



## Summary

This analysis assessed the impact on re-offending of projects run by Only Connect targeted at offenders in prison or in the community. The one year proven re-offending rate<sup>1</sup> for 39 offenders who participated in projects run by Only Connect was 33%, compared with 37% for a matched control group of similar offenders. Statistical significance testing has shown that this difference is not significant<sup>2</sup>; suggesting that at this stage there is insufficient evidence to draw a conclusion about the impact of projects provided by Only Connect on re-offending. However, the results of the analysis do not mean that the projects run by Only Connect 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 projects run by Only Connect on re-offending.

**What you cannot say:** This analysis shows that projects run by Only Connect decreased proven re-offending by 4 percentage points, or by any other amount.

## Introduction

Only Connect is a crime prevention charity providing support, including training, and creative opportunities for young people at risk, prisoners and ex-offenders. Only Connect's mission is to support individuals in custody in London prisons, Young Offender Institutions, Secure Training Centres and elsewhere. Only Connect provide stand-alone accredited courses enabling individuals to gain employment qualifications while developing the softer skills that employers are looking for, including the attitudinal and relational qualities that are necessary for many jobs. From 2008, the range of support programmes offered by Only Connect has increased significantly, including the launch of National Open Course Network (NOCN) qualifications from 2012. Only Connect programmes have been designed to deliver support at every point in the crime cycle in order to reduce offending. This means that Only Connect will work with individuals who are at risk of offending – i.e. individuals who have never been convicted or cautioned.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

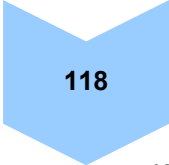
<sup>2</sup> The difference was non-significant,  $p = 0.60$ . Statistical significance testing is described on page 7 of this report.

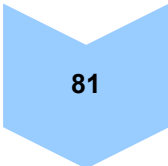
This analysis relates to offenders who engaged and successfully completed creative arts projects run by Only Connect in prison and in the community between 2006 and 2011. The projects lasted between two weeks and three months, and included performances at the end of the projects that other inmates or the public could watch. The projects in prisons take place at HMP Brixton, HMP Holloway, HMP Pentonville, HMP Wormwood Scrubs, with one off workshops in HMP Edmund's Hill and HMP Highpoint. The community projects take place in Camden (since the end of 2008).

The individuals in this analysis were selected for the prison projects through drama recruitment workshops, based on their “liveliness”. However, some offenders may have brought along other inmates who may also have wanted to be involved. There are no exclusion criteria, other than if security departments in prisons suggest it to be inappropriate for particular individuals to take part.

Since 2008, some of these individuals would also have received pastoral support through the membership club: “OC Central”. The pastoral support includes letters of support, court visits and home and family meetings. The support work varies from individual to individual based on their needs, though on the whole, the majority of individuals are offered a similar range of support, namely: practical advice (e.g. bank accounts, identity), or referrals to drug services or therapeutic services. Individuals leaving prison can receive support for as long as they need it, with the intensity of support varying depending on the level of demand. Individuals that are part of the membership club can also take part in projects in the community, as well as weekly social evenings, theatre trips and family days. The aim of the membership club is to support those aged 17+ on the journey from being unemployed and at risk of offending to holding down a fulfilling, legitimate career and making a positive impact in their communities. OC Central delivers arts projects, social activities and practical support services including training and therapy.

## Processing the Data

 Only Connect sent data to the Justice Data Lab for 118 offenders who participated in projects in prison and the community between 2006 and 2012. Individuals who participated in 2012 would have been dropped from the analysis (6 in total), therefore this analysis only refers to those individuals who participated between 2006 and 2011.

 81 of the 118 offenders were matched to the Police National Computer, a match rate of 69%. Dates of birth were not provided for 20 (16.9%) of the unmatched offenders; they could not be matched as date of birth is a requirement for matching.

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44 offenders participated in projects run by Only Connect a year before their release date from custody (20 individuals) or a year after release from custody (21 individuals) or within a year of an identifiable community sentence (4 individuals). Having a year period between release from custody or the start of a community sentence and the projects run by Only Connect means that any observable difference in the one year proven re-offending rate would be more likely to be attributable to the work of Only Connect, rather than any other factors which may have had an effect.

Analysis of the unmatched data revealed the following:

- Some were individuals who did not have a prison sentence or community sentence as the most recent proven offence before participating in projects run by Only Connect; this could include persons who appear to have received fines, conditional discharges or youth sentences (12 individuals across all different sentence types, 4 of these individuals participated in projects run by Only Connect within a year of receiving a sentence).
- There were 16 individuals who had a prison sentence or community sentence as the most recent proven offence before participating in projects run by Only Connect, but who were not included in the analysis. All of these individuals did not commence participating in a theatre project run by Only Connect until at least a year before or after release from custody or a year after the start of a community sentence.
- There were 6 individuals that were lost from the analysis as Only Connect worked with them in 2012, a period for which re-offending data is not currently available.
- There were 2 individuals that could not be included in the analysis as they had a previous sexual offence.
- There was 1 individual that was not included in the analysis for modelling purposes.

