

A photograph showing a person's lower legs and feet. They are wearing blue Adidas sneakers with white stripes and laces. Underneath, they have white socks with the Adidas logo. A black ankle monitor is strapped around the right ankle. The person is standing on a concrete surface. The background is slightly out of focus, showing a doorway and a wall.

ISSP

the final report

**YOUTH
JUSTICE
BOARD**

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This summary was written by Emily Gray, Emily Taylor, Simon Merrington and Colin Roberts, in collaboration with the YJB.

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The summary of the final report on the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme

BACKGROUND

The Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP) was introduced by the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) in 2001, and is recognised as the most robust and innovative community-based programme available for persistent and serious young offenders. It can be used for young people on community sentences or on bail, or for those on the community part of a Detention and Training Order (DTO).



ISSP has multiple components in order to tackle the numerous needs of young offenders. It is highly intensive, and combines supervision with surveillance in an attempt to ensure programme completion, and to bring structure to young people's lives. The goal is to ensure that the risks that they pose are managed, and that their needs are met and continually reassessed in order to reduce their offending.

When ISSP was first established in 2001, the YJB set the following three key objectives:

- **to reduce the reoffending in the target group of offenders by 5%, and to reduce the seriousness of reoffending**
- **to tackle the underlying problems of the young people concerned, in an effective manner, and with a particular emphasis on educational needs**
- **to demonstrate that supervision and surveillance are being undertaken consistently and rigorously, and in ways that will reassure the community and sentencers of their credibility and likely success.**

Interest in ISSP has been high. Soon after the pilot schemes were established, the programme was introduced nationally, and in the wider criminal justice system there has been increasing emphasis on the use of intensive community programmes. For example:

- **the Intensive Control and Change Programme, similar to ISSP, but targeting 18 to 20-year-olds, which was piloted in 11 probation areas from April 2003**
- **the *Carter Report* has encouraged the use of 'Intensive Supervision and Monitoring' for persistent offenders of all ages, and the Home Office has advocated the use of multi-component programmes within the development of the new National Offender Management Service for both young people and adults¹**
- **Prolific and Other Priority Offender Scheme has been established in every crime and disorder partnership.**

EVALUATING ISSP

The evaluation of the first 41 pilot schemes has provided a valuable opportunity to examine the potential of multi-modal² programmes to address the offending behaviour of persistent and serious young offenders. The number of ISSP schemes around the country, and the differences in their approaches, made the evaluation a complex and stimulating challenge. Data collection required a broad range of quantitative and qualitative techniques, involving standardised measures that permitted a comparison of effectiveness and impact across the ISSP schemes.

there has been increasing emphasis on the use of intensive community programmes

1. Carter, P. (2003) *Managing Offenders, Reducing Crime: A New Approach*. London: The Stationery Office; Home Office (2004) *Reducing Crime – Changing Lives: The Government's Plans for Transforming the Management of Offenders*. London: Home Office.
2. A multi-modal programme consists of more than one kind of intervention.



The evaluation has been in two stages: the main body of the study was published in 2004 and involved an investigation of the implementation, process and outcomes of the ISSP model.³ This second phase of the work extends the reconvection study from 12 to 24 months, and gives further insights into additional outcome measures. The areas covered in the report include:

- the impact of ISSP as an alternative to custody
- the impact of ISSP on reoffending
- a cost-benefit analysis of ISSP
- how staff, young people and their families perceive the effectiveness of ISSP
- developing a typology of young offenders on ISSP.

Findings on each of these topics are summarised below.

IMPACT OF ISSP AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO CUSTODY

While ISSP was not initially launched as an alternative to custody for young offenders, it is intended to provide the sort of disposal that courts would view as suitable for young people who were persistently offending and/or had committed serious offences. This view of its value was largely endorsed in the survey of sentencers reported in the *ISSP: Initial Report*: they believed it to be ‘a useful option for the youth courts, bridging the divide between custody and conventional community penalties’ (page 238).

Between April 2000 and December 2004, the YJB’s national data showed that there was a **2.1%** reduction in the use of juvenile custody. This reduction is in stark contrast to the increasing upward

3. Referred to in this summary as *ISSP: Initial Report*: Moore, R. et al (2004) *ISSP: The Initial Report on the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme*. London: YJB.

trend for adults. While there is evidence that custodial sentencing went down during the period of the evaluation, this happened in both ISSP and non-ISSP areas. This suggests that the drop cannot necessarily be attributed to the introduction of ISSP. It was probably determined by a range of national policies and initiatives to reduce the levels of juvenile imprisonment, as well as local factors such as sentencing decisions by youth courts.⁴

A more detailed analysis of patterns of sentencing in ISSP areas shows that there has been some diversion from custodial disposals to ISSP, but that ISSP has also replaced some less intensive community disposals. It is important to recognise the potential consequences of using ISSP for a wider group of offenders than it was initially conceived for: this can lead to increased use of custody, and lower risk offenders being exposed to the negative influence of higher risk offenders.

