



Summary

This analysis assessed the impact on re-offending of a “through-the-gate” mentoring service that was provided by The Footprints Project to individuals leaving custody. The one year proven re-offending rate¹ for 72 offenders who received mentoring provided by The Footprints Project was 58%, compared with 56% for a matched control group of similar offenders. Statistical significance testing has shown that this difference is not significant²; suggesting that at this stage there is insufficient evidence to draw a conclusion about the impact for those individuals receiving mentoring provided by The Footprints Project on re-offending. However, the results of the analysis do not mean that the mentoring project delivered by The Footprints Project failed to impact on re-offending.

What you can say: There is insufficient evidence at this stage to draw a conclusion about the impact of receiving mentoring provided by The Footprints Project on re-offending.

What you cannot say: This analysis shows that receiving mentoring provided by The Footprints Project increased proven re-offending by 2 percentage points, or by any other amount.

Introduction

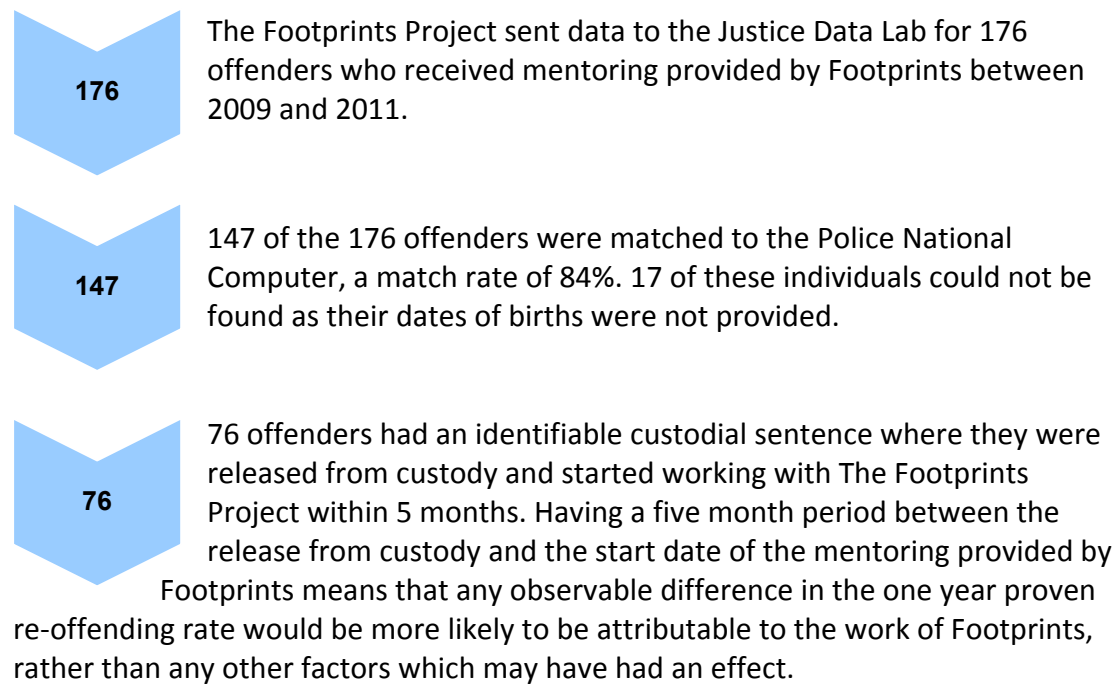
The Footprints Project charity, established in 2005, provides a mentoring service to individuals leaving custody or serving a community sentence in the Dorset, Somerset and Hampshire areas. Footprints aim to reduce the risk of re-offending by helping offenders re-integrate into their local community, offering a “through-the-gate” mentoring service around the time of leaving custody. Individuals self-refer themselves to Footprints with the amount of engagement varying widely due to the amount of support the individual is seeking or feels they need. Many of the individuals that Footprints work with have mental, physical, social, and educational/employment issues, alongside difficulties with relationships, substance misuse and housing. Trained volunteers from the community (some of which are reformed offenders themselves), act as mentors by guiding and supporting individuals with various needs, often signposting them to where they can further

¹ The **one year proven re-offending rate** is defined as the proportion of offenders in a cohort who commit an offence in a one year follow-up period which was proven through receipt of a court conviction, caution, reprimand or warning during the one year follow-up or in a further six month waiting period. The one year follow-up period begins when offenders leave custody or start their probation sentence.