39

5 persons were removed because they had committed a re-offence before the individuals commenced a theatre project run by Only Connect.

## Creating a Matched Control Group

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All of the 39 offender records for which re-offending data was available could be matched to offenders with similar characteristics, but who did not participate in projects run by Only Connect. In total the matched control group consisted of 26,234 offender records.

As this analysis refers to those that participated in projects provided by Only Connect after release from custody (as well as whilst in custody) or after the start of a community sentence, additional checks were 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 theatre project start date for the matched Only Connect counterparts. Any matches where the control group had committed a proven re-offence prior to the theatre project start date of the Only Connect counterpart were excluded from the analysis. Also, all the members of the matched control group could only be matched to the Only Connect counterparts if they received the same sentence type. These checks ensured that we have greater confidence that the matched control group presents a more accurate counterfactual for comparison.

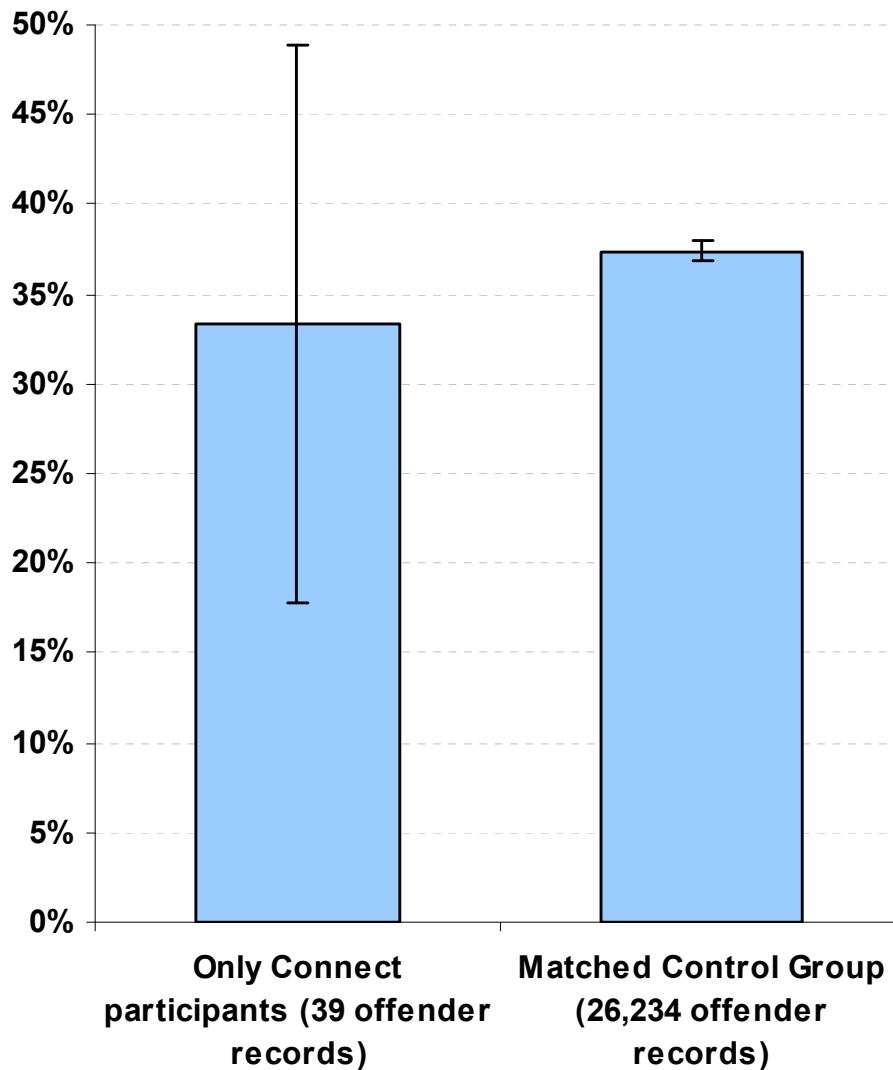
The Annex provides information on the similarity between the treatment and control groups. Further data on the matching process is available upon request.

## **Results**

The one year proven re-offending rate for 39 offenders who participated in projects run by Only Connect was 33%. This compares to 37% 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 the two groups is between a 20 percentage point reduction, and a 12 percentage point increase. However, because this difference crosses 0, we cannot be sure either way that participating in projects provided by Only Connect 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 participated in projects run by Only Connect in prison and the community, and a matched control group



In this case the confidence intervals are particularly wide; this is to be expected when the size of the treatment group (in this case, participants of projects run by Only Connect) is very small. The precision of this estimate could be improved if the size of the Only Connect group used in the analysis was increased. It is recommended that the analysis is repeated on a larger sample<sup>3</sup>, including previous years of information, and when additional years of data become available.