A further aim of the study was to investigate what influence the strict enforcement procedures and breaching policy of ISSP had on subsequent sentences, when compared to a comparison group of young offenders. This was not possible however, since the Police National Computer data were overall of very poor quality in respect of breach and the resultant sentences. What we do know, from the local breach data collected from YOTs and reported on in the *ISSP: Initial Report*, is that **31%** of ISSP cases who breached the requirements of ISSP (sometimes in conjunction with further convictions) were subsequently recalled or sentenced to custody (n=896).

Strict enforcement of ISSP therefore did result in a number of young offenders eventually entering custody. What cannot be determined is whether the number of young people who went to custody entirely or partly as a result of a breach was any greater than it might have been, had ISSP not existed.

4. For example, the YJB set a corporate target to reduce the use of custody for juvenile offenders by 10% between October 2002 and March 2005, and adopted national measures to do this.

IMPACT OF ISSP ON REOFFENDING

This 24-month study has been able to improve the robustness of the findings from the *ISSP: Initial Report* because it allowed:

- larger samples
- better matching of the comparison group
- a revised *Asset* score.

The principal aim of ISSP is to reduce the rate and seriousness of reoffending among programme participants. When offending data in the 12 and 24 months before and after the start of ISSP are compared, there is a marked reduction:

- the frequency of offending in the ISSP sample went down by 40% over one year and by 39% over two years
- the seriousness of any further offending went down by 13%, one and two years after ISSP (maximum n=2,843).

Although both these figures well exceed the agreed target of a 5% reduction, a similar level of improvement was achieved by the comparison group: in fact, young people on a DTO without ISSP committed significantly fewer offences than young people on a DTO with ISSP. One reason for this may be that the perceived high demands of a DTO with ISSP are counter-productive.

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However, a possible explanation for the substantial improvements observed in both the ISSP and comparison groups is the statistical phenomenon of ‘regression to the mean’, which makes extreme pre-test scores move towards the average at post-test stage.



An alternative measure commonly used in reconviction studies is the proportion reconvicted at least once in the two-year follow-up period. This figure was very high – **91%** in the ISSP sample. However, this is not surprising, given that the young people in the sample had committed an average of 11.6 offences in the previous two years. The most recent reconviction data available (from the *Offender Management Caseload Statistics 2003*, published by the Home Office in 2004) show higher rates for offenders of a similar age and risk profile upon leaving custody or after starting community sentences.

Indeed, it was always unlikely that persistent young offenders would cease offending completely as a result of ISSP: hence the YJB's more specific aim of reducing the frequency and seriousness of subsequent offending. It is also important to bear in mind that young people on ISSP are subject to greater levels of police surveillance and attention, which may, in turn, increase the levels of reconviction.

Sub-group differences

ISSP was used with different types of offenders. Therefore, its effectiveness was explored to see if certain groups responded more positively to the programme than others, with the following results.

- **In terms of reduced offence frequency and gravity, young women performed significantly better than young men on ISSP.**
- **The greatest improvements were achieved when there was suitable matching between eligibility and the use of ISSP; young people who did not meet the eligibility criteria for the programme did not gain any benefit.**
- **Those who were persistent and serious experienced the greatest reduction in offending frequency.**

statistically significant results at 12 months disappeared at 24 months in many instances

Evidence that ISSP may be achieving its best results with the most difficult young offenders needs to be recognised in the future development and use of the programme. Nevertheless, there was also evidence that any impact ISSP had on different sub-samples lessened over time. Statistically significant results at 12 months disappeared at 24 months in many instances. This pattern probably reflects a trend that the impact of the ISSP may well fade over time, a finding consistent with previous evidence from similar studies in the UK and worldwide.⁵

Other findings were as follows.

- **Restorative justice and constructive leisure activities were statistically associated with higher levels of reduced offending after ISSP.**
- **Electronic monitoring was not proven to be any more effective at reducing the frequency of offending than human tracking was.**
- **Young people who completed ISSP showed statistically significant gains in reducing the rate and gravity of their offending when compared to non-completers (although this may be due to pre-existing differences rather than ISSP).**

Scheme differences

ISSP schemes varied considerably in their impact on the frequency and seriousness of further offending. Some schemes performed well on both counts, and some poorly. ISSP schemes, which were run by non-YOT providers and did not also employ a 'specific model of change', achieved significantly worse results in reducing offence frequency when compared to other models of ISSP provision.

5. Merrington, S. and Stanley, S. (2004) 'What Works? Revisiting the Evidence in England and Wales', *Probation Journal*, 51:1, 7–20.

Overall, more successful schemes seemed to be able to engage the young people for longer periods. All these factors may in combination be representative of the quality of staff on the schemes and the rapport they established with the young people.

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF ISSP

The social benefits of ISSP were calculated through working out the money saved by reducing the frequency and gravity of reoffending.

