



Summary

This analysis assessed the impact on re-offending of the A4e First Steps Programme delivered during 2010. The one year proven re-offending rate¹ for 168 offenders who were targeted by A4e was 45%, compared with 48% 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 at this stage to draw a conclusion about the impact the First Steps Programme on re-offending. However, the results of the analysis do not mean that the First Steps Programme 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 the First Steps Programme on re-offending.

What you can't say: This analysis shows that the First Steps Programme decreased proven re-offending by 3 percentage points, or by any other amount.

Introduction

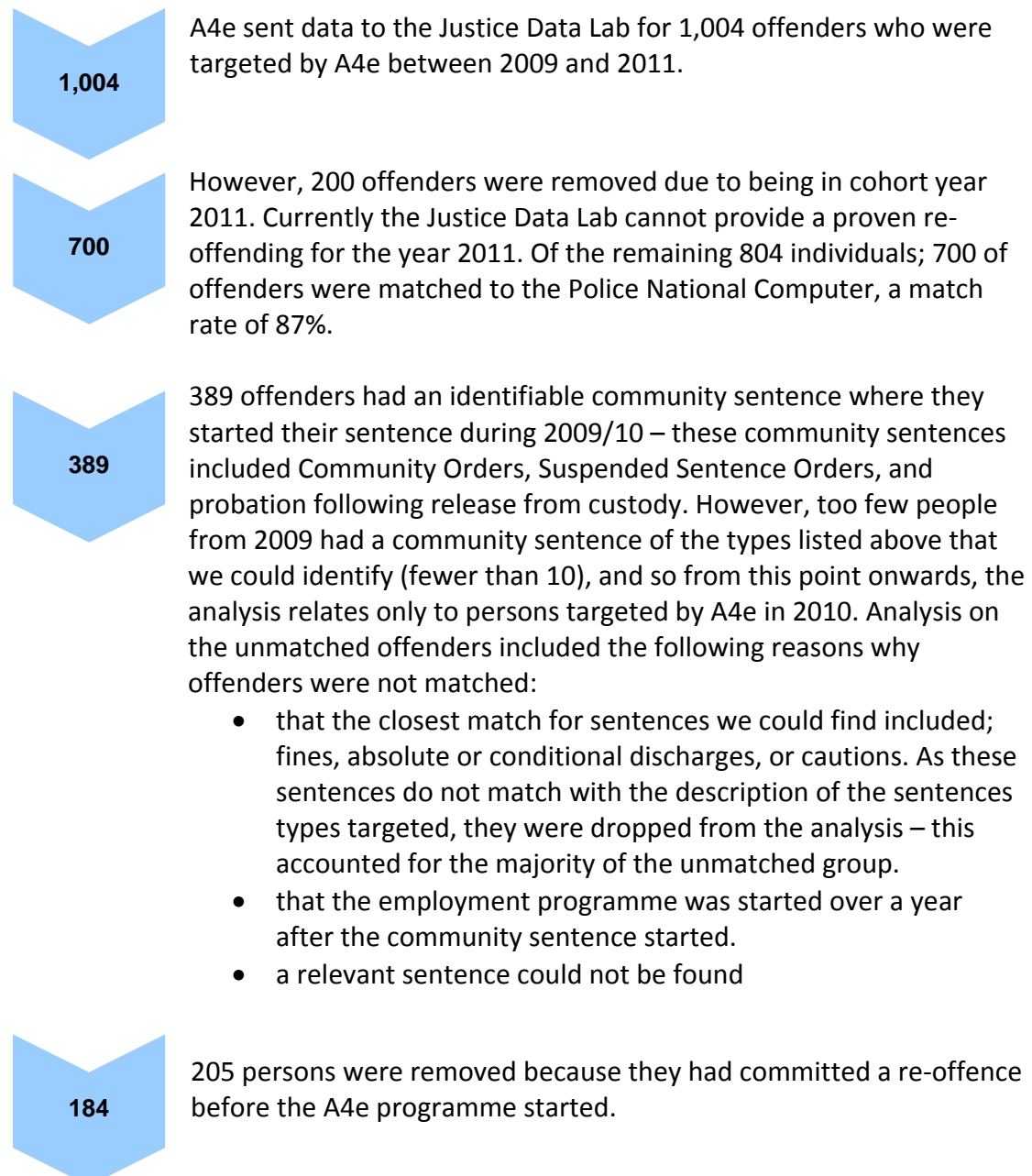
The First Steps Programme was co-funded in 2009 by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and the European Social Fund (ESF), with A4e as the programmes' lead delivery partner. The primary focus of the programme was to identify and provide support to offenders who were given unpaid work orders, and subsequently help move these individuals closer to employment. In order to achieve this, the First Steps Programme was split into two strands. Strand one involved progressing individuals towards existing further learner support or employment, this accounted for 30% of the offenders they worked with. Strand 2 involved developing and delivering accreditation of unpaid work where individuals are subject to an Unpaid Work Order, this accounted for 70% of the offenders they worked with. This analysis refers to those offenders involved in strand 2 of the service. The programme operated in the North East of England, the Durham Tees Valley area, and the Northumberland area between 2009 and March 2011. The programme targeted offenders who were the furthest away from the labour market, skills, activity and learning with offender referrals from local Probation Trusts. First Steps supported offenders through training, provision of qualifications, confidence building sessions and job searching.