² The difference was non-significant, $p = 0.70$. Statistical significance testing is described on page 6 of this report.

access particular support that they need including accommodation, finance, health services, substance misuse agencies and access to training/voluntary work. Footprints are also actively involved in educating the public as to the difficulties that ex-offenders face when re-integrating following their release from prison. This analysis refers to those individuals who received mentoring provided by The Footprints Project when leaving custody between 2009 and 2011. The mentoring of women was incorporated into the project in 2011.

Processing the Data



Analysis of the unmatched data revealed the following:

- There were 44 individuals for which their mentoring commencement date fell outside of the 5 months range described above.
- There were 13 individuals that did not have a custodial sentence as the most recent proven offence to the mentoring commencement date. The sentences included Cautions, Community Sentence Orders, Conditional Discharges and Fines.
- There were 7 individuals that could not be included in the analysis as they had a previous sexual offence or their index offence appeared to be of a sexual nature.
- There was 1 individual that could not be included in the analysis as their prison sentence appeared to be a life sentence.
- Sentences could not be found on the administrative datasets for 6 remaining individuals.



72

4 persons were removed because they had committed a re-offence before the mentoring provided by The Footprints Project commenced.

Creating a Matched Control Group



72

All of the 72 offender records for which re-offending data was available could be matched to offenders with similar characteristics, but who did not receive a mentoring service provided by The Footprints Project. In total the matched control group consisted of 71,902 offender records.

As this analysis refers to those that received the majority of the mentoring provided by The Footprints Project after release from custody, an additional check was imposed on the control group to ensure that the matched individuals had similar characteristics. All members of the matched control group could not have committed a proven re-offence before the intervention start date for the matched Footprints counterparts. Any matches where the control group had committed a proven re-offence prior to the start date of the Footprints counter part were excluded from the analysis. This check ensured that we have greater confidence that the matched control group presents a more accurate counterfactual for comparison.

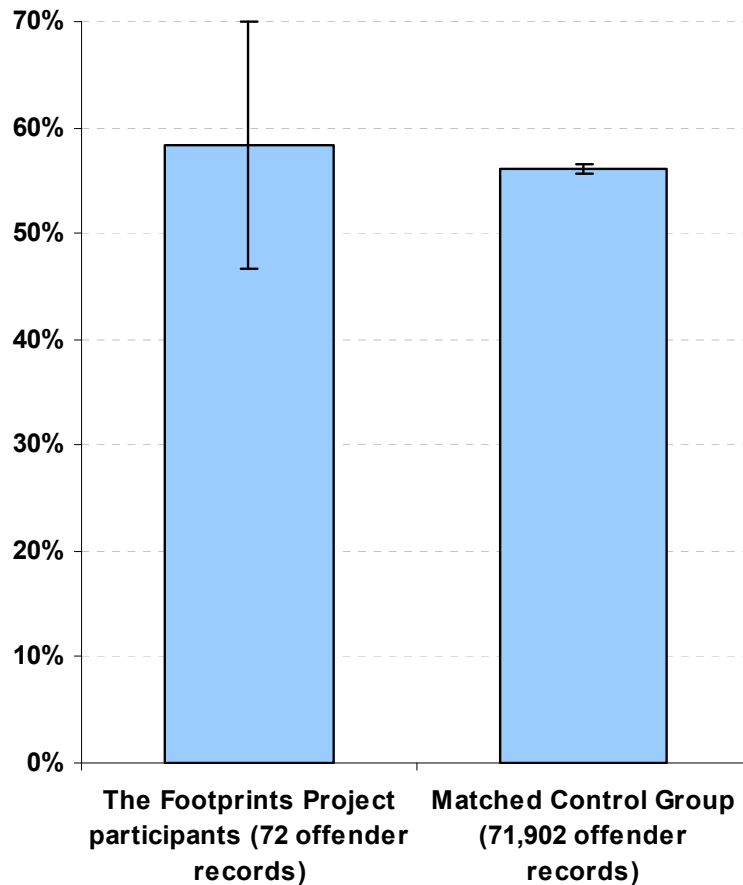
The Annex provides information on the similarity between the treatment and control groups. Further data on the matching process is available upon request.

Results

The one year proven re-offending rate for 72 offenders who received mentoring provided by The Footprints Project was 58%. This compares to 56% for a matched control group of similar offenders. This information is displayed in Figure 1 on the next page.

