has had on you and your offending behaviour.

There are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in your views and experiences.

Everything you tell me will be in confidence and the research data will ONLY be available to members of the research team.

However, I will have to disclose information if you tell me:

- Anything that might put yourself or any other person at risk (i.e. self-harm, being seriously harmed or ill-treated or the intention to harm others),
- If you disclose information relating to crimes for which you have not been convicted,
- Or if you tell me anything that compromises Clear Track security.

**Table ER11 4.7 (cont): A Sample Consent Form for Clear Track Research Participants**

Excerpts from the research data may be part of the final research report. You can be assured that all views and comments used will be anonymous, so it will not be possible for individuals to be recognised and I always change people's names to keep their views anonymous.

I will keep all of the questionnaires, tapes, videos and research notes in a safe, lockable place. Once the research is finished, they will be destroyed securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

**Yes**      **No**

- |                          |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Would you be willing to complete a questionnaire?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Would you be willing to be interviewed?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Would you be willing to keep a video diary?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Would it be okay for us to include clips from your video diary when we present our research findings in our reports and at conferences? (we will change your name )      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Would it be okay for us to include your voice from your video diary when we present our research findings in our reports and at conferences? (we will change your name ) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Would it be okay for us to include your face from your video diary when we present our research findings in our reports and at conferences? (we will change your name )  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Would you be willing to be involved in other aspects of the research study, for example focus groups, case studies etc?  |

*(Researcher asks participant have you understood this form, do you have any questions)*

Thank you again for your help. Should you have any further questions you can contact me at [danna-mechelle.lewis@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:danna-mechelle.lewis@ncl.ac.uk)

Please sign the form to show that you agree to take part in the research under the conditions which you ticked above.

Signed .....  
Printed .....  
Dated .....

researcher should disclosure of any incidents, such as outlined above, occur when conducting research with the young offenders, this will aid in determining an appropriate course of action. Furthermore, members of the Clear Track management team will also be available to immediately act upon such information. It is essential to build a clear strategy into the research project, as is outlined here, in order to be able to respond to issues if they arise with speed and efficiency.

**24.7.** In further safeguarding the welfare of the young participants at Clear Track, the researcher has undergone a police check prior to undertaking the research, and under the Police Act<sup>41</sup> (1997), the researcher has obtained a criminal record certificate from the Criminal Records Bureau. Historically, this issue had received little attention within social science research organisations. However, given the current political climate of working with young people and vulnerable groups there is no rationale for researchers to be exempt from this requirement (France et al 2000).

## **25. Timetable, Reports and Dissemination**

**25.1.** The Clear Track Evaluation, which was organised around four-levels of analysis, was originally proposed to be completed over a three year timescale – September 2005 to August 2008 – as outlined in the ‘Evaluation Proposal of Clear Track’ Report (Campbell and Lewis 2005:14).

**25.2.** The initial three year timetable was tailored around four phases. Phase I – which stemmed from September 2005 to August 2006 – and subsequently phases II, III and IV which stemmed until 2008.

**25.3.** However, the Clear Track project’s delay in ‘going-live’<sup>42</sup> had significantly impacted upon the proposed research strategy timetable to such an extent that the evaluation-research data collection phase was postponed by one year. Thus, for the evaluation to be completed successfully, in accordance with the evaluation-research aims and research strategy, the evaluation will need to adopt a revised research timetable that includes an additional fifth phase. This will be dependent upon additional funding.

**25.4.** Clear Track, who anticipated a strategic referral process to be in place by September 2005, received their first probation referral in November 2006. Since November 2006, the tailored evaluation-research strategy has been implemented in conjunction with Clear Track’s first participants. However, it was not possible to implement Phase I of the research strategy prior to this date due to the lack of potential research participants; that is, young people sentenced to Clear Track.

**25.5.** Nonetheless, the evaluation made progress within the first year in relation to drawing together a detailed research proposal, observing the decision-making processes and structures which were put into operational-practice, and by designing scientifically grounded data collection tools for both the quantitative and qualitative research methods. In addition, Phase I reports were produced as scheduled and can be viewed on Newcastle University’s Criminal Justice Research website<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> For more information go to <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1997/1997050.htm>, viewed 06/03/07

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<sup>42</sup> The delays experienced by the Clear Track project are outlined in detail in the Evaluation Report - March 2006 (Campbell and Lewis 2006a) and the Annual Evaluation Report - August 2006 (Campbell and Lewis 2006b).