<sup>3</sup> For the difference of the one year proven re-offending rates to be statistically significant for this report, a minimum size of 1,953 individuals participating in projects run by Only Connect would need to be in the matched treatment group.

## **Additional proven re-offending measures**

### **Frequency of re-offending**

The frequency of one year proven re-offending for 39 offenders who participated in projects run by Only Connect was 1.03 offences per individual, compared with 1.10 per individual in the matched control group. Statistical significance testing has shown that this difference in the re-offending rates is not statistically significant<sup>4</sup>.

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 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. Earlier in this report, we have stated that Only Connect select individuals based on their "liveliness", this is a characteristic that we cannot statistically control for and therefore may be a characteristic which is different between the group that Only Connect work with, and the matched control group. 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. In particular, it would have been helpful in this analysis to take account of engagement with the arts and motivation to change. The control group against which re-offending rates for those participating in projects provided by Only Connect have been compared with will therefore include offenders both with and without the specific needs that Only Connect are seeking to address. Furthermore, this report does not look at the outcomes of the projects run by Only Connect.

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

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<sup>4</sup> The p-value for this significance test was 0.87. Statistical significance testing is described on page 7 of this report.

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 39 of the 118 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 does not necessarily represent the outcomes or characteristics of all offenders who participated in projects run by Only Connect. 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 participated in projects run by Only Connect, 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](http://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
<b>Number in group</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>26,234</b>	
<b>Ethnicity</b>			
White	18%	19%	-2
Black and Asian	82%	81%	2
<b>Nationality</b>			
UK Citizen	92%	91%	6
Foreign National and Unknown Nationality	8%	9%	-6
<b>Gender</b>			
Proportion that were male	95%	95%	-2
<b>Age</b>			
Mean age at Index Offence	28	29	-10
Mean age at first contact with CJS	17	17	5
<b>Index Offence<sup>1</sup></b>			
Violent offences including robbery	31%	35%	-8
Burglary	23%	19%	10
Theft and handling	10%	10%	1
Motoring offences, including theft of and from Vehicles	8%	7%	4
Drug related <sup>2</sup>	23%	25%	-5
Other <sup>3</sup>	5%	5%	2
<b>Type of Sentence</b>			
Individuals on community sentences	3%	3%	0
Individuals on custodial sentences of 12 months or less	10%	12%	-6
Individuals on custodial sentences of 12 months to 4 years	62%	61%	1
Individuals on custodial sentences of 4 years to 10 years	26%	24%	4
<b>Criminal History<sup>3</sup></b>			
Mean Copas Rate	-0.84	-0.85	2
Mean total previous offences	22	22	0
Mean previous criminal convictions	9	10	-7
Mean previous custodial sentences	3	3	2
Mean previous court orders	3	3	-5
<b>Notes:</b>			
1 Index Offence is based on OGRS categories. Further details on make-up of categories available upon request.			
2 Drug related offences including importation, exportation, possession, and supply of drugs.			
3 Other offences include fraud and forgery and criminal or malicious damage.			
4 All excluding Penalty Notices for Disorder. All prior to Index Offence.			
All figures (except mean copas rate) are rounded to the nearest whole number, this may mean that percentages do not sum to 100%.			
<b>Standardised Difference Key</b>			
<b>Green - the two groups were well matched on this variable (-5% to 5%)</b>			
<b>Amber - the two groups were reasonably matched on this variable (6% to 10% or -6% to -10%)</b>			
<b>Red - the two groups were poorly matched on this variable (greater than 10% or less than -10%)</b>			



Table 1 shows that the two groups were reasonably matched on all variables found to have associations with receiving treatment and/or re-offending. The standardised differences are highlighted as amber (i.e. between 6% to 10% or -6% to -10%) in a number of cases, suggesting that the control group could have been slightly better matched in these cases, but were still indicative of a control group who exhibit similar characteristics. The higher standardised differences in the “Nationality” section may have occurred because Only Connect work with a diverse group of individuals that have different nationalities and a mixture of ethnicities. Some of the standardised differences in the categories “Index Offence” and “Type of Sentence” are high, however the means of these variables suggest that they are still matched sufficiently.

In addition to the variables listed in Table 1 it would have been helpful for us to have taken into account the employment and benefit history for both the group that Only Connect worked with, and the matched control group. This information is currently not available routinely to the Justice Data Lab for individuals with a release date from custody or an identifiable sentence (such as community, conditional discharge or fine) in 2011. Therefore, the employment and benefit information has been dropped for all individuals in this report.

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