- **Average savings over 24 months amounted to £80,000 per ISSP start, while the comparison sample achieved a lower figure of £72,000 per start.**
- **Savings were shown to increase over time, with almost a doubling of crime cost savings between the 12 and 24-month periods, in line with the findings of the continuing reductions in the frequency of reoffending over two years.**

Unfortunately, it was beyond the scope of this study to compare the benefits against the full costs of the interventions used with the young people, because valid and reliable financial data were not available on the costs of the comparison cases.

HOW STAFF, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES PERCEIVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ISSP



It was clear from the qualitative data collected from practitioners, young people and their families that many programme participants had a range of underlying needs and were extremely socially excluded: some had not been engaged by the mainstream structures for a considerable time. In many cases, families had already been asking for help but been unable to get any assistance.

staff and families were generally supportive of the surveillance elements

When faced with such entrenched underlying deprivation, staff tended to focus on young people's needs. Increasingly, research evidence from the 'desistance from crime' field has advocated establishing interventions that have an impact on the community, and the social and personal contexts of offenders. In these respects, the holistic and integrated approach of ISSP went some way towards establishing 'a new set of pro-social linkages, resources and opportunities'.⁶

Perhaps the most valuable resource of ISSP was the quality and commitment of its staff. The time they dedicated to establishing positive relationships resulted in high levels of trust on the part of the young people, who seemed to view staff members as less punitive than some others in the youth justice system – despite the fact that enforcement levels were high. They tended to refer to one staff member whom they could 'befriend', who 'understood' them, or who 'cared' about them. However, staff also provided an 'air of authority', which the families saw as invaluable in ensuring the young people's compliance. Parents and carers also played a key role in the delivery of ISSP, not only in terms of decision-making, but in assisting in the supervision and surveillance requirements.

Staff and families were generally supportive of the surveillance elements, citing as the advantages their:

- **stabilising influence**
- **ability to break up negative contacts with peers**
- **general impact on the behaviour of the young people.**

6. Raynor, P. (2001) 'Community Penalties and Social Integration: 'Community' as Solution and as Problem', in Bottoms, A., Gelsthorpe, L. and Rex, S. (eds) *Community Penalties: Changes and Challenges*. Cullompton: Willan Publishing.

The intensiveness of the programme, through the combination of supervision and surveillance elements, was widely believed to have had an impact upon the young peoples' lifestyles, occupying more of their time constructively and establishing a more structured daily routine.

Staff were confident of the ability of the more active and participatory aspects of offending behaviour programmes and restorative justice to affect offending behaviour.

- **Gaining access to education, training and employment was considered essential in creating structure, confidence and long-term opportunities.**
- **Leisure activities were seen as increasing self-esteem.**
- **Life-skills sessions were cited as developing young people's self-sufficiency.**

However, the vast majority of staff lamented that statutory services for persistent young offenders in their area were poor, and felt at times this undermined the ability of ISSP to meet the needs of the young people with the most severe underlying problems.

DEVELOPING A TYPOLOGY OF YOUNG OFFENDERS ON ISSP

Using an analysis of *Asset* data, four distinct groups of offenders were identified, defined by whether they had high or low risk scores in the domains of 'individual characteristics' and 'social influences'.

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These categories could be used to better determine the most suitable approaches and methods of supervision for reducing the risk of reoffending. Those at high risk tended to be the young people meeting the persistence criterion, and those who were at lowest risk included more offenders who qualified for ISSP through the serious crime shortcut.⁷

As expected, young offenders with the fewest individual and social problems were the most likely to complete ISSP. With regard to the subsequent rate of offending behaviour, those who had high risk scores in the individual characteristics domain performed significantly worse than the other typologies. This is consistent with other research findings that indicate that the more significant influences on behaviour are individual characteristics,⁸ and that these are strongly associated with persistent and sometimes serious offending.

CONCLUSIONS

Performance against objectives

- **To reduce the reoffending in the target group of offenders by 5%, and to reduce the seriousness of reoffending.**

This objective was met overall by a significant margin. However, the results show that the comparison groups did equally well in achieving this reduction. This trend also underlines the difficulty of using reconviction as the main outcome measure, particularly in evaluations of persistent offenders.

7. A young person is eligible for ISSP through the serious crime short cut if charged with an offence for which an adult would receive 14 years or more in custody.

8. Stouthamer-Loeber, M. et al (1997) *The Early Onset of Persistent Serious Offending*. Washington: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

These results are very similar to the most recent US study of the Intensive Aftercare Program for juvenile offenders.⁹ In a controlled trial with random allocation of cases, young offenders subject to an intensive pre- and post-release aftercare programme did no better than control individuals who received ‘normal’ supervision.

- **To tackle the underlying problems of the young people concerned, in an effective manner, and with a particular emphasis on educational needs.**

There was considerable quantitative evidence in the *ISSP: Initial Report* that many of these problems were tackled effectively and produced measