



# **Scoping the Development of a Critical Employment Pathway for IOM Offenders in County Durham and Darlington**

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## Executive Summary

### **Project Overview**

- In summer 2014, Northumbria University was commissioned by the Institute for Local Government (ILG), on behalf of Durham Constabulary, to review evidence regarding the relationship between employment and desistance and explore employment support for Integrated Offender Management (IOM) offenders, in County Durham and Darlington, in order to support the development of a critical employment pathway.

### **Rapid Review of Evidence**

- The committing of a large proportion of recorded crimes by a relatively small proportion of offenders has driven various multi-agency policy initiatives in recent times. IOM is the latest approach developed to tackle persistent offending and this looks set to continue under the *Transforming Rehabilitation* agenda.
- IOM offenders typically have a range of criminogenic needs; the individual risk factors associated with overall risk of re-offending. They are likely to be high volume offenders, with a history of short-term prison sentences and characterised by early onset involvement in crime and drug use, benefit dependency, housing issues, separation from family, alcohol and drug dependency, mental health issues and low self-esteem/self-worth. They are likely to have experienced many interventions by the criminal justice system and aligned agencies, with varying levels of engagement and success, but that which has not led to long-term desistance.
- The concept of criminogenic needs has important consequences for the management of offenders – outlining the importance of linking individuals to a range of rehabilitative services in order to reduce recidivism and suggesting that interventions should target the ‘Big Four’ criminogenic needs that are dynamic (responsive to change) and most directly related to recidivism outcomes.
- Rehabilitation is a central goal of the IOM approach. Through practical engagement to enhance employment, address housing needs and tackle addiction, for example, IOM programmes are intended to promote desistance through the development of a ‘pro-social identity’ that enhances motivation to change.
- Assessing the significance of employment in the context of desistance is highly complex. Life-course studies suggest that gaining employment promotes desistance through the development of a pro-social identity and embeddedness in society. It can also promote desistance where the financial benefits are greater than those of committing crime and where it reduces the amount of unstructured time available to an individual. Selection theories, however, suggest that subjective change – a commitment to desistance – is an essential precondition for successful exit from criminality.
- Empirical evidence regarding the effects of employment on desistance is mixed. It indicates that the relationship is dependent on a range of factors, including age, criminogenic needs, job quality and gender.
- Ex-offenders face a number of supply-side (the attitudes, characteristics and behaviours of individuals) and demand-side (the attitudes and behaviours of employers and the characteristics of jobs) factors to obtaining work. Tackling unemployment amongst offenders requires: improving offender skills and qualifications; tackling non-employment problems, such as housing and drug abuse; reducing employer discrimination; and improved training and advice on job searches, interviews and work conduct.
- There are high levels of benefit dependency among prolific offenders. They - the same as all claimants - are required to engage with the DWP, through JobCentre Plus offices and the Work Programme. However, the characteristics of offenders, along with poor and inaccessible

communication, inflexible systems and lack of personalised support on the part of JobCentre Plus, present barriers to effective engagement. Benefit sanctions can result in a range of negative outcomes, including disengagement with the system and survival crime.

### **Empirical Evidence**

- The IOM units in County Durham and Darlington are part of the Safe Durham Partnership. They support prolific offenders to reduce their offending by addressing their criminogenic needs.
- Multi-agency teams are made up of police, probation and drug workers, supported by housing and other services including mentor support. Notable is that employment providers are not consistently represented within the teams.
- Stakeholders reported a high degree of success in terms of addressing criminogenic needs and reducing offending behaviour, attributed to the multi-agency approach of IOM, with the co-location of agencies a significant advantage (although funding cuts have undermined this).
- Quantitative data was provided on the characteristics of 240 offenders engaging with the IOM teams in early 2014. Of these, 204 (85%) were male and 36 (15%) female. The average age was 32 years. Offenders had committed a total of 13,792 offences; an average of 57.2 offences per person. Unemployment was a significant issue, with 227 (94.5%) being unemployed.
- Stakeholders and service users alike were clear about the benefits of employment to desistance. However, there was extensive discussion about the range of individual, systemic and structural barriers that IOM offenders face to securing employment and stakeholders reported low levels of success in terms of supporting service users into employment. Barriers include: the multiple and complex needs of IOM offenders (with addictions and homelessness being most pertinent), limited employment experience, poor educational attainment, low self-esteem and lack of good quality voluntary and paid work opportunities for offenders.
- An important step in pathways to desistance is access to welfare benefits. Stakeholders reported to be knowledgeable about the workings of the welfare system, including the recent welfare reforms and feel confident supporting offenders to engage. However, a high proportion of offenders find it difficult to understand the welfare system. Some struggle to comply with claimant commitments because of the level of chaos in their lives and see the requirements of these as unrealistic. Some lack the IT skills and means needed to undertake job searches and access services. Compounding this, the scale of the benefits system was said to mean that JobCentre Plus is somewhat inaccessible and lacks the capacity to provide intensive and personalised 1-2-1 support to offenders.
- In addition, some offenders are not sufficiently motivated to attend JobCentre Plus appointments and/or see benefits as entitlements so are unwilling to adhere to conditionalities.
- Benefits sanctions are common among the cohort and can encourage disengagement with the system and re-offending. The situation is exacerbated by the ending of Crisis Loans. Accessing foodbanks is a short-term support mechanism advocated by stakeholders.
- Concern was expressed about the impact of further welfare reforms, such as the introduction of Universal Credit, on the cohort's likelihood of desistance if they are unable to manage their finances.
- Links with Jobcentre Plus are lacking and less effective than with the prison system. Information about service users is not routinely shared between these agencies, making it difficult for stakeholders to liaise and advocate on their behalf. A positive development within JobCentre Plus is the introduction of 'offender champions', but these are not known to interviewees.
- There is a lack of information sharing from JobCentre Plus about the education and training opportunities available to claimants. More information notices within local offices and between JobCentre Plus and IOM teams would be useful.
- The IOM teams are highly pro-active in supporting offenders to become 'work-ready' and secure employment. Critical stages at the start of employment pathways were said to be: developing

rapport with service users, gaining their trust, re-building their confidence (through engagement in meaningful activities and the use of peer mentors), educating them about the benefits of work and managing employment expectations.

- The characteristics of IOM offenders mean they generally require intensive assistance in the area of employment. Having increased capacity here was noted as desirable by stakeholders.
- Service users were highly positive about the employment support received by the teams. Offenders are given financial and practical support to achieve basic qualifications in literacy and numeracy, as well as GCSEs, and to undertake vocational courses. Wraparound support, such as transportation to access these opportunities, was cited to be vital here.
- The mainstream types of employment support offered to the cohort include: CV writing, undertaking job searches, the identification of strengths and skills, completing application forms, cover letters, interview skills and transportation to job interviews. Motivating offenders to continue to look for work was also said to be key. A more unique form of employment is helping service users to think about how and which offences to disclose to prospective employers.
- The IOM teams have connections with several churches and charities that provide offenders with volunteering opportunities. Stakeholders and service users talked about how volunteering helps to develop service users' confidence, skills and sense of structure and routine.
- For those considered 'work-ready', offenders are encouraged to register with employment agencies. For some, this had resulted in offenders securing paid work.
- Positively, several employment providers reported that they will continue to work with offenders for six months or more once they have secured employment in order to offer offenders any additional support they require in their transition to work.
- Despite the best efforts of teams, the type of work offered to offenders is often short-term in nature. The highs and lows of this can be demoralising for service users.
- Stakeholders reported that they have limited contacts with employers who are willing/able to offer job opportunities to service users. They stressed the need for the development of relationships with a broader range of charities and employers to facilitate offenders' access to voluntary or paid work and to help promote greater understanding among employers about the circumstances that surround offending behaviour. This is particularly necessary in Darlington, where partner agencies have fewer links with employers.
- The mapping exercise revealed that there is not a designated service provider for IOM cases with ETE needs, and that the support accessed by the IOM teams is highly dependent on their knowledge of and links with employment provision in the local area. APM (formerly Pertemps) and the National Careers Service are the main organisations that are utilised for support.
- The Employer Forum for Reducing Reoffending (EFRR), currently chaired by APM, was identified as a key mechanism for promoting offenders to employers, as well as engaging a number of employers to identify employment opportunities for ex-offenders.

## **Conclusion**

- The relationship in question is complex, mediated by multiple factors. Nonetheless, there is sufficient evidence to claim that stable, good quality employment has the capacity to promote. The evidence is particularly strong for adult offenders. As such, it is highly appropriate that criminal justice agencies have a strong focus on rehabilitation and that employment is regarded as playing a critical role in this process.
- Within County Durham and Darlington, the IOM teams and partner agencies are highly proactive in terms of trying to support offenders to become 'work-ready' and gain employment, with various good practice approaches in operation. But, employment is a challenging area.
- In addition to building on good practice, further work needs to go into the development of relationships with a bank of employers and JobCentre Plus.

## Section One: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

In the summer of 2014, the Department of Social Sciences and Languages, at Northumbria University, was commissioned by the Institute for Local Government (ILG), on behalf of Durham Constabulary, to provide an evidence-base regarding the relationship between offending and employment, in order to support the development of a critical employment pathways framework for offenders engaged with the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) unit. The research objectives were to:

- Identify the relationship between criminogenic needs, employment and offending, with a particular focus on the challenges that IOM offenders experience in respect to employment;
- Identify the expectations of the welfare system in respect of IOM offenders and their experiences of engagement with this;
- Map current employment provision for IOM offenders in the North East and identify potential gaps; and
- Develop a series of recommendations to inform the development of a critical employment pathway for IOM offenders.

### 1.2 Methodology

The research was undertaken using a mixed-methods approach that combined the use of quantitative and qualitative data, thus strengthening the validity of the research findings. Specifically, it involved the following data collection techniques:

**Rapid Assessment of Evidence (RAE)** - A rapid review of academic articles published in refereed journals, books and grey literature, which set the research in the wider academic and policy context. The review considered:

- The IOM approach and characteristics of IOM offenders;
- The links between criminogenic needs, offending and employment;
- The requirements of the welfare system in order to access benefits, the challenges that offenders face in complying and mechanisms in place to support them with this;
- The expectations of the welfare system in respect of IOM offenders; and
- The difficulties that offenders face to securing employment and good practice responses.

**Mapping Exercise** - Undertaken to explore the range and diversity of the region's employment support programmes, particularly as they relate to the needs of IOM offenders. This was informed by a web-based search and dialogue with key local and regional stakeholders including Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company Limited Esh group, Northern Local Offender Partnership Board, Changing Lives, Manchester College, and APM (formerly Pertemps People Development Group)

**Stakeholder Engagement** - Nine semi-structured interviews and two focus groups were undertaken with key local and regional stakeholders, including: nine IOM stakeholders, case workers, two employment support providers, one charity and one DWP representative. The interviews discussed the nature and extent of the support currently offered to IOM offenders (highlighting its various strengths and successes, and any exceptions or limitations), the difficulties which IOM offenders face to securing employment and engagement with the welfare system, and any potential recommendations which they would like to see explored through the research.

**Quantitative Analysis** - Quantitative analysis was performed on a dataset, provided by Durham Constabulary, regarding the age, gender, employment status, Blue Delta score and offending histories of a sample of 240 IOM offenders engaged with in early 2014. An understanding of the nature of the IOM cohort would be useful in terms of understanding the types of support they may need and therefore the development of an employment pathway.

**Service User Interviews** - Eight semi-structured interviews were undertaken with a sample of IOM offenders (five in Durham and three in Darlington). The interviews were underpinned by a biographical approach, with participants asked to reflect on their life histories (with particular reference to childhood, educational attainment, employment, health and addictions, social networks, offending histories and significant life events, for example). The interviews explored the barriers to employment faced by IOM offenders, their hopes and aspirations in regard to employment, the value and usefulness of current employment support measures available to them and experiences of the welfare system.



## **Section Two: Rapid Assessment of Evidence - Criminogenic Needs, Employment and Desistance**

The purpose of the first substantive section of the report is to discuss the relevant research literature on the links between employment and offending. As the focus of this report is the development of an employment pathway for IOM offenders, the review will begin with an overview of the IOM approach and the characteristics of IOM offenders. Crucially, it will then move on to discuss the primary theorisations and insights of empirical research into the links between employment and offending. Having established the importance of employment to lifestyle normalisation, the section will then discuss the requirements of the welfare system in relation to offenders, the barriers which IOM offenders face to securing employment and good practice responses to address these.

### **2.1 The Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Approach**

In 2010, the Conservative-led coalition government launched a Green Paper on tackling re-offending, *Breaking the Cycle*, which recognised that a disproportionate amount of recorded crime is committed by a relatively small number of prolific offenders (Ministry of Justice, 2010). Indeed, evidence at the time identified that a cohort of 16,000 offenders had an average of 75 convictions each, had been to prison 14 times, had nine community sentences and 10 fines (Ministry of Justice, 2010). While not an excuse, these high-risk offenders are typically experiencing problems of multiple disadvantage, which when combined, can help account for a perpetuate cycle of sustained offending behaviour, punctuated by short-term prison sentences (Revolving Doors Agency, 2012). This cycle places a substantial burden on national and local resources and social impact on communities (Revolving Doors Agency, 2012). Accordingly, at the start of its term in office, the coalition government set out a commitment to rethinking its approach to the management of offenders. The new approach would be focused on *rehabilitation*, as well as *correction*; to break the cycle of offending at the earliest opportunity by supporting offenders to access support services to help tackle their problems and reintegrate into mainstream society (Home Office, Ministry of Justice, 2015). At the heart of this approach is the concept of 'Integrated Offender Management' (IOM).

Established in 2009, the IOM approach is part of a Home Office and Ministry of Justice strategy to bring together representatives from criminal justice agencies, the local authority, health services and the voluntary sector to prevent problems of crime and reduce reoffending threats faced by local communities, through the delivery of targeted interventions to some of the most persistent and problematic offenders in their localities (Revolving Doors Agency, 2012; HM Inspectorate of Probation and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, 2014; Home Office, Ministry of Justice, 2015). Intended to provide a strategic framework, rather than a detailed set of procedures and processes, the specific nature of local models vary, but the common elements are:

- a multi-agency problem-solving approach focusing on offenders, not offences;
- engaging all relevant local partners in strategic planning and decision making;
- offenders facing their responsibility or facing the consequences;
- making better use of existing programmes and governance, such as drug-treatment facilities; and
- all high risk offenders are 'in scope', irrespective of position within the criminal justice system or whether statutory or non-statutory (Rowe and Soppitt, 2014).

Understanding the characteristics of offenders engaging with IOM is critical to contextualising and assessing the nature of support and interventions offered by IOM teams. The IOM approach does not include a firm definition of the profile of offenders to be targeted and individual areas have interpreted who should be managed under the approach in a variety of ways (Home Office, Ministry

of Justice, 2015). However, most offenders are identified as suitable by either police or probation, based on some form of weighted matrix based on their 'criminogenic needs'. The highly-influential risk-needs model of criminal behaviour, developed by Andrews and Bonta (1994), views criminal behaviour as the outcome of an interaction between a range of situational and personal factors (criminogenic needs) which increase the likelihood (risk) of a crime. The concept of a criminogenic need is explained below:

*'Many offenders, especially high-risk offenders, have a variety of needs. They need places to live and work and/or they need to stop taking drugs. Some have poor self-esteem, chronic headaches or cavities in their teeth. These are all 'needs'. The need principle draws our attention to the distinction between criminogenic and non-criminogenic needs. Criminogenic needs are a subset of an offender's risk level. They are the dynamic attributes of an offender that, when changed, are associated with changes in the probability of recidivism' (Andrews and Bonta, 1994: 176).*

Thus, within the risk-needs model, the offender's criminogenic needs are the individual risk factors associated with the overall risk of their reoffending. The distinction can be drawn between static needs and dynamic needs. A static need is an event in an individual's history that cannot be changed, such as experiences of physical abuse. A dynamic need is an aspect of an individual's current situation which can be changed, such as their employment status (Hollin and Palmer, 2006).

Andrews and Bonta (2010) identified eight criminogenic risk and need factors, called the 'Central Eight', with the first four being known as the 'Big Four':

- A history of anti-social behaviour – early and continuing involvement in a number/variety of antisocial acts in a variety of settings.
- Antisocial personality pattern – 'impulsive, adventurous pleasure seeking, generalized trouble, restless aggressive, disregard for others.'
- Antisocial cognition – 'attitudes, values, beliefs, rationalizations – and a personal identity that is favourable to crime.'
- Antisocial associates- 'both association with pro-criminal others and relative isolation from anti criminal others.'
- Family and/or marital – key elements are nurturance and/or caring and monitoring and/or supervision.
- School and/or work – Low levels of performance and satisfactions in school and/or work.
- Leisure and/or recreation – low levels of involvement and satisfactions in anti-criminal leisure pursuits.
- Substance abuse – abuse of alcohol and/or other drugs.

Broadly speaking, IOM offenders will typically exhibit several, if not all, of these criminogenic needs. They will typically have a range of criminogenic needs. They are likely to be high volume offenders, with a history of short-term prison sentences and characterised by early onset involvement in crime and drug use, benefits dependency, housing issues, separation from family, alcohol and drug dependency, mental health issues and low self-esteem/self-worth. They are likely to have experienced many interventions by the criminal justice system and aligned agencies, with varying levels of engagement and success, but that which has not led to long-term desistance (Revolving Doors Agency, 2012).

It is important to note the potential role of gender in the management of IOM offenders. Research suggests that female offenders often have unique needs, which would fall into the 'personal/emotional' domain, that include: dealing with issues of trauma and abuse, self-esteem and

assertiveness, medical care, mental health, self-injury, parenting and child care, and relationships (Hollin and Palmer, 2006). While these factors are sometimes cited as women-specific criminogenic needs, research highlights a mismatch between the observations of professionals in the field and the strength of the associated empirical evidence. Empirical studies struggle to determine that experiences such as abuse have any substantial predictive power with regard to offending and hence can be considered criminogenic (Lowenkamp et al, 2001). Fagan (2001: 457) explains the issues:

*'While most retrospective studies find a majority of offenders reporting childhood maltreatment, most prospective studies demonstrate that only one-third to one-half of victims become criminal. The findings suggest that intervening variables affect the progression from maltreatment to offending, but such circumstances have yet to be fully identified'.*

Thus, the conceptual issue for female offenders lies in the question of how adverse life events interact with each other and how this interaction relates to offending. Academic research has continually stressed that understandings of rehabilitation need to extend beyond narrow correctionalism to a more socially inclusive model (Robinson and Raynor, 2006). Indeed, the concept of criminogenic needs has important consequences for the rehabilitation of offenders, particularly in outlining the importance of linking individuals involved in the criminal justice system to a range of appropriate rehabilitative services in order to reduce recidivism. Research suggests that some dynamic risk factors are directly related to recidivism, while others are indirectly related. As such, it is suggested that rehabilitative interventions should target those offender risk factors that are dynamic (responsive to change) and criminogenic (directly related to recidivism outcomes) (Caudy et al, 2013). Specifically, Caudy et al (2013) state that changes in the 'big four' dynamic risk factors/criminogenic needs will result in the largest changes in the probability of recidivism. What's more, much of the research addressing the risk-based approach recommends that the effective promotion of desistance requires interventions across, as well as within, life domains. Building on this, the IOM approach has rehabilitation as its central goal and much of its work is focused on supporting offenders through the seven resettlement pathways identified as likely to reduce risks of reoffending by the Ministry of Justice. The seven offender pathways are:

- Accommodation
- Skills and Employment
- Health Inequalities
- Drugs and Alcohol
- Children and Families of Offenders
- Finance, benefit and debt
- Attitudes, thinking and behaviour (Gojkovic et al, 2011).

The relevance of these to IOM was described as: *'At the core of IOM was the delivery of a set of interventions, sequenced and tailored to respond to the risks and needs of the individual. These interventions had the key aim of disrupting the offender's criminal activity and thereby reducing their re-offending'* (Senior, 2011). Through practical engagement to enhance employment and training prospects, address housing needs, tackle addiction and so forth, the IOM programmes are intended to promote desistance through the development of a 'pro-social identity' for offenders that would enhance their motivation to change (Farrall, 2002). In addition, restorative justice is a widely used approach within the IOM units and is available to anyone who has been affected by a crime committed by an offender managed within the project, where the offender is willing to participate. This gives the victim the chance to discuss with offenders the impact of their crime and ask questions in order to help them move on with their lives. It helps the offenders understand the real

impact of what they have done, to take responsibility for their actions and make amends. This approach has been evidenced to result in significant reductions in the frequency of re-offending.

## 2.2 The Relationship between Employment and Desistance

The relationship between employment and offending is an enduring topic of criminological inquiry. There are a number of theories about the negative longitudinal association between employment and crime (see for example, Mischkowitz, 1994; Uggen and Kruttschnitt, 1998; Uggen and Staff, 2001; Farrall, 2002), but each provides a different explanation as to how and why the causal effect of employment on crime exists. Theorisations can be broadly categorised into those which focus on 'life-course' and those which focus on 'selection' or 'individual pre-dispositions'.

Criminological life-course theories emphasise the effects of key life events on gradual decreases in offending behaviour over time. In particular, they stress the role of life events, such as marriage and gaining employment, in the taking on of adult roles and development of a sense of embeddedness in conventional society. These transitions lead to an increase in responsibility, not only for the self but also for others. Linked to this, scholars suggest that employment is associated with the development of a positive sense of identity (linked to feelings of competence, usefulness and satisfaction) (Pugliesi 1995; Crutchfield and Pitchford, 1997; Maruna, 2001; Rocque, 2014). Theories suggest that delinquency then becomes less appealing as it may impair these newly gained responsibilities, embeddedness in society and positive sense of identity (Sampson and Laub, 1993; Hirschi and Stark, 1969). Sampson and Laub's (1993) work, *Crime in the Making*, is perhaps the most influential life-course study of criminal behaviour. They identified that marital attachment and job stability redirected the life-course trajectories of adults away from crime, by creating stakes in conformity that increase the costs associated with misbehaviour. Thus, men who were strongly attached to their wives or were embedded in long-term jobs became less likely to disrupt their social ties by engaging in behaviour that could potentially divorce them from their valued relationships. Laub and Sampson (2003: 278–9) use the term 'desistance by default' to describe this outcome: '*Many men made a commitment to go straight without even realising it. Before they knew it, they had invested so much time in a marriage or job that they did not want to risk losing their investment*'. Taking a different perspective, anomie theory argues that employment will decrease delinquency if the financial benefits of employment are greater than the benefits of delinquency. This type of theory fits economic crime models, in which individuals are regarded as rational beings who weigh the costs and benefits of crime. Finally, routine activities theory suggests that employment reduces delinquency because of a reduction in unstructured time: when engaged in a job, time and possibilities to offend will be limited (Cohen, 1965; Laub and Sampson, 2003).

The strong causality between employment and offending suggested by life-course theories has been questioned by scholars who view subjective change as a precondition for successful exit from a criminal lifestyle (Giordano et al, 2002; LeBel et al, 2008; Maruna, 2001). For example, Bushway and Reuter (1997) have argued that employment is unlikely to facilitate desistance in the absence of true commitment to 'go straight'. Taking this further, Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) argue that it is pre-existing differences between people – such as levels of self-control – that cause or prevent delinquency and determine individuals' chances of being employed, for example. According to this theory, personality traits such as low self-control are stable over the life course; consequently, any association between employment and offending is spurious. A less deterministic reading of this would suggest that life-course transitions are unlikely to result in lasting changes in behaviour without strong personal desire to undertake a conversion effort. Sampson and Laub (1993), however, state that over and above such effects, 'good' things can happen to 'bad' people and can lead to desistance from crime. In other words, if the transition towards (good quality) employment is

successful, even people with a criminal predisposition can experience a positive effect from employment on offending (Bushway and Reuter, 2002).

The empirical evidence for the effect of employment on offending is mixed. As such, the causal links between engagement in employment and desistance from offending are yet to be fully established (Farrall and Calverley, 2006). A number of studies in which careful control methods were used purported to identify a negative effect of employment on offending in various population samples (Sampson and Laub, 2003; Thornberry and Christenson, 1984; Savolainen, 2009), including those with problematic backgrounds and extensive criminal careers (van der Geest, 2011; Verbruggen et al, 2012). However, some studies have found no link between employment and offending (Horney et al. 1995; MacKenzie and De Li, 2002, Skardhamar and Savolainen, 2011). Indeed, evidence suggests that the relationship in question is complex and may be dependent on a range of factors: notably, age, criminogenic needs, job quality and gender.