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, $p = 0.42$. Statistical significance testing is described on page 6 of this report.

A4e also worked with a number of other training providers and assessors including; Butterwick Trees, Acumen Trust, JMI, Northern Safety, Riverside CIC and Comply UK. These organisations supported A4e with delivering accredited training elements of the programme, job brokerage and delivering non-accredited training elements of the programme.

Processing the Data



Creating a Matched Control Group

168

Of the 184 offender records for which re-offending data was available, 168 could be matched to offenders with similar characteristics, but who had not been targeted by A4e. In total the matched control group consisted of 97,002 offender records.

As this analysis refers to those that received support from A4e within the community, an additional check needed to be 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 start date of the support of the matched A4e counterparts. Any matches where the control group had committed a proven re-offence prior to the start date of the A4e counterpart were excluded from the analysis. This check ensures 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.

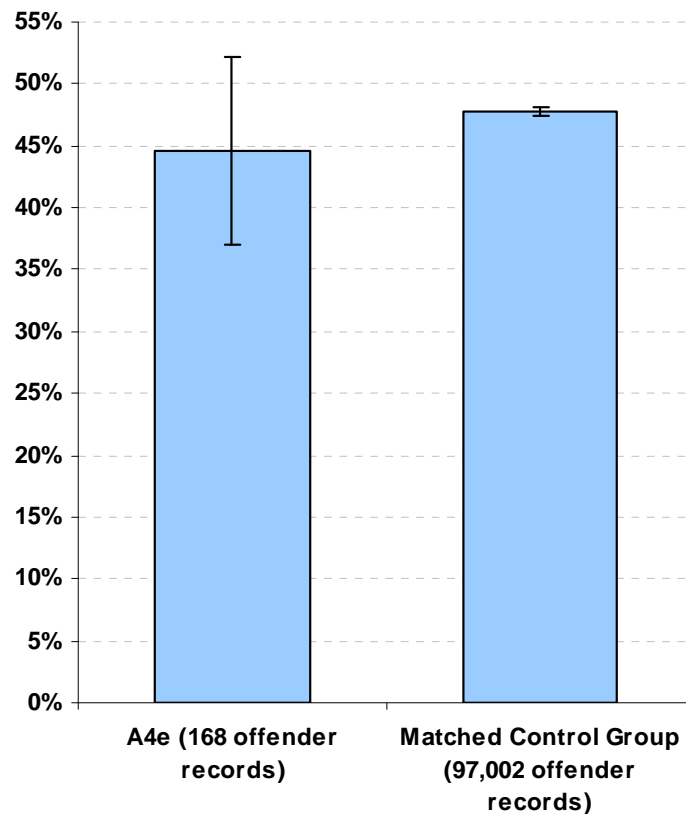
Results

The one year proven re-offending rate for 168 offenders who were targeted by A4e was 45%. This compares to 48% for a matched control group of similar offenders. This information is displayed in Figure 1 below

Figure 1 below 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 5 and -11 percentage points. 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. However, because this difference crosses 0, we cannot be sure either way that receiving mentoring through A4e led to a reduction or an increase in re-offending and thus cannot draw a firm conclusion about its impact.