Figure 1 on the next page presents the 95 per cent confidence intervals for the re-offending rates of both groups, i.e. the range in which we can be 95 per cent sure that the true re-offending rate for the groups lie. For this analysis we can be confident that the true difference in re-offending between two groups is between -10 and 14 percentage points. However, because this difference crosses 0, we cannot be sure either way that receiving the mentoring provided by The Footprints Project led to a reduction or an increase in re-offending and thus cannot draw a firm conclusion about its impact. It is important to show confidence intervals because both the treatment and matched control groups are samples of larger populations; the re-offending rate is therefore an estimate for each population based on a sample, rather than the actual rate.

Figure 1: The best estimates for the one year proven re-offending rate for offenders who received mentoring provided by The Footprints Project, and a matched control group



The precision of this estimate could be improved if the size of the Footprints Project group used in the analysis was increased. It is recommended that the analysis is repeated on a larger sample, including previous years of information, and when additional years of data become available.

Additional proven re-offending measures

Frequency of re-offending

The frequency of one year proven re-offending for 72 offenders targeted by The Footprints Project was 3.61 offences per individual, compared with 2.90 per individual in the matched control group. Statistical significance testing has shown that this difference in the re-offending rates is not statistically significant³.

³ The p-value for this significance test was 0.25. Statistical significance testing is described on page 6 of this report.

This result is in line with the findings around the indicator of one year proven re-offending; the subject of this report. The same caveats and limitations apply to these findings, which are described below.

Caveats and Limitations

The statistical methods used in this analysis are based on data collected for administrative purposes. While these include details of each offender's previous criminal alongside more basic offender characteristics such as age, gender and ethnicity, it is possible that other important contextual information that may help explain the results has not been accounted for. It is also possible that there are additional underlying characteristics about the individuals included in the analysis which were not captured by the data, for example attendance on other interventions targeted at offenders, that may have impacted re-offending behaviour.

The Footprints Project mentors individuals who are known to have multiple complex needs, driven by accommodation status, drug and alcohol issues and mental health issues, in particular. In addition to the needs listed it would also have been helpful for us to have taken into account employment and benefit history for both the group that Footprints worked with, and the matched control group. This information is currently not available routinely to the Justice Data Lab. Whilst the success of the matching described in Annex A suggests that the individuals were well matched to the control group on key characteristics such as demographic and criminal history, it would have been beneficial for us to have been able to take these additional factors into account. For the group that The Footprints Project worked with, the number of previous convictions was reasonably high at an average of 21. Within the group there were some individuals with very high numbers of previous convictions (over 80), and also previous custodial sentences (over 15). These individuals are likely to have a much more challenging time changing their offending behaviour. Due to the issues highlighted here, the results of this analysis should be interpreted with particular care.

Many organisations that work with offenders will look to target specific needs of individuals; for example improving housing, or employability. However, how the organisations select those individuals to work with could lead to selection bias, which can impact on the direction of the results. For example; individuals may self select into a service, because they are highly motivated to address one or more of their needs. This would result in a positive selection bias, meaning that for these persons we would generally expect a better re-offending outcome as they are more motivated. Alternatively, some organisations might specifically target persons who are known to have more complex needs and whose attitudes to addressing their needs are more challenging. This would result in a negative selection bias, meaning that for these persons we would generally expect a poorer re-offending outcome as they are not motivated. However, factors which would lead to selection bias in either direction are not represented in our underlying data, and cannot be reflected in our modelling. This means that all results should be interpreted with care, as selection bias cannot be accounted for in analyses.

Furthermore, only 72 of the 176 offenders originally shared with the MoJ were in the final treatment group. The section “Processing the Data” outlines key steps taken to obtain the final group used in the analysis. In many analyses, the creation of a matched control group will mean that some individuals, who will usually have particular characteristics – for example a particular ethnicity, or have committed a certain type of offence, will need to be removed to ensure that the modelling will work. Steps will always be taken at this stage to preserve as many individuals as possible, but due to the intricacies of statistical modelling some attrition at this stage will often result. As such, the final treatment group may not be representative of all offenders who received mentoring provided by The Footprints Project. In all analyses from the Justice Data Lab, persons who have ever been convicted of sex offences will be removed, as these individuals are known to have very different patterns of re-offending.

The re-offending rates included in this analysis **should not** be compared to the national average, nor any other reports or publications which include re-offending rates – including those assessing the impact of other interventions. The re-offending rates included in this report are specific to the characteristics of those persons who received mentoring provided by The Footprints Project, and could be matched. Any other comparison would not be comparing like for like.

For a full description of the methodology, including the matching process, see www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/justice-data-lab/justice-data-lab-methodology.pdf.

Assessing Statistical Significance

This analysis uses statistical testing to assess whether any differences in the observed re-offending rates are due to chance, or if the intervention is likely to have led to a real change in behaviour. The outcome of the statistical testing is a value between 0 and 1, called a ‘p-value’, indicating the certainty that a real difference in re-offending between the two groups has been observed. A value closer to 0 indicates that the difference in the observed re-offending rates is not merely due to chance. For example, a p-value of 0.01 suggests there is only a 1 per cent likelihood that any observed difference in re-offending has been caused by chance.

For the purposes of the analysis presented in this report, we have taken a p-value of up to 0.05 as indicative of a real difference in re-offending rates between the treatment and control groups.

The confidence intervals in the figure are helpful in judging whether something is significant at the 0.05 level. If the confidence intervals for the two groups do not overlap, this indicates that there is a real difference between the re-offending rates.

Annex

Table 1: Characteristics of offenders in the treatment and control groups

	Treatment Group	Matched Control Group	Standardised Difference
Number in group	72	71,902	
Ethnicity			
White	89%	89%	1
Other	11%	11%	
Nationality			
UK Citizen ¹	96%	100%	n/a
Gender			
Proportion that were male	82%	83%	-2
Age			
Mean age at Index Offence	34	34	3
Mean age at first contact with CJS	18	18	1
Index Offence²			
Violent offences including robbery	25%	25%	1
Burglary	17%	19%	-7
Theft and handling	17%	16%	1
Fraud and Forgery	7%	7%	2
Motoring offences, including theft of and from Vehicles	8%	8%	2
Drugs	7%	7%	0
Other	7%	7%	2
Length of Custodial Sentence			
6 months or less	40%	40%	1
6 months to 12 months	14%	14%	1
12 months to 4 years	46%	46%	-1
Criminal History²			
Mean Copas Rate	-0.46	-0.47	1
Mean total previous offences	47	47	2
Mean previous criminal convictions	21	20	2
Mean previous custodial sentences	7	7	1
Mean previous court orders	5	5	0
Notes:			
1 See note on next page			
2 Index Offence is based on OGRS categories. Further details on make-up of categories available upon request.			
2 All excluding Penalty Notices for Disorder. All prior to Index Offence.			
4 Out of Work Benefits include people on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Incapacity Benefits (IB) and Income Support (IS) but it does not count people whose primary benefit is Carer's Allowance (CA).			
All figures (except mean copas rate) are rounded to the nearest whole number, this may mean that percentages do not sum to 100%.			
Standardised Difference Key			
Green - the two groups were well matched on this variable (-5% to 5%)			
Amber - the two groups were reasonably matched on this variable (6% to 10% or -6% to -10%)			
Red - the two groups were poorly matched on this variable (greater than 10% or less than -10%)			

Table 1 on the previous page shows that the two groups were well matched on all but one variable found to have associations with receiving treatment and/or re-offending. Nearly all of the standardised mean differences are highlighted green because they were between -5% and 5%, indicating close matches on these characteristics. The variable 'Burglary' is not as well balanced in the treatment and control groups in this instance, but overall the groups were still well balanced on the vast majority of characteristics meaning that this is still a robust comparison.

In our final treatment group, there were individuals of a foreign nationality. As this only comprised of a small proportion of our final treatment group it was not suitable to include the variable "Nationality" in our final statistical model. Having too small a proportion of offenders comprising of a variable in the final treatment group will result in high standard errors preventing the statistical model from running correctly and meaning reliable comparisons cannot be made between the treatment group and matched control group. It would not be appropriate to include individuals with these characteristics in the control group due to the limited representation these characteristics have in the final treatment group. In this particular case these individuals had similar criminal histories and re-offending patterns to the other individuals in the treatment group suggesting that the variable "Nationality" was not likely to be significant in determining the re-offending outcome of these individuals. Therefore, although there were no individuals of a foreign nationality in the control group, we still feel this is a valid analysis.

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