The effects of employment on crime appear to differ across studies that examine samples with *different age groups*. For adults, a protective effect of employment on crime is consistently found (MacKenzie and De Li, 2002; Uggen 2000). For youths and young adults, however, findings are less conclusive. For example, Fergusson et al (2001) found unemployment following leaving school to be associated with criminal behaviour. Similarly, Farrington et al (1986) found that following leaving school, youths committed more crimes during unemployment than when employed. However, others found that work for youths who are still in school can also be associated with an increase in offending (Bachman and Schulenberg, 1993; Staff and Uggen, 2003; Cullen et al, 1997; Ploeger, 1997). Employment may be a risk factor partly because some of the places in which youths work – such as fast-food restaurants and service jobs – do not necessarily build social capital and are populated by teenage co-workers who may not be committed to conventional values. This suggests that the timing of the transition to employment matters and that employment might only have a positive effect when it concerns an age-appropriate transition.

The effects of employment might differ because of differences in samples in terms of *risk factors* and the risk of (re)offending. Horney et al (1995) and Savolainen (2009), for example, studied a sample of convicted offenders and found that work was only weakly related to offending, while MacKenzie and De Li (2002) who studied a sample of less serious offenders found employment to result in reduced levels of crime. The effects of employment on crime thus appear to be especially mixed in high-risk samples.

Research evidences also suggests that the *quality of employment* – in terms of satisfaction with one's job role, salary, stability/duration of employment and prospects for promotion/career progression – is important in terms of its impacts of reoffending (Crutchfield, 2014; Van den Berg et al, 2014; Skardhamar and Savolainen, 2011). For example, if a person is employed for a longer period at the same company, it can be expected that the social capital generated is greater because of the stronger embeddedness within the company. Conversely, a longer span of a contract may be a marker for greater job satisfaction (Van der Geest et al, 2011). This supports routine activities theory by Cohen and Felson (1979) which suggest a direct impact of work on everyday life, which results in a short term reduction in crime. As such, research has recognised the importance of '*not just a job but a high quality job*' (Crutchfield 2014: 36). It is important to recognise that the desire for a 'real job' or the rejection of a 'slave job' is not an unwillingness to work, but the desire for work with real value (Crutchfield, 2014). Crutchfield (2014: 37) stated:

*'People who have to be at work on a job that they value are less likely to lead a life of carefree late nights in the bars, on street corners, and in marginal company engaging in questionable behaviour. In addition – the immediate consequences of such behaviours –*

*exhaustion, hangovers, jail, injury – the loss of a valued job, because one cannot perform up to par, or is too often tardy, or a no show adds additional costs to more reprobate lifestyles’.*

Gender may also be an important variable in the relationship between (un)employment and crime, although too few studies have directly compared the effects of employment on offenders across the genders to draw definitive conclusions about the role of gender. It could be argued that employment is more strongly linked to crime for men, since men are still more likely to be ‘breadwinners’ so have more at stake by committing crime than women. Furthermore, a (steady) job is an important part of masculine identity (McFayden, 1995): unemployed men are stigmatised more strongly and experience greater negative psychological effects of unemployment than do women (Kulik, 2000; Paul and Moser 2009; Harding and Sewel, 1992). In addition, unemployed women might more easily have access to other accepted adult social roles, such as the role of mother, which (like work) provide both social control and structure in everyday life (Paul and Moser, 2009). Taken together, it can be hypothesised that the beneficial effects of employment and detrimental effects of long-term unemployment for men may be larger compared to those for women. However, increasingly, the difference in employment participation between men and women is becoming increasingly smaller and so too could the meaning both genders attach to work (Hult, 2008; Nordenmark, 1999). However, Uggen and Kruttschnitt’s (1998) study, which is one of the few studies directly comparing the effect of employment for men and women, found that for women, employment was associated with an 85% reduction in re-arrest and for men, employment led to just a 52% reduction in re-arrest.

### **2.3 IOM Offenders and Engagement with the Welfare System**

There are high levels of benefit dependency among prolific offenders. Data on the sentencing and offence records of offenders held by the Ministry of Justice, linked with benefit and employment data held by the Department for Work and Pensions and Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs, shows that of those leaving prison, 75% of offenders claimed an out-of-work benefit within two years. Two years after being released from prison in 2008, 47% of offenders were on out-of-work benefits. Offenders claiming Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) on release from prison in 2008 spent 40% more time on benefits over the next three years than the average claimant. The results of this analysis have been used to change policy (Home Office, Ministry of Justice, 2011).

In order to access benefits, IOM offenders (the same as all citizens) are required to engage with the DWP, through JobCentre Plus offices and the Work Programme. Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) is paid to help people who are unemployed or on a low income, but are actively seeking work. In order to claim JSA, they just make an application online or telephone Jobcentre Plus. They will then be asked to attend an interview at their local Jobcentre Plus, where they and the adviser will agree what steps they’ll take to find work. This agreement will be recorded on a Claimant Commitment. Every fortnight, a meeting is required to review the extent to which the Claimant Commitment has been met. Failure to comply with this, could result in benefits being sanctioned (Gov.UK, n.d).

In 2010, the Coalition Government pressed ahead with plans set in train by the previous administration for a programme of welfare reform that placed conditionality and responsibility at the heart of welfare policy. In March 2012, strengthened conditionality and a harsher sanctions regime were enshrined in law when the Welfare Reform Act 2012 received royal assent. A key change has been increased severity and length of sanctions: a claimant can have their benefit withheld for up to three years if they do not meet the stringent requirements now placed upon them. The core objective of welfare reform is to encourage (support, incentivise) more people into work, underpinned by the view that rights must be balanced by responsibilities; that no one should get ‘something for nothing’. Government rationale for the use of sanctions is that they are effective in changing behaviour that will, in turn, reduce unemployment. However, with no robust evidence to

support this claim, the effectiveness and fairness of the sanctions regime has been questioned. The sanctions rate has increased dramatically over the past five years and, in particular, since the introduction of the new regime in 2012. For example:

- The number of JSA sanctions per 100 claimants has almost tripled, from 2.5 sanctions per 100 claimants per month in the year ending March 2001 to seven per 100 claimants per month in the year ending March 2014
- The average monthly number of JSA sanctions has risen dramatically from 35,500 a month up to October 2012 to 84,800 after this date
- There has been more than a three-fold increase in ESA sanctions from 1,400 per month in March 2013 to 5,400 in March 2014

The most common reason for a sanction at present is failing to actively seek work, with around one in three sanctions imposed for this reason.

There is a strong body of evidence that points to an increased risk of sanctions amongst 'vulnerable' groups and those with characteristics likely to present barriers to navigating the system. These include: ill health, substance misuse, lack of work experience, literacy issues and low self-esteem, amongst others. An independent review and the Work and Pensions Committee scrutinised the sanctions system in 2014 and found it lacking. Evidence is presented about poor communication, letters that are impossible to understand, lack of provision for people who face difficulties storing documentation, do not have access to the internet, and have limited literacy, and limited flexibility to accommodate claimants' other commitments including hospital appointments and job interviews. There is evidence of a range of negative outcomes associated with sanctions including: food poverty, survival crime, family/relationship tensions, mental and physical health problems, fuel poverty, debt, disengagement with the system and homelessness (Crisis, 2015).

The Work Programme is a government welfare-to-work programme introduced in the UK in June 2011. Under the Work Programme, the task of getting long-term unemployed people into work has been contracted out to a range of public, private and third sector organisations, which are contracted to offer tailored, locally-appropriate employment support. In March 2012, the Government launched a major overhaul of the employment support given to prisoners following release, in order to provide them with more intensive support. Everyone leaving prison and claiming JSA benefits is immediately referred on to the Work Programme, meaning that people leaving prison will be able to access specialised employment support 'at the prison gates'. Some prisoners are also offered an appointment with a Jobcentre Plus Employment Benefits Advisor whilst in custody to initiate a benefit claim, with a follow-up appointment in the community arranged for the prisoner on release. Additionally, there are plans for Jobcentre Plus to process benefit claims in prison, streamlining the benefits process and making immediate mandation to the Work Programme possible in the hope of reducing the temptation of ex-offenders to reoffend. The Ministry of Justice is also preparing to pilot the integration of a reoffending outcome payment into the Work Programme as part of a wider programme of pilots to reduce reoffending on a payment by results basis. Work Programme providers will receive a fee of £5,600 if they succeed in placing a former offender into work and help them stay in employment for over two years (Department of Work and Pensions, 2012). A report for NOMS (2012) reported that there are formal links between North East prisons and Jobcentre Plus to support prisoners' transition on to the Work Programme: all prisoners have access to a Jobcentre Plus Advisor based in the prison, prior to their release. Furthermore, a national agreement exists between NOMS and DWP regarding offenders. There is a formal mechanism for sharing information such as licence conditions, and this can enable some flexibility to be applied to individual cases. Locally, however, this information sharing does not appear to be routinely happening.

## 2.4 Barriers to IOM Offenders Securing Employment

Despite the potential benefits of employment to pathways to desistance, research suggests that ex-offenders face a number of obstacles to obtaining work; some of which a typical of non-offending, disadvantaged individual may face and some which are unique. These obstacles can be referred to as supply-side factors (the attitudes, characteristics and behaviours of individuals) and demand-side factors (attitudes and behaviours of employers and the characteristics of jobs).

In terms of supply, offenders may have limited education and cognitive skills, including: poor literacy and numeracy skills, linked to early school-leaving age and a history of truanting from school, for example; low self-esteem, linked to experiences such as homelessness, time spent in statutory care, long-term unemployment and having unspent convictions; a history of unemployment or experience of long-term unemployment; low motivation to find employment; behavioural and health problems, including substance abuse and alcohol dependency; housing problems and homelessness (JRF, 1998; DWP, 2001; Holzer et al, 2003; Hurry et al. 2006). Indeed, nearly half of those in prisons have no qualifications and 48% of prisoners are at, or below, the level expected of an 11 year old in reading, 65% in numeracy and 82% in writing. Others note that ex-offenders may believe that the benefits of illegal opportunities exceed the legitimate. With illegal opportunities more readily available, such offenders may only have vague plans for non-criminal employment and see the deviant activity that they are involved in as 'work' (Hagan, 1993). Maruna and Immarigeon (2004) conducted a review of a large number of both qualitative and quantitative studies, concluded that many young criminals 'doubled-up' by earning money in both the legitimate and illegitimate economies. Crutchfield (2014) argues that they shouldn't be seen as 'either or', but rather a continuum used by some to gain an income.

In terms of demand, offenders' attitudes, characteristics and behaviours often 'mismatch' those which employers seek (Holzer et al, 2003). Research undertaken by Lawlor and McDonald (2001) with Irish employers, identified that only half would be willing to employ ex-offenders and even then, would only consider them for low level positions. This research was undertaken at a time when the economy was booming and there were labour shortages (Healy, 2010). A DWP (2001) report identified that employers tend to reject people with a criminal record as they are regarded as undesirable, outside the employers' experience and alien, with employers showing a moral disapproval and concerned that they would be held responsible for recruiting someone who offended in the workplace. Employers' behaviour is often exacerbated by their lack of knowledge of offending behaviour and particularly, the prevalence of offending, including the high number of people with a criminal record in their workplace, and the risks of re-offending at work and patterns of desistance. Furthermore, few have effective knowledge of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. Research has also identified a 'hierarchy' of offences among employers, with sexual and violent crimes seen as grounds for rejecting an application, while driving offences are seen as less serious. This suggests that providing offenders with the opportunities to increase their human capital, such as job interview skills or educational qualifications, will not be of benefit without interventions designed to change employer attitudes (Healy, 2010). However, because most studies are small and have not focused on particular industries and occupations, little is known about which employers are concerned about which types of crime and in relation to which jobs (DWP, 2001). Research has discussed the types of employment that offenders have particular difficulties securing; most notably, public/government/civil service employment (Maruna and Immarigeon, 2004). Meanwhile, it has been noted that the job sectors most likely to hire offenders will become 'scarcer, i.e. blue collar jobs in construction and manufacturing. Therefore, employment opportunities for offenders will diminish (Holzer et al, 2003). Linked to this, Maruna and Immarigeon (2004) highlighted Crow's (2000) studies of employment schemes which have frequently been unable to demonstrate an impact on offending; a finding which he suggests is due, in part, to them being unable to address the



wider problem of mass unemployment. In other words, such schemes are ultimately unable to be able to improve participants' social capital as they ultimately have little direct control or influence over wider meso- and macro- level circumstances.

Other barriers identified which were aimed at promoting employment for offenders include barriers inherent in the criminal justice system – such as those related to sentencing policy, funding structures and the transition from custody to the community (Hurry et al, 2006). Maruna and Immarigeon (2004) wrote, *'generally ex-convicts are unlikely to receive any prison training in marketable skills, employers are reluctant to hire them and they have great difficulty in filing out employment applications that inquire about arrest and conviction records, while on parole, they must okay their employment by calling or visiting the parolees work site. This may lead to the termination of employment'*.

Research commissioned by the DWP (2001) highlighted a series of recommendations to tackle unemployment amongst people with a criminal record: improve offender skills and qualifications; tackle non-employment problems, such as housing and drug abuse; reduce employer discrimination; and improved training and advice on job search (including improving confidence and the way convictions are revealed). Similarly, Hurry et al (2006) argued that programmes which address a wider range of issues (e.g. anger management, housing, job search, job skills, etc) are more helpful than those with a narrow employment focus, while NACRO (2006) concluded that employers should develop sensible and fair recruitment policies which do not unreasonably discriminate against ex-offenders. Business in the Community runs a number of Work Inclusion initiatives which aim to engage employees in organisations in mentoring and coaching offenders, delivering training to offenders and supporting candidates on work experience placements. A recent evaluation suggested that benefits of the initiatives to employers and employees include: improved professional and personal skills (communication, leadership, problem solving); improved awareness of community issues; enhanced employee engagement (increased morale / motivation, commitment and loyalty); an increased recruitment pool (access to talent, increased diversity, quality of talent); improved retention rates/reduced turnover and reduced absenteeism; and improved employee engagement and skills; being seen as an employer that is helping address some of society's most critical social issues; improved customer relations.

### **Section Three: Empirical Research Findings**

This section of the report details the findings of interviews with stakeholders and IOM service users in respect of the IOM approach locally, the characteristics of the IOM cohort, the difficulties which they face in terms of securing employment, experiences of engagement with the welfare system and the current employment offer for service users in the areas of Durham and Darlington.

#### **3.1 The IOM Approach in County Durham and Darlington**

The IOM units in County Durham and Darlington are part of the Safe Durham Partnership (the local Community Safety Partnership). They operate under two project titles: *Change Track* for Darlington and *Castle Project* for the Durham, Chester-Le-Street, Derwentside, Peterlee and Seaham, Sedgefield and Wear Valley areas. As noted in the literature review, the stakeholders interviewed explained that the aim of the IOM unit is to support prolific offenders to reduce their offending behaviour by addressing the broad range of criminogenic factors that may undermine a process of lifestyle normalisation.

The teams identify and manage some of the most demanding offenders, displaying complex needs and those that are responsible for multiple and predominately acquisitive crimes. Offenders suitable for referral to the IOM programme are identified via: analysis of offending profiles using the Blue Delta System and nominations/referrals from various statutory and voluntary agencies that support offenders. At this point, they are given a risk score, based on the frequency and gravity of their offending history. Additional points are given for employment, education and accommodation needs. Multi-agency meetings, made up of police, probation and drug workers supported by housing and other services including mentor support (and drawing, in part, on the calculated risk scores) are then used to decide which offenders should be given the opportunity for IOM support. Notable is that employment providers were said not to be consistently represented at these meetings.

Offenders are offered a choice; to work with the IOM units and reduce their offending *or* be subject to regular and robust enforcement by probation and police. Stakeholders highlighted, however, that in selecting IOM cases, it is important that the offender is willing to co-operate with the IOM scheme: *'If we get people on board, we need to have some kind of working relationship with them and that needs developing because sometimes they've got a distrust of both police and probation, so we need to develop that but there's some people it just wouldn't do...they're not prepared to change'* (Darlington Focus Group). Accordingly, engagement with IOM is a potential 'turning point' whereby motivated offenders can receive the support needed to potentially leave behind their criminal career (Sampson and Laub, 1993).

Once offenders are identified as suitable for IOM, a support worker is allocated and a holistic support plan is developed, based on the factors identified as likely to affect the offenders' likelihood of desistance. These may include: alcohol and drug abuse, poor health, homelessness, little or no financial resource, personal attitudes and values, unemployment and negative or limited social networks. The support plans are then discussed with offenders and intensive – often daily – wraparound support is provided by a lead case worker tasked with developing a collaborative trusting relationship with the offender:

*'One day, they may say "I need to get my benefits sorted today. I need to get this in place before I can do anything", so we sort that out. So I suppose the logistics of it is get the basic stuff in place - have they got housing, for instance, have they got food, things like that. Sometimes I have to take people - physically pick them up and take them - to go and get some food from the food bank. It's something which we do to prevent them going out and*

*shoplifting if you know what I mean. I'd rather do that than somebody go out and create more victims because that's what we're aiming to reduce as well, victims of crime'* (Darlington Police Officer).

While attributing outcomes to particular interventions in criminal justice is notoriously difficult, IOM stakeholders in both Durham and Darlington reported a high degree of success in terms of addressing the criminogenic needs of offenders, improving their quality of life and reducing their offending behaviour. Comments included: *'We're actually about reducing reoffending and I know certainly in the last two years within Darlington, we've reduced it significantly and that's what it's about.'* (Darlington Focus Group) and *'A couple of years ago, we were at a 65% reduction rate in offending so the [Offender Management Unit] does have a massive impact on the lives of the people that we work with and their welfare'* (Durham Reducing Reoffending Officer). In interviews, offenders managed under the approach were, broadly, very positive about the way they had been treated. They understood why they had been targeted and were pleased to have been offered the help they needed to move away from offending. Several offenders mentioned that previous attempts to assist them had not been sufficiently intensive to bring about positive outcomes. One service user who had been working with an IOM unit for 14 months at the point of interview reported it to be the longest period of time that they had avoided returning to jail in many years: *'14 month now. It's like, this is the longest I've ever been out. I was lucky if I was out more than six weeks (previously)'* (Darlington Service User 3). Another service user who had desisted from crime for one year at the point of interview attributed this to working with the IOM team and stated *'From there, me life's changed...they couldn't have give us any more support if I asked, d'you know what I mean'* (Durham Service User 2).

Stakeholders largely attributed the success of the IOM programme to the multi-agency approach, which they claimed facilitated information sharing, capitalises on each agencies knowledge and contacts and promotes a culture of rehabilitation:

*'There's police, probation and we sort of work together. We were always seen as separate entities and we didn't share any information or anything like that. That's totally changing now and I've got to say it's really good because we can see it from the police side and they can see it from our side...it's not all the catch and convict now. Lots of police officers I've met over the last few years, I can see the change where they're thinking, "Oh, yes" and they'll ring upstairs for us in the IOM and say, "We've got so and so in, can you do anything with him? Do you want us to refer him?" and things like this'* (Darlington Focus Group).

*'We need to keep the funding going for [support worker], that's a big thing. She's instrumental... because she has a lot of links with the drugs and alcohol services so she knows who to speak to and who to get into recovery. She's very good'* (Darlington Employment Support).

*'I don't think there would be anyway that we would get the reductions and successes that we do if we all worked individually as agencies. You find that with us all being so close together in one office, we've all got that really good communication and we all know that much about the people...they can't give us both different stories because we're all there together and we all feed in the information. And the offenders know that and they know that they can't get away with it. There's consistency there between the agencies and I think had that not have been there, we probably would be nowhere near where we are'* (Durham Reducing reoffending Officer).

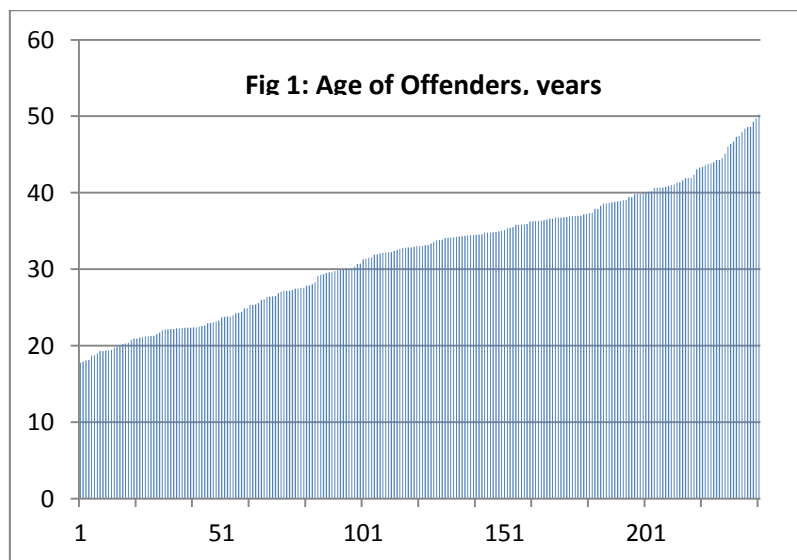
The co-location of multiple agencies within IOM offices was said to be of significant advantage in terms of partnership working and services being easily accessible to offenders. However, it was noted that this is in jeopardy – and has already decreased in some cases – due to organisational cuts.

Several stakeholders also spoke about the value of restorative justice interventions. One interviewee highlighted the importance of the restorative justice approach, suggesting that meeting the victim can have a significant emotional impact on the offender, unlike going to court or prison ‘again’ which no longer concerns some members of the cohort. It was mentioned that restorative justice seems to have a particular impact on dwelling burglary crime (even though the offender may then simply go on to commit a different type of crime). Discussing the relevance of this to employment, one stakeholder explained:

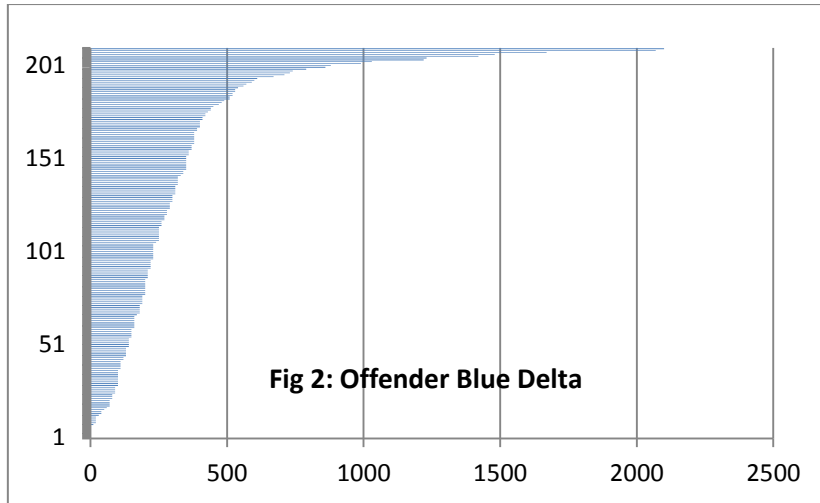
*‘Because one of the other things, I know it’s not about employment but I think it leads to it, I’m a big supporter of the restorative justice process because I think that initially once people can go and get over that stage of meeting the victim of their crime I think they’re halfway there to be fair. Because in some ways it’s sort of like going to confession, they’ve done it, they’ve overcome it and then they’re ready to move on. So I think that alongside, I think that’s a big step I think’ (Darlington Focus Group).*

### 3.2 The Characteristics of IOM Offenders and Barriers to Employment

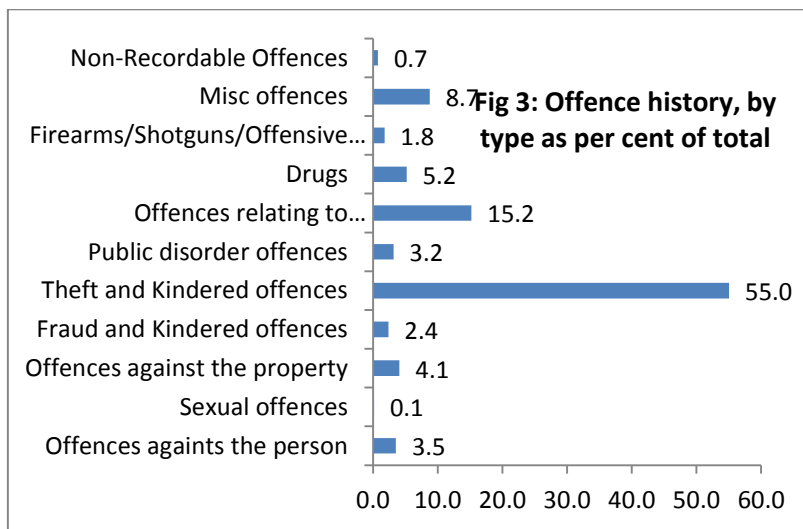
Data was provided on the age, gender, employment status, Blue Delta score and offending histories of a sample of 240 offenders engaging with Durham and Darlington IOM teams in early 2014. Of these, 204 (85%) were male and 36 (15%) were female. The youngest offender was aged 17 years and 8 months, while the oldest was 50 years and 2 months. The average age was 32 years and 2 months. Just two of the 240 offenders were juveniles.