The precision of this estimate could be improved if the size of the A4e programme group used in the analysis was increased. It is recommended that the analysis is repeated on a larger sample, including when 2011 re-offending data becomes available.

Figure 1: the best estimates for the one year proven re-offending rate for offenders who were targeted by A4e in the First Steps Programme



Additional proven re-offending measures

Frequency of re-offending

The frequency of one year proven re-offending for 168 offenders targeted by A4e while on the First Steps Programme was 1.37 offences per individual, compared with 1.74 per individual in the matched control group. Statistical significance testing has shown that this difference in the re-offending rates is statistically significant³.

This analysis indicates that individuals, who participated in the First Steps Programme run by A4e in 2010 experienced a real reduction in the frequency of re-offending. The same caveats and limitations apply to these findings as in the rest of this report, 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, benefit and employment history 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.

³ The p-value for this significance test was 0.03. Statistical significance testing is described on page 6 of this report.

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.

For this analysis in particular, it is known that the First Steps Programme engages with some offenders who have particularly complex needs (including addictions to drugs and alcohol, homelessness and employment and complex mental health problems), and who may be at very high risk of re-offending, and as such could be considered to be harder to help to break the cycle of re-offending. Having particularly complex needs and being at very high risk of re-offending is not well reflected in the administrative datasets which have been used for this analysis, which means that the results of this analysis should be interpreted with 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 168 of the 1,004 offenders originally shared with the MoJ were in the final treatment group. Additionally, the effectiveness of the programme is only being evaluated where the programme was started in 2010, although the programme was delivered both before and after 2010. The section “Processing the Data” outlines key steps taken to obtain the final group used in the analysis. In many analyses, the creation of 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 were targeted by A4e. 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 support by A4e, 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	168	97,002	
Ethnicity			
White	100%	100%	0
Nationality			
UK Citizen	100%	100%	0
Gender			
Proportion that were male	88%	89%	-2
Age			
Mean age at Index Offence	28	28	1
Mean age at first contact with CJS	17	17	0
Index Offence¹			
Violent offences including robbery	40%	40%	-1
Theft and handling	15%	14%	1
Motoring offences, including theft of and from Vehicles	12%	12%	0
Drugs	12%	12%	-2
Other/Burglary/Fraud and Forgery	21%	21%	1
Criminal History²			
Mean Copas Rate	-0.745	-0.757	2
Mean total previous offences	23	22	2
Mean previous criminal convictions	10	10	3
Mean previous custodial sentences	1	1	2
Mean previous court orders	4	4	0
Employment and Benefit History			
In P45 employment (year prior to conviction)	32%	32%	-1
In P45 employment (month prior to conviction)	23%	23%	0
Claiming Out of Work Benefits (year prior to conviction) ³	88%	89%	-2
Claiming Job Seekers Allowance (year prior to conviction)	82%	82%	-2
Claiming Incapacity Benefit (year prior to conviction)	28%	27%	1
Claiming Income Support (year prior to conviction)	10%	10%	0
Notes:			
1 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.			
3 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 shows that the two groups were well matched on all variables found to have associations with receiving treatment and/or re-offending. All of the standardised mean differences are highlighted green because they were between -5% and 5%, indicating close matches on these characteristics.

Contact Points

Press enquiries should be directed to the Ministry of Justice press office:

Tel: 020 3334 3555

Other enquiries about the analysis should be directed to:

Justice Data Lab Team

Ministry of Justice

Justice Data Lab

Justice Statistical Analytical Services

7th Floor

102 Petty France

London

SW1H 9AJ

Tel: 0203 334 4396

E-mail: Justice.DataLab@justice.gsi.gov.uk

General enquiries about the statistical work of the Ministry of Justice can be e-mailed to: statistics.enquiries@justice.gsi.gov.uk

General information about the official statistics system of the United Kingdom is available from www.statistics.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

Produced by the Ministry of Justice

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/ or email:

psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.