<sup>43</sup> The Evaluation research reports can be downloaded from [http://criminaljusticeresearch.ncl.ac.uk/index\\_files/Page229.htm](http://criminaljusticeresearch.ncl.ac.uk/index_files/Page229.htm), viewed 10.03.07

**25.6.** It is essential however, in delivering a comprehensive, independent evaluation of Clear Track which is based upon a framework of scientific realism, that the fundamental principles of implementing a rigorous and robust research strategy are not compromised as a consequence of the project's delay in 'going-live'. In ensuring the validity of the research findings the evaluation-research requires the same time period to complete the research process as initially proposed in the 'Evaluation Proposal of Clear Track'; and to accommodate this an additional fifth phase is needed (Campbell and Lewis 2005).

**25.7.** Thus, the revised evaluation research timetable would be scheduled as follows (see table ERII 4.8 and ERII 4.9):

- **Phase I** (September 2005 – August 2006): to draw together a detailed evaluation proposal; to observe the decision-making processes and structures during the implementation stage of Clear Track; to design the quantitative data collection tool – the interrupted time series, before and after design; to design the qualitative data collection tool – the video diary.
- **Phase I Reports:**
  - Evaluation Proposal Report – December 2005
  - Bi-Annual Report – March 2006
  - End of Year Annual Report – August 2006
- **Phase II** (September 2006 – August 2007): to implement the quantitative data collection tool – the interrupted time series; to implement the qualitative data collection tool – the video diary and in-depth interviews; to aid in the design and implementation of the quantitative data collection tool – the client satisfaction questionnaire sheet and to explore secondary data.
- **Phase II Reports:**
  - Bi-Annual Report – March 2007
  - End of Second Year Annual Report – August 2007
- **Phase III** (September 2007 – August 2008): to continue with both the quantitative and qualitative data collection; to carry out the second stage follow-up data collection of the interrupted time series of research participants six months after leaving the Clear Track project.
- **Phase III Reports:**
  - Bi-Annual Report – March 2008
  - End of Third Year Annual Report – August 2008
- **Phase IV:** Dissemination of the evaluation findings will be fed back to the stakeholders and decision-makers through regular operational and progress team meetings, quarterly evaluation meetings and the reporting schedule. In addition, dissemination will be pursued through the following routes:
  - Clear Track website
  - CSV Intranet website
  - CSV Internet website
  - University of Newcastle website
  - University of Newcastle Criminal Justice Research website
  - Conference papers
  - Articles for publication
  - In consultation with Springboard Sunderland and CSV, the organisation of day seminars and/or conferences at appropriate stages of the evaluation.

These dissemination methods will ensure that the progress and findings of the evaluation research are made available to as wide an audience as possible.

- **Phase V** (September 2008 – August 2009): to finalise the second stage follow-up data collection of the interrupted time series; to complete data analysis; and to prepare the Clear Track Evaluation Final Report.
- **Phase V Reports:**
  - Bi-Annual Report – March 2009
  - Final Report – August 2009

**25.8.** Phase I and Phase I Reports were successfully concluded and the evaluation-research has successfully progressed into Phase II. Phase II is on target for completion, however, this is dependent upon Clear Track achieving its proposed aim of 50 referrals per annum<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> Due to the project's delay in 'going-live' it is anticipated by the Clear Track management team that the project aims to revise the originally proposed target of 50 referrals per annum to approximately 90 referrals per annum in order to meet its overall target of 150 referrals.

**Table ERII 4.8: A Comparative Table of the Original and Proposed Revised Research Timetable**

Original Research Timetable	Proposed Revised Research Timetable
<p><b>Phase I</b> <b>(Sept 2005 – Aug 2006)</b></p> <p><i>To draw together a detailed evaluation proposal; to observe the ‘decision-making process’ during the implementation stage of Clear Track; to design and implement the quantitative data collection tool – the interrupted time series, before and after design; to design the qualitative data collection tool – the video diary; and to carry out the first stage follow-up data collection of the interrupted time series of participants six months after leaving Clear Track.</i></p>	<p>To observe and report on project development and the implementation process; to explore secondary data; to develop and design the quantitative data collection tools – the interrupted time series and the client satisfaction questionnaire; to develop and design the qualitative data collection tool – the video diary and in-depth interviews.</p>
<p><b>Phase I Reports</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Evaluation proposal report – December 2005</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Bi-annual Report – March 2006</i></li> <li>▪ <i>End of Year Annual Report – August 2006</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluation Proposal Report – December 2005</li> <li>▪ Bi-Annual Report – March 2006</li> <li>▪ End of Year Annual Report – August 2006</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phase II</b> <b>(Sept 2006 – Aug 2007)</b></p> <p><i>To implement the qualitative data collection tool – the video diary; to carry out the second stage follow-up data collection of the interrupted time series of participants 12 months after their completion of the Clear Track programme; to design and implement quantitative data collection tool – the evaluation sheet; to explore secondary data; and to begin analysis of the data</i></p>	<p>To implement the quantitative data collection tools – the interrupted time series and client satisfaction questionnaire; to implement the qualitative data collection tool – the video diary and in-depth interviews; to explore secondary data.</p>
<p><b>Phase II Reports</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Bi-annual report – February 2007</i></li> <li>▪ <i>End of Second Year Annual Report – August 2007</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bi-Annual Report – March 2007</li> <li>▪ End of Second Year Annual Report – August 2007</li> </ul>

**Table ERII 4.8 (Cont): A Comparative Table of the Original and Proposed Revised Research Timetable**

<b>Phase III</b> (Sept 2007 – Aug 2008)	<i>To analyse data; to prepare final report; and to feedback results to stakeholders.</i>	To continue with both the quantitative and qualitative data collection; to carry out the second stage follow-up data collection of the interrupted time series of research participants six months after leaving the Clear Track project
<b>Phase III Reports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Bi-annual report – February 2008</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Final Report – August 2008</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bi-Annual Report – March 2008</li> <li>▪ End of Third Year Annual Report – August 2008</li> </ul>
<b>Phase IV</b>	<i>Dissemination of the evaluation findings will be fed back to the stakeholders and decision-makers through regular operational and progress team meetings, quarterly evaluation meetings and the reporting schedule.</i>	Dissemination of the evaluation findings will be fed back to the stakeholders and decision-makers through regular operational and progress team meetings, quarterly evaluation meetings and the reporting schedule.
<b>Phase V*</b> (Sept 2008 – Aug 2009)		To finalise the second stage follow-up data collection of the interrupted time series; to complete data analysis; and to prepare the Clear Track Evaluation Final Report.
<b>Phase V Reports</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bi-Annual Report – March 2009</li> <li>▪ Final Report – August 2009</li> </ul>

\*Note: Phase V of the evaluation is dependent upon additional funding.

**Table ER II 4.9: Proposed Revised Research Timetable by Months**

	Sept 2005-Aug 2006 (0 to 12 Months)	Sept 2006-Aug 2007 (13 to 24 Months)	Sept 2007-Aug 2008 (25 to 36 Months)	Sept 2008-Aug 2009* (37 to 48 Months)
<b>Phase I</b>	[Orange bar spanning 0 to 12 months]			
<b>Phase I Reports</b>	[Three orange bars at 3, 6, and 9 months]			
<b>Phase II</b>		[Orange bar spanning 13 to 24 months]		
<b>Phase II Reports</b>		[Two orange bars at 18 and 21 months]		
<b>Phase III</b>			[Orange bar spanning 25 to 36 months]	
<b>Phase III Reports</b>			[Two orange bars at 27 and 30 months]	
<b>Phase IV</b>		[Orange bar spanning 13 to 48 months]		
<b>Phase V</b>				[Orange bar spanning 37 to 48 months]
<b>Phase V Reports</b>				[Two orange bars at 42 and 45 months]

\* Note: The fourth year of the evaluation-research is dependent upon additional funding.



## ▪ **Abbreviations**

<b>CJA</b>	Criminal Justice Act
<b>CJS</b>	Criminal Justice System
<b>CNA</b>	Certified Normal Accommodation
<b>C-NOMIS</b>	National Offender Management Information System
<b>CSV</b>	Community Service Volunteers
<b>IAP</b>	Individual Action Plan
<b>NOMS</b>	National Offender Management Service
<b>OASys</b>	Offender Assessment System
<b>PSR</b>	Pre-Sentence Report
<b>ROMs</b>	Regional Offender Managers
<b>ViSOR</b>	Violent Offender and Sex Offender Register

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