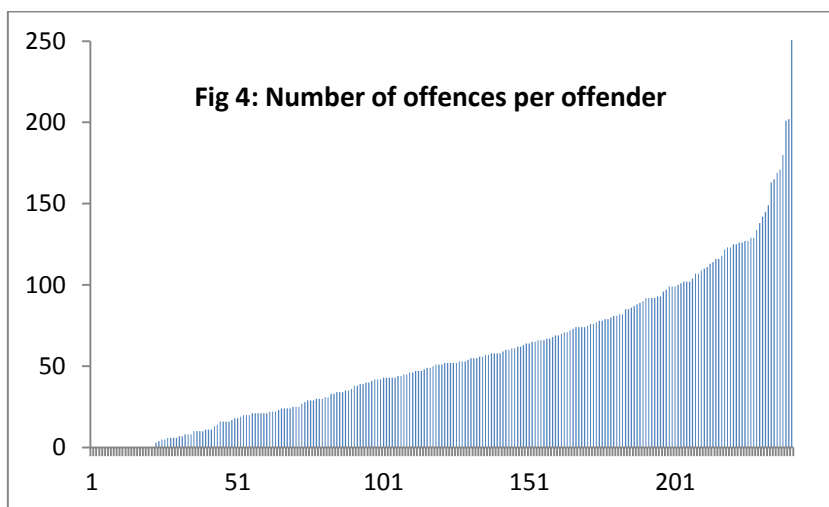
The Blue Delta score of offenders was provided in 210 cases. The lowest score was 0, with the highest being 2100.



Offenders had committed a total of 13,792 offences; an average of 57.2 offences per person with a high standard deviation of 45.9. 83.3% had committed fewer than 100 offences.



21 offenders had not committed an offence. The highest number of offences was 303 (of which 212 were theft and kindred offences).



Analysis of the employment status of 238 records revealed unemployment to be a significant issue for service users. Just seven (3%) were employed; six (2.5%) were students and 227 (94.5%) were unemployed.

The stakeholders and offenders interviewed were clear about the benefits of employment to desistance, in terms of financial resources, providing a positive sense of identity, a sense of structure and routine and the development of positive social networks, for example. Typical views here included:

*'We've had people coming out of prison and they've been ready [to work] and then...you can see them going downhill because they've got nothing to occupy themselves with. It's just boredom a lot of the time. And it's frustrating'* (Darlington Police Officer).

*'It's important really, 'cos it's give yourself a purpose, you know what I mean? If you've got no purpose, what's the point in life, d'you know what I mean?'* (Durham Service User 2).

When asked whether employment has an effect on crime, a typical response from stakeholders was:

*'Oh, without a doubt, without a doubt'. Similarly, one offender doing a voluntary work placement said: 'Well, I'll be honest. If I wasn't doing that, I'd probably be back in jail or have a heroin habit still'* (Durham Service User 2).

Several offenders had aspirations to work. When asked about these, comments included:

*'Well, I want to get a job where I get paid'* (Darlington Service User 2).

*'Yeah, there's like, obviously I've liked working, I've like the money, I've done a few things with Probation and it's just like, they've helped me and I'd rather work than not, if you know what I mean?'* (Darlington Service User 3).

*'I want employment, I've never had it. Aye, just anything you know. I'm a man of many trades, I've worked at me friend's house for like years and years so I can do different things. I just potter on. Owt'll do me, anything. A job, just a job'* (Durham Service User 1).

*'Like if I could get a job now...like even if it was only for four weeks, what's the least you come out with? 260 or something, 250? It's better than £140 a fortnight, you know what I mean, and it's like something else you can put on your CV'* (Darlington Service User 3).

*'Get a full time job. Just move out of Darlington, just start afresh'* (Darlington Service User 3).

Nonetheless, there was extensive discussion about the range of individual, systemic and structural barriers that IOM offenders face to securing employment. While stakeholders reported high levels of success in terms of supporting offenders to address their barriers to employment, they reported less success in terms of supporting service users to secure employment:

*'I would say it's successful in regards of addressing people's barriers to employment. It's not as successful at getting people into employment.'* (Darlington Employment Support).

The first, most frequently, discussed barrier is the multiple and complex needs of IOM offenders, particularly at the point of beginning to engage with the IOM units. Stakeholders explained:

*'They're extremely chaotic. Nearly every individual that we deal with is extremely chaotic ...a very low percentage is in the right place to actually take up that employment' (Durham Reducing Reoffending Officer).*

*'Every one of them has employment needs but some of them are just so far from being able to get a job it's unbelievable...'* (Durham Focus Group).

Similarly, a report for the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) (2012) looking at the impacts of IOM on short-sentence offenders in the North East stated that most offenders had a range of criminogenic needs, including housing, employment, substance misuse and thinking skills.

Addictions and homelessness were identified as the most prevalent and problematic needs among the IOM cohort, which can prevent them from being able to secure and maintain employment. For example, stakeholders reported:

*'A lot of the people that I tend to come into contact with abuse drugs, that is one of the biggest issues we have. And when they don't abuse drugs, they then go on to abusing alcohol or they will do it as a dual addiction. I think addressing the addiction first is, for me, the biggest problem we have'* (Darlington Police Officer).

*'It (drugs and alcohol) plays a big role. I would say a good 90% of the people that I've worked with have had one or the other issue, some worse than others or more dependent than other should we say. In terms of employment it's a big issue'* (Darlington Employment Support).

*'Most of them have got drug issues which would prevent them from working and a lot of them haven't got any kind of accommodation. That's the uniqueness of them'* (Darlington Focus Group).

In one case, however, other issues such as family problems were also highlighted as contributing to offenders not being able to sustain employment:

*'I've worked with clients who come out of prison and go straight into work and earn a really good living. [But] it's family life or it's a social life that's getting them into trouble and if that was addressed, then the employment is not an issue because they're turning up to work every day and they're earning a living and they've got a good work ethic'* (Darlington Employment Support).

Because of these needs, stakeholders reported that it is often not possible or appropriate to begin to engage with offenders about their employment needs until their housing needs have been addressed and their addictions are stable. In this respect, employment can be regarded as a secondary need. Discussing the relationship between employment and other needs, stakeholders reported:

*'Initially we try and stabilise them in some form of accommodation which can be extremely difficult because most of them have burned lots of bridges in the past with housing providers. From there, we will target the drug use. So, we try and get them stabilised first and break any habits...'* (Darlington Focus Group).

*'It's not our priority at the start with offenders....because they've got so many other issues. Fundamentally, accommodation and....addictions...they're not job ready. You can't expect somebody who is homeless to [work] so it's not our top priority. As we move along the line*

*with them and get them in a place where they are more stable and they've got accommodation and they can physically go and look for a job, then we would push that because it's been one of the old sayings in probation - employment is the key. And I'm a firm believer that is the truth' (Darlington Focus Group).*

Some of the stakeholders interviewed felt that supporting people to address their addictions was a critical first step in pathways to desistance:

*'Recently myself and some of my team members helped to resurrect a narcotics anonymous meeting in the town because it had fallen by the wayside and we identified that there was a massive need for it' (Darlington Police Officer).*

*'Once you get someone treated for their addiction you're sailing, absolutely sailing. And it's the big recovery thing which I think needs to be looked at more than anything from our point of view and that's what we've been pushing for' (Darlington Police Officer).*

Service users, too, confirmed that their first priority when they begin to engage with the IOM units is to face their substance misuse issues, in particular:

*'Oh, it's really important in the future, but what's really important at the minute is concentrating on staying clean and getting well an' that first. I'm trying not to - the programme we do, the 12 step programme, we try and not think about the future or the past. But obviously I will be wanting to work an' that in the future' (Durham Service User 3).*

Another key barrier is the limited employment experience of many of the cohort, which is often linked to poor educational attainment, as the result of problematic childhoods that include negative social networks and being taken into local authority care, for instance. As one stakeholder stated:

*'They have a poor history of school...they've left school early or been excluded, no qualifications, because in their early teens they've been hanging round with the wrong sort of people and then they've got criminal convictions and they've spent time in and out of prison...then late 20s, early 30s, that time when normally you would have sort of a work history, they have nothing' (Durham Probation Officer).*

When asked about their history of schooling, service user responses included:

*'I didn't even go to school if I'm honest. Well, I was always kicked out and into naughty boy schools and stuff like that.' (Durham Service user 3).*

*'I was excluded from school at 13...All me qualifications have come from prison' (Durham Service User 2).*

*'No, I never had no qualifications after school...I used to do car valeting and then obviously I started misbehaving and going to prison and then I never, probably never really had a job' (Darlington Service User 3).*

*'I think I'd done a few labouring jobs for people and I'd worked in one factory. But apart from that like, my life was making money by selling drugs' (Durham Service User 2).*

*'I worked in the past, but it's only...'cos of me drug use, it's only ever lasted what, three month at the most' (Durham Service User 3).*



In addition, IOM offenders were typically said to have low self-esteem and believe that their limited employment histories and criminal records especially will prevent them from being able to secure employment. Stakeholders explained:

*'Lots of them are of the view that, "I'll never get a job, I've never worked ever. Who will give me a job with my criminal record?" And once you get them to change their way of thinking that, "Well, actually I can work, I can actually do something" I think we're in with half a chance there' (Darlington Focus Group).*

*'When I first started on the IOM, I got, "Well, no-one will give me a job because I'm a criminal", now that's not the case. Life changes and people move on, people change. I'm not saying that they've all done very well on that but certainly, if they want to work we can facilitate it.' (Darlington Police Officer).*

*'A lot of them will come in and say they've got limited expectations of themselves, they don't have that, "I'm capable of doing A, B and C", they come the opposite direction... "Who is going to employ me? Why would you employ me? I'm not trustworthy", because that's what they've been told.' (Darlington Employment Support).*

*'The biggest difference is a lot of the guys who are on the IOM will have had a lot more negative experiences, a lot more history of time spent in custody or being arrested etc. so there's a trust issue to a lot of it. "Why do people want to know about me? Why do people want to do this, that and the other?" (Darlington Employment Support).*

Indeed, the service users interviewed typically lacked confidence about their likelihood of securing employment. When asked if their criminal record had affected their ability to secure employment in the past, one said: *'Oh god, yeah. It's horrible' (Darlington Service User 3)*, while another said:

*'There's nobody can help us because of my past. 'I've got to apply for things and when they phone me up, "Oh, what have you done for 15 year?"... "Oh, well, nothing. I've been in and out of jail a lot and I've been on the sick". So obviously just the fact that you have to kind of say that you've been in and out of prison, that straight away has a negative...' (Darlington Service User 2).*

Another reported being moved from Employment Support Allowance (ESA) to Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) following a work capability assessment several years ago. They completed the Work Programme for 2 years and in that time, could not secure a job; they believed this to be due to their criminal record. During the six months prior to interview, they had been doing voluntary work for a local charity and felt that this is the only option available to them. They explained, *'I have no choice...'*. Another service user reported feeling judged by prospective employers when enquiring about the availability of jobs:

*'I've got a CV and everything and I just sometimes find I've gone in [shops] and I'm asking and they're looking and thinking, "Is she going to be a good worker?". I know I am. I'd even clean on the bottom of the floors for hours and hours in McDonalds, you know what I mean?' (Darlington Service User 1).*

Another reported negative experiences of engaging with prospective employers in interview and sometimes feeling the need to lie about their background:

*'To be honest with you, most of the jobs I've applied for, once you tell them you've got a criminal record they just, they don't want to know, you know what I mean?' who wants to employ a thief, you know what I mean? Nobody does, so...and some of my interviews, I've just, you have to lie' (Darlington Service User 3).*

Finally, for one service user, the perception that they would not be able to secure a job because of their criminal record had resulted in them feeling deeply unmotivated to look for employment: *'I just thought because having a criminal record, I'll never, ever get a job so it's pointless trying for a job'*. In one case, however, one interviewee reported employers being understanding of their criminal record when they were honest about it:

*'I've only ever had one job interview and the bloke caught me out because he said, "How come this application form's from Doncaster?" and I just said, "Look, I'm not going to lie to you, mate. I got out of jail about last week and they sent the form in for us" and he said, "Oh, right. Well thanks for your honesty. I'll introduce you to the floor manager and we'll see what he says"...I got the job' (Darlington Service User 2).*

### **3.3 Engagement with the Welfare System**

Prior to supporting service users to seek employment, another important step is for their pathway to desistance is to support them to gain access to benefits. The stakeholders interviewed reported to be knowledgeable about the workings of the welfare system, including the recent welfare reforms and feel confident providing offenders with benefits information and support to engage. One stakeholder reported:

*'We're all quite clued up – every agency – on the benefits system. We have Foundation, who will assist, they provide a bit more intense support where they'll go and see the offenders, if they've got any issues with benefits and things, they'll link them in. I have recently had my benefit training on universal credit and things that have come in' (Durham Reducing Reoffending Officer).*

It was reported, however, that a high proportion of offenders find it difficult to understand the welfare system, particularly the conditionality requirements which they must adhere to in order to receive out-of-work benefits. Others struggle to comply with their Claimant Commitments because of the level of chaos in their lives. Some lack the IT skills and means needed to access online support services and undertake online job searches. Stakeholders reported that the scale of the benefits system means that JobCentre Plus lacks the capacity to provide intensive and personalised, 1-2-1 support to claimants:

*'It's a huge problem because they don't understand it. So there's a few statements you'll get regularly off the people that I work with which will be things like, "Why should I have to? They're making me do this, they're making me do that". But it's actually you've signed an agreement when you made a claim for benefits which said this is what you are going to do. The job centre advisor who signed you up onto the contract for your Jobseekers allowance said you've got to access the internet, you've got to do job searches' (Darlington Employment Support).*

*'I'm not speaking for all of them but quite a few of them are uneducated and they don't know what to do and these forms that some of them are given, some of them can't read. Some of them don't have mobiles. I understand why the benefits system is changing for how it is, however, the benefit system is not a one size fits all and there's no other words to say*

*it's going to have a massive knock-on effect for these because as much as they're chaotic and they are criminals, some of them are extremely vulnerable'* (Durham Reducing Reoffending Officer).

*'I think the back-to-work programmes, from what I've heard, they're very, very basic and they're maybe too basic for some people. There's nothing individualistic about it now, it's all just, "Well, you go and do that"'* (Durham Probation Officer).

*'I know when they go to the Jobcentre they're allocated a personal advisor and everything but the feedback that I've had is that they're overloaded, it's just all, "Sign that there and do that.'* (Darlington Focus Group).

*'Yeah, they've got quite a few regulations that they've got to adhere to but some of ours just kind of agree just so they can get the money but then find themselves sanctioned extremely often because they can't actually adhere to those regulations'* (Durham Reducing Reoffending Officer).

*'They do get sanctioned quite often, which is a massive problem for everything, accommodation, the offending, things like that....They're quite unrealistic for the vast majority of them, how chaotic that they are...'* (Durham Reducing Reoffending Officer).

In some cases, however, stakeholders reported that some offenders aren't sufficiently motivated to attend JobCentre Plus appointments:

*'But a lot of them don't turn up for the free money. They literally just, they won't turn up to sign on....You can't give them money'* (Durham Focus Group).

*'Some of them can't be bothered to even...he'll just phone up and say, "I'm on the sick. I'm not well", "We need a sick note", "No, I can't be bothered to go to the doctors"...quite often enough he doesn't turn up for his benefits so he's been sanctioned...three or four times now'* (Durham Focus Group).

Others, however, reported that some IOM offenders have inappropriate attitudes towards benefits; namely, that they are entitled to benefits and see them as 'being paid'. As such, they are reluctant to comply with conditionality requirements which they see as being unnecessary and unfair. Stakeholder comments here included:

*'It is down to this, "I am entitled to" and the phrase from most people is, "I get paid on Friday". You don't get paid, you get your benefits going into your account on Friday but they see it as I get paid'* (Darlington Employment Support).

Reflecting on their experiences of engagement with JobCentre Plus, offenders reported similar issues; typically, the difficulties of complying due to chaotic lives and lacking the skills and capacity needed to comply.

*'Sometimes I'll forget because I've got that much going on'* (Darlington Service User 1).

*'I'm dyslexic me and there wasn't enough support around that sort of stuff, d'you know what I mean. I had to go and do the job searches and...don't get us wrong, I've progressed in it now, I've learned myself to read and write but back then when I've signed for Jobseeker's, I*

*had to do at least 25 job searches a week and just the dread of thinking about doing that just put us right off' (Durham Service User 2).*

Service users discussed the limited accessibility of DWP – particularly, difficulties communicating with them as a result of not having a mobile phone:

*'I'm ringing up and I'm sat there all day for four or five hours in the job centre because I don't have a phone...I know I should have a mobile but it's because of the hassle that comes with the phone...people texting you and if you don't meet them or you can't be bothered to come out then they're - some of them aren't even my friends' (Darlington Service User 1).*

Several service users reported being proactive in terms of trying to comply with their claimant commitments. One service user, for example, said: *'Obviously a lot of job searching and stuff every day, looking through magazines, papers, internet, everything. Shops, I'm in the shops every day, I'm ringing round, I'm constantly, three or four jobs a day' (Darlington Service User 1).* But, they did not on the whole feel that JobCentre Plus' expectations of them in terms of the number of jobs they must apply for each week in order to fulfil their Claimant Commitments is realistic. This is in part due to the lack of new jobs booming available with they are eligible to apply for. For example, one service user said: *'No, because I'm doing it all but they don't understand that in a week only so many jobs come out on that Thursday so what's there is there...'. (Darlington Service User 1).*

One service user went so far as to say that the difficulties which they had complying with benefit conditionality motivated them to return to crime in order to gain an income instead:

*'It's torture, it was easier to go and sell drugs and commit crime and take that risk' (Durham Service User 2).*

Another interviewee had just had a work capability assessment prior to interview. They expressed concern that if they are deemed fit for work and moved onto JSA, they will struggle to comply and sanctioning may result in offending:

*'I've just had me medical and d'you know like, if they put us back on Jobseeker's Allowance, that's where I will struggle, meeting the demand. I've struggled in the past and like I've ended up getting sanctioned and then having to graft for me money and going to jail, so I'm just frightened, I've sorted meself out and it might happen again' (Durham Service User 4).*

Indeed, because of these problems, there is a high level of sanctioning or delays to benefit payments among the cohort, jeopardising their Housing Benefit and leaving them without access to funds. A typical comment from service users was:

*'Yeah. It was quite a while back. I'd missed an appointment at Avanta. I was at my parents and when I'd come back, the appointment had been and gone so I tried to argue it out, appeal against, but they wouldn't do it' (Darlington Service User 2).*

*'Yeah, loads of times. Loads of times. That has been the hardest thing in my life' (Darlington Service User 1).*

Stakeholders reported their concerns about the knock-on effect of sanctions on other areas of the offenders' lives and their likelihood of reoffending:

*'We try and get them to understand that being sanctioned is a massive thing and it's got a knock-on effect for everything. But their way of dealing with the fact that they've been sanctioned is either ticking on with the local drug dealer for the drugs that they need or going out and committing crime' (Durham Focus Group).*

*'All of this impacts on the fact that they go and do what they know best, which is going and committing crime' (Durham Reducing Reoffending Officer).*

*'...we see quite often people out shoplifting because their benefits, not just the benefit sanctions but the delay in benefits as well from initially setting up a claim to them getting their benefits paid can take anywhere from three to five weeks. It's fine saying, "Well, it'll be backdated" but what's that person supposed to do in the meantime? I've been skint, I'm ... you know, I don't know if you've been skint before but I'll tell you I've been skint. It's not a nice place to be' (Durham Focus Group).*

The situation is exacerbated by the ending of Crisis Loans for those who have been sanctioned, which even further limits their recourse to financial support. As opposed to offending, however, IOM stakeholders try to support service users to resort to other means of survival, such as going to foodbanks.

While the sanctions regime is intended to further incentivise claimants to seek work, only in one case did a service user report that the fear of being sanctioned was motivating them to try to comply more effectively with the welfare system and undertake voluntary work to make themselves more employable:

*'If I get sanctioned again, it's going to be for three month and I'm not having no money for three month...That's why I'm going to the church and that...'I do 16 hours a week. I do 6 hours on Monday, 6 hours on Tuesday and 4 hours on Wednesday, which adds up to 16 hours and basically it's to keep the dole off my back. If I don't do it I don't get my dole and I don't get my housing benefit so I'd end up homeless and I've got a mint flat and I'm not losing it' (Darlington Service User 2).*

Continuing the theme of welfare reform, several Stakeholders raised concerns that there is nothing currently in place to prepare offenders to manage the shift to Universal Credit.

*'It's becoming harder and harder. It's always been quite hard but at the minute the reasons for sanctioning....with universal credit...it's going to be horrendous' (Durham Focus Group).*

At an operational level, stakeholders reported that links with Jobcentre Plus are lacking and less effective than with the links between prisons and JobCentre Plus. Information about clients does not appear to be routinely shared between these agencies and failures to share information have sometimes led to clients receiving Work Programme requirements which conflicted with their licence conditions. A positive development within JobCentre Plus is the provision of 'champions' with a specific remit to support offenders to navigate the benefits systems. However, stakeholders suggested that this is not necessarily working effectively:

*'We're supposed to have a champion based in the Job Centre...we did identify them when we went in, they went, "Yeah, I'm supposed to be a champion and I've kind of done some training ages ago but I don't really know what I'm supposed to do". It doesn't work very well at all' (Durham Focus Group).*

*'Technically we're supposed to have an offender champion in the local Jobcentres. Now I know in the past when I've phoned up and spoke to the Jobcentre, there's nobody knows who that was, we had no direct lines to these offender champions and they're not, certainly not widely publicised at all...I'm not saying that there's not any links but my own experience is I'm not aware of anyone that I can go to directly to resolve a specific problem with a person's benefits' (Durham Reducing Reoffending Officer).*

Linked to this, stakeholders pointed out the lack of information sharing from JobCentre Plus about the education and training opportunities available to claimants. They suggested that more information notices within local JobCentre offices and between JobCentre Plus and IOM teams would be useful:

*'So wider publication, that would certainly be another one and if you want people to get into work, the Job Centre is the best place to advertise instead of it being all on computers because that's where it is now. You go in and there's very little up. If you went round a Job Centre now ... when I've been in there's very, very little up there' (Durham Probation Officer).*

### **3.4 Supporting IOM Offenders into Employment**

In addition to supporting offenders to engage with the welfare system, the IOM teams are also proactive in supporting offenders to become 'work-ready' and to both secure and sustain employment. In doing so, the team can provide in-house support but also have links with a range of organisations – including colleges, careers services, charities and employment support providers – that can offer education, vocational training, voluntary work opportunities or placements and employment specific support.

All interviewed reported that the characteristics of IOM offenders mean they generally require a lot of assistance:

*'Lots of ours have not even ever worked...they need somebody basically to hold their hand and take them through each step...they're capable of it if they've got somebody to see them along every inch of the way' (Darlington Focus Group).*

Several, however, noted the ideal of having increased capacity among IOM stakeholders, employment support providers and peer support workers to work more intensely with offenders to support them to become 'work ready'.

Stakeholders stressed the importance of developing rapport with service users, gaining their trust and re-building their confidence (often through engagement in meaningful activities) as critical stages in any employment pathway:

*'I mean before, even before we get people into drug treatment or even think about employment or training, the sport is a good one just to get them engaging and to start that rapport-building with them' (Durham Focus Group).*

*'.. Sometimes you're a social worker, an agony aunt (or uncle, in our case) .... a father figure to them' (Durham Focus Group).*

*'And I think the way that we approach it and the way that you have to approach it with the IOM guys is they're very suspicious of authority so I come in as kind of a new goal buddy, I'm not probation, I'm not police, I'm not the job centre, I'm just someone here who is quite*

*happy to help. What you do find occasionally is that they take that as I've got somewhere here who will do it all for me so you have to be able to stand up to that and say, "Actually, no, there's a limit. I'll show you how to do it, I'll help you do it but it's up to you to do it". And then we work together' (Darlington Reducing Reoffending Officer).*

The use of peer mentors to help break down barriers between statutory and voluntary agencies and service users was also said to be helpful here. Several service users who are currently volunteering with IOM spoke about the value of their role:

*'I'm a volunteer for OMU actually...what it involves is just going out once a week, knocking on offenders doors who's going through the same sort of stuff as I went through y'know, stuck in that cycle of drugs, offending, homelessness, all that stuff...most of the people I go and visit I've either used drugs with, sold 'em drugs, committed crime with, lived with them, hung about with them. So it breaks down that barrier straight away between the police and the client, with me being there. We try and offer them support and stuff like you do now, like once a week boxercise, football on a Thursday, taking them to NA meetings; just try and getting them engage...I done it myself and it's what changed me life around, d'you know what I mean' (Durham service user 2).*

*'I do voluntary work in a few, a couple of different places, so I've got a few voluntary jobs. One's working with people with mental health and the other one's going round Chester where like I used to use drugs and do all me crime, helping all me old mates, like trying to show them that there's a way out' (Durham Service User 4).*

Linked, to this, police stakeholders cited a new rehabilitation order which is now in place, where offenders are directed to undertake ten sessions, including volunteering, with a view to securing employment once these are completed, which they feel helps to address confidence issues.

*'So I think when people have been out of work for years and years and years it must be a confidence thing as well. So these new orders have been pretty good where we can now direct people to go on volunteering days, for instance, where it gets them in the community'. (Darlington Reducing Reoffending Officer).*

Stakeholders' reported that another key initial step in supporting offenders into employment is to educate some of them – particularly those with a long history of unemployment – on the benefits of work, compared to a dependency on welfare. This is achieved through doing 'better-off' calculations and talking about the personal and social benefits of employment, for example. As one employment support provider explained:

*'So it's trying to re-educate people [about] what benefits are available, what they need. So we do things like the better off calculation with them and say, "Look, this is what your total income would be on benefits based on housing benefit and council tax and the like. And this is what you'd get if you were earning on a 30-hour week, 40-hour week". That sort of thing' (Darlington Reducing Reoffending Officer).*

Employment providers, in particular, also discussed the often unrealistic employment expectations of offenders, in terms of the nature of the work that they would like to secure, including salary and working hours or indeed, their ability to work full-time, despite their limited or nil employment histories. The management of expectations and supporting offenders to re-engage with work gradually, therefore, is also key to sustainable change:

*'When we do interviews with our customers, a lot of them say, "I'm desperate to work, I want to work" and I say, "Okay, so you're prepared to get up at 6.00am in the morning to be at work for 7.00am, do a full day at work and come home and then do all that you need to do and make your tea and what have you, watch maybe an hour of TV and then go to bed but do the same again tomorrow morning and do the same the morning after for a week? And then when a week, then a month, then a month into a year, can you do that every day?" Bearing in mind we're talking about people who are used to getting up at 1.00pm in the afternoon. It's unrealistic. We have to start smaller. Give them some work ethic, give them some confidence and so actually, this work thing isn't maybe as hard.'* (Darlington Focus Group).

*'So they'd be looking at things like access to children, which is normally related to their offence anyway, then that means they're not looking for full-time work or they're looking at full-time but they want to be very specific about when I can do this full-time, it's on my terms Durham Housing Support).*

It was reported that offenders are given financial and practical support to achieve basic qualifications in literacy and numeracy, as well as GCSEs and vocational courses. Accessibility, however, was a recurring theme in discussions. Darlington IOM team works with a particular college, but noted that the location makes it difficult for some service users to access, meaning the IOM team must provide service users with travel support. The service users interviewed were highly positive about the support offer, in a range of scenarios. Service users said:

*'It's like, they paid for my CSCS card, they paid for my asbestos awareness training and then I had this job down in London and like they were going to pay for my bus fares, train tickets and all that, you know what I mean'* (Darlington Service User 3).

*'Pertemps out the back, they got me in to see him, like I say, they got me all my revision, took me up to Stockton, Middlesbrough, wherever it is where you do the (inaudible), they took me to the library to do my asbestos awareness training and all that'* (Darlington Service User 3).

Furthermore, following funding cuts, one IOM team reported having lost an education, training and employment (ETE) provider who used to be located within their office. Although the team still has links with them, that service users need to travel to access them is perceived to be a barrier to engagement.

But, because of this, one stakeholder suggested that they would like the IOM unit to deliver more basic education and training in-house but was unsure of whether this would be possible:

*'I would ideally like a one-stop shop where that person goes in, does the numeracy and literacy and then...I mean, you could say the college does that but you know, the college is sometimes constrained by the number of people that we have through the doors and they could only allocate bums on seats for a certain amount of people. I would love something that we have ourselves, our own IOM, but whether or not we can get the people to engage with that is a different matter'* (Durham Probation Officer).

The mainstream types of employment support offered to the IOM cohort include: CV writing, how to undertake job searches, the identification of strengths and skills, completing application forms, cover letters and interview skills and transportation to job interviews:



*'We start with motivational goal setting, because it seems an apt point to start for anybody, we do CV development, dealing with change, because if you have been out of employment for a while, it's looking at how your life might have to change to fit into working again, peer group pressure, we do interview techniques, money skills, job searches and cover letters, and the final one is practice interviews and we get some of our business partners to help with that' (Charity Representative).*

*'A lot of the time it's things as simple as getting them a CV, writing them a CV, making sure they're doing some job searches, trying to get them to think differently about what they can do' (Darlington Employment Support).*

*'So it's about getting people to understand that actually when you go to work, when you go to an interview, when you go to a training course, you adopt a different persona to the one that you might adopt with your mates. And that's the biggest challenge' (Darlington Employment Support).*

*'That Helen, she's the best probation officer I've ever had and like sometimes if I've got no money and I need to get to an interview, I can just ring her up and she'll say to us, "Yeah, I'll get you a bus ticket" or if I ring OMU, PPO, whatever, they'll give me a lift anyway. Like I could ring them and say, "Oh, I need a lift for an interview in Middlesbrough" and they'll just come and pick you up and take you straight away. They probably do more than they should if you know what I mean, which is good' (Darlington Service User 3).*

A more unique form of employment support given to IOM offenders is helping them to think about how they disclose their offence appropriately to prospective employers:

*'It's the same as disclosing an offence, a lot of people will either go very brash or I don't really want to say [or] they'll minimise it. Some will go one extent and some will go the other. So it's really about getting them to actually explain it in a better way' (Darlington Employment Support).*

Similarly, a national charity supporting homeless people (many of whom have criminal backgrounds) in the region to access employment reported that the primary question of service users is what offences they need to disclose (based on the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act) and how to disclose them. The organisation reported that they will often ask a legal organisation to explain the Act to service users and discuss the legal status of their convictions with them:

*'That is, for clients, a major thing in their head, not knowing what to declare and what not to declare. Changing lives as an organisation has a policy that one in four or our employees will have used our services at some point. It's about getting that message across that everyone has a past, but the past isn't going to stop you moving on' (Charity Representative).*

The IOM teams have connections with several churches and charities, such as Kings church and Changing Lives, who provide offenders with volunteering opportunities. For example, Kings Church operates a small food-bank and reclamation furniture business. Reflecting on the benefits of this, stakeholders and service users talked about how volunteering has developed the confidence of offenders to engage with people, the development of skills, the development of routine and structure:

*'One lad, he came through from special needs school, literacy skills quite poor, he had never ever worked. He was so resistant, it was unbelievable. Anyway, that guy is doing great now.*

*He came in after a couple of months and I said, "How's it going? Is it still going alright?" and he said, "Yes. They like me, you know..They like me" and I said, "Well, why wouldn't they like you?" and that confidence. Long-term, he's hoping to get paid employment there' (Darlington Focus Group).*

*'Me getting up once a week and going out volunteering on a Thursday gives me like some sort of self importance to meself d'you know what I mean, gives us a purpose in life. If I was just sitting about the house, it'd be quite easy to fall back into old behaviours, d'you know what I mean' (Durham Service User 2).*

For those that are considered 'work-ready', offenders are encouraged to register with employment agencies. For some, had resulted in some securing paid work, while others were hopeful that it would in the future:

*'Well, I've just done a health and safety course in Washington and on Friday I went to a careers day, and what's happened there is I've applied for three jobs there and they're all at Nissan but they're desperate for people. It's through an agency so I'm hoping that this is going to come off and it's going to be more work' (Darlington Service User 3).*

Positively, several employment providers engaged with also reported that they will continue to typically work with offenders for six months once they have secured employment in order to offer offenders any additional support which they require in their transition into work:

*'I'll work with them until they've been in employment for six months. And we do that as a company. It's not a requirement of the contract, it's just as a company that's what we believe in' (Darlington Employment Support).*

*'I mean what I would say is I do get a lot of people who are no longer with me who have gone into work a year ago, two years ago, who still contact me now because they want to apply for a different job or they want something doing on their CV. And they know they've got somewhere where they can go because I tell them when they sign up that, Data Protection, that information is kept there for a good six or seven years. So I will have their CV on the computer system so there is somewhere to go'(Darlington Employment Support).*

Motivating offenders to continue to look for work was also said to be key. Stakeholders reported that offenders can often become demoralised by the level of effort required and often slow nature of the process of looking for work.

*'Again, when you explain a job is actually a job of work itself getting a job and there's a bit of work and effort involved and time, that's when it can push them back a little bit. So you've got to take it slowly and take it a bit at a time' (Darlington Employment Support).*

*'What I would say to people when I'm encouraging them to go for interviews etc. is you're going to get knockbacks but, on the other hand, some people get jobs and it's about maintaining positivity. Taking the positive out of everything as opposed to a negative' (Darlington Employment Support).*

Equally, despite the best efforts of the IOM teams, stakeholders reported that the types of work offered to offenders will often be temporary or short-term in nature. The highs and lows of securing employment and then being unemployed again can also be demoralising for service users:

*'They are a bit delicate, fragile, if you like and it's a temporary contract or a zero hour contract just by the nature of the work. They take a bit of a kicking, you know, and every time there's a knock-back it just dents ... [their confidence]'* (Durham Police Focus Group).

Stakeholders reported that they have limited contacts with employers with job opportunities for service users and some of the jobs which are available are not suitable for IOM offenders:

*'... I'd see them for two or three times, go down to sort of the pit yard or off to the shipyard, have a word with the foreman and say, 'Give him a job' and they'd get a job and we'd never see them" but that's physical, manual labour. There's nothing like that here now. There's your call centres and your factories...but.. I mean, if you hear the way some [service users] speak, a call centre would be the wrong employment for them, wouldn't it?'* (Durham Police Officer).

*'No, I think by and large as a team, as an IOM team, we recognise that it's going to be difficult to get a lot of our people into work and we're proactive enough to be able to go out and sort of try to resource places but we don't...the bottom line is, we don't have any jobs to give them. The jobs are entirely contingent on them going out and...agencies'* (Durham Probation Officer).

In other cases, offenders can be reluctant to accept short-term work because of the difficulties which this can cause in terms of delays in the processing of new benefit claims.

Employers' attitudes towards the client group were also cited as a barrier to employment: *'I think it comes down to human nature and the media and experiences'* (Darlington Employment Support). For those with addictions, the requirements of drug treatment – particularly methadone – can be a barrier to achieving and sustaining employment. As one service user explained: *I'm 'on 90 ml of methadone a day. There's loads of things I can't do with being on methadone'* (Durham Service User 2). Being on methadone, for example, can limit the types of work which people can do. Having to be available at a certain time each day to go to a chemist to collect a script can also be problematic in terms of shifts/working hours. As stakeholders explained:

*'Finding employers who understand that, and see passed the fact that if they have got to be at a chemist at 8 in morning it might mean that they can't start work until 8.15 and give someone a chance and take a punt on someone that might have a really good skills set, is trying to manage their behaviour and manage their conditions....trying to get employers to think that way can be extremely difficult'* (Charity representative).

*'A number of them are going through some sort of treatment programme. It may be that they have to attend that dispensing chemist at certain times to pick up a script for methadone, which can be problematic if they have to be at work at a certain time. If they are on some sort of script or some sort of substance, that then might affect the type of work they can do. For example if they are on a high methadone script does that stop you driving, I guess it probably would, so we have got all those types of barriers that you have to overcome aswell'* (National Employment Support).

Stakeholders stressed the need for the development of relationships with a broader range of charities and employers to facilitate ex-offenders' access to site visits or voluntary or paid work and to help promote greater understanding among employers about the circumstances that sometimes surround offending behaviour. Stakeholders felt that this is particularly needed in Darlington where partner agencies have fewer links with employers:

*'I think we need some kind of actual organisation that will sign these companies up, we can go to and they can look at them and at the end of the day it's their choice but give people a go' (Darlington Focus Group).*

*'But we could definitely do with some kind of cohort of employers who are willing to...whether it be on a voluntary basis at first...we definitely need that in Darlington, I'm not saying all of our offenders would go to it and make a success but if we could get two or three it would be brilliant' (Darlington Focus Group).*

*'For me, the only thing I think we're lacking is some real employers who are willing to give someone a chance on a voluntary basis at first or on a trial period or whatever, I'd love to see us have that bank of employers who are willing to do that' (Darlington Focus Group).*

*'One thing that I think would benefit a lot of people in employment is everyone talks about placements with employers, sometimes you don't need a placement, sometimes you just need someone to go and visit an employer and actually give somebody an opportunity to go around and see inside a warehouse. A lot of people who want to work in a warehouse have never been in a warehouse in their life, they don't know what it's like' (Darlington Employment Support).*

One charity which has a specialist work placement programme with a range of employers reported that the primary benefit is that employers understand that placements are likely to have an offending background, with the focus of the programme being giving them an opportunity to prove that they can maintain - and be trusted to maintain – employment. They agreed that in some cases, an offending history is not as significant a barrier to employment as some service users anticipate.

*'There is a lack of confidence there, belief that they are not going to be able to get back into work for whatever reason...we do a lot of work around building people's confidence and we have great support from the companies who work with us, who people think they wouldn't dream of approaching' (Charity representative).*

It was recently reported in a NOMs report that across the North East, there are a number of agencies that carry out mentoring work with ex-offenders, often focussed on a particular group of offenders, such as IOM cases, those with a background of substance misuse or rough sleeping. However there is no central coordination of mentoring work with offenders in the North East. It is therefore difficult to assess current provision and from talking to stakeholders, such as the probation staff, it was reported that there was a need for more mentoring, including peer mentoring work with ex-offenders.

### **3.5 Mapping Exercise**

A mapping of the range and diversity of County Durham and Darlington's employment support programmes, particularly as they relate to and are influenced by the needs of IOM offenders was undertaken. The following organisations were contacted for information or web searches were undertaken: National Careers Service, JobCentre Plus, APM (Formerly Pertemps), Changing Lives , Esh Group, Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company Limited, Working Links, Manchester College, Clinks (in partnership with VONNE), Northern Local Offender Partnership Board, headed up by NOMs North East, Northumbria Community Rehabilitation Company, Unlock, Working Links and Durham County Council.

Whilst contacting key organisations such as Durham Tees Valley Community Rehabilitation Company Limited, it was reported that the region lacks a designated service provider or point of contact for IOM cases with education, training and employment needs. Furthermore, a host of employment support schemes for offenders appear to have ceased in recent years due to funding cuts. As such, it appears that the employment support offered to offenders is largely dependent on the links of IOM case workers. The most common organisations which offenders are referred to was reported to be Pertemps (now APM) or the National Careers Service. However, it was reported that those involved with IOM seem to be *'more responsive and reactive to such needs and are more pro-active in looking for options for individuals such as linking them in with local colleges, courses etc as a means of keeping them busy etc'*.

Offenders have access to impartial careers advice, from the **National Careers Service**, in the same way as any other customer. They have access to National Careers Service advisers at every Community Justice Hub, as well as every Job Centre across County Durham. The Durham National Careers Service has a planned calendar of events for 2016, to be held in Durham Town Hall and one of these events will be focussed around ex-offenders, with employers, training providers and support agencies present. The only difference in terms of support offered to offenders is specific advice around the disclosure of offences.

**APM** (formerly Pertemps) currently run work with offenders across the North East, Yorkshire and Humber and East Midlands. Part of their work is to deliver the NOMs CFO-3 contract, which focuses on the 'hardest to help' offenders (of which IOM offenders would meet the criteria) to find employment. The majority of their referrals will be offenders pre-release from prison (70%), with the remainder (30%) being community referrals. On a one-to-one basis, APM engages with offenders and seeks to identify any issues which they may have with the aim of addressing barriers to employment. Once these barriers have been addressed, employment support is then provided, including assistance with motivation and confidence, employability skills (including job searches, CV writing, completing job applications and interview preparation) and disclosure. Once in employment, support can be provided in terms of clothing and equipment needed for jobs. Furthermore, APM is also part of a forum called *Employer Forum for Reducing Reoffending* (EFRR). The forum, chaired by the Chairman of Timpsons, aims to provide former offenders to opportunities to meet with prospective employers who are willing to offer them training and employment opportunities, while also promoting a better understanding among employers about the experiences of offenders and the contribution which they can make to their organisations. The forum also runs a series of roadshows across the UK, which tries to encourage more employers to sign up to the initiative. An APM representative explained:

*'That forum is a perfect vehicle to promote offenders to employers and one of the things we were tasked with was to try to increase the membership of that which we have done. Trying to get people to see that an offender isn't someone that will...take all of your money, they are just sometimes people who have maybe done something on a one-off occasion. IOM are slightly different as tend to be the most prolific and they have got barriers attached to them but it is trying to get passed that. It is difficult though because they can pick and choose who they want, it is very competitive out there...'*

Other organisations which provide an employment support service is **Changing Lives**. The service is available to those over the age of 18 and who are currently, formerly or at risk of being homeless – of course, many IOM offenders will have experienced this. Referrals can come from a wide range of organisations, including criminal justice, homelessness, veterans and drug treatment services; up to 180 were said to have referred into the service to date. Changing Lives has a Benefits Employment Action Team (BEAT), which offers service users with pre-employment support, such as access to

benefits and avoiding sanctions, to help address any issues which could act as barriers to accessing employment. A range of mainstream employment support is available, similar to those listed previously. Additionally, it operates a *Business in the Community Work Programme* providing those who have faced social exclusion with opportunities for training and work experience and job interview practice, with well-known employers, who are willing to work with offenders. This includes national companies, such as Greggs, Marks and Spencer, Carillion and Price Waterhouse and Cooper. A charity representative explained:

*'It's really popular because a lot of our clients have got work in the past by being told to have a cup of tea with someone because they have something going. Interviews now are more formal and a lot of clients haven't had [experience of] a panel of interviewers or competency-based questions'.*

A key focus on the initiative is building the confidence of service users who may have been out of work for a long time and fear that they may not be able to secure or sustain employment in the future. Furthermore, Changing Lives is campaigning as part of a scheme to *Ban the Box*, whereby job applicants are not asked to disclose any convictions at the initial application stage.

**Manchester College** is the employment broker for the North East Justice sector and currently has the Offender Learning and Skills contract for all prisons across the North East. Again, this could include IOM offenders. It aims to source employment opportunities for offenders on release from prison. It has a database of employers who are willing to work with former offenders and utilises this to source opportunities. The majority of employers that it has links with includes small to medium sized enterprise (SMEs), as well as Timpsons and Greggs. It was reported that most SMEs do not ask about criminal convictions. In the North East, it is reportedly more difficult to secure work opportunities than in other parts of the UK because of the relatively weak nature of the region's labour market; this means that there are more limited job opportunities and more competition for job – putting former offenders at a disadvantage. Nonetheless, the college reported a good degree of success in terms of supporting offenders into work.

#### **Section Four: Conclusion and Recommendations**

This report has aimed to explore the relationship between employment and desistance, both theoretically and empirically. It commenced with a brief review of the key theorisations and empirical findings to emerge from academia regarding the relationship and how this relates to the work of criminal justice and related agencies. The review identified that the relationship in question is complex, mediated by multiple factors, including age, individual differences, criminogenic needs, job quality and potentially, gender, among others. Nonetheless, while the complexities are yet to be fully disentangled, there is sufficient evidence to claim that stable, good quality employment has the capacity to promote desistance – even if this is ‘desistance by default’ – through the promotion of a pro-social identity, sense of structure and routine and the provision of financial resources. The evidence is particularly strong in relation to adult offenders. As such, it is both appropriate and commended that criminal justice agencies have a strong focus on rehabilitation and that employment is seen as playing a critical role in this process (particularly in respect of IOM offenders whose successful rehabilitation is likely to be of significant benefit to individuals, communities and the public purse).

The findings of the literature review and empirical research highlight, however, that IOM offenders embody a set of particular characteristics which mean that employment support alone will not result in desistance; their wide-ranging criminogenic needs suggest that rehabilitation must focus on all of the offender resettlement pathways, with employment being a pathway which can only be addressed subsequent to support with housing, addictions and finance, in particular.

Within County Durham and Darlington, it is clear that IOM teams and partner agencies have a thorough understanding of the needs of IOM offenders and the barriers they face to employment and are highly pro-active in terms of trying to support offenders to become 'work-ready' and gain employment. Various good practice approaches to supporting service users are in operation. Furthermore, the service users interviewed generally reported a desire to work and spoke highly about the quality of education, training and employment support which they had received from caseworkers and related stakeholders.

However, despite this, employment was anecdotally reported to be one of the most challenging issues facing IOM service users and stakeholders. While some of this is linked to the characteristics of the cohort, efforts are invariably undermined by a number of external factors: funding cuts, changes to the welfare system, the nature of the region's labour market, employer attitudes and the limited specialist employment provision and opportunities available to offenders.

Building on the good work already in operation, work experience is a valuable tool for improving confidence and employment experience for IOM offenders. However, in light of the difficulties that offenders experience securing employment on the open jobs market, further work needs to go into the development of relationships with a bank of employers who are prepared to offer offenders good-quality, stable employment opportunities. A suggested starting point and mechanism for doing this is building on the links of those organisations (as identified in the mapping exercise) that have developed a cohort of employers willing to work with offenders. This includes: Employers Forum for Reducing Reoffending (chaired by APM), Manchester College and Changing Lives' Business in the Community Work Programme. Any employment opportunities need to be with employers who understand that some IOM offenders may have multiple and complex needs and therefore may need some flexibility in the early stages of their working life, in order to access drug treatment support, for example.

In addition, there is a national body of evidence which highlights the challenges which vulnerable groups have with regards effective engagement with the benefits system and the potential impacts of this on reoffending. Indeed, the IOM cohort are clearly experience difficulties with compliance following welfare reform - particularly the more stricter conditionality requirements for out-of-work benefit - and balancing the often competing demands of the criminal justice system and DWP for service users. There is also a lack of information sharing from JobCentre Plus, IOM case works and offenders about the education and training opportunities available to claimants. A positive development within JobCentre Plus is the introduction of 'offender champions', but a programme of work clearly needs to be undertaken by IOM to identify and develop working relationships with these to encourage information sharing and service user engagement me compliance with the benefits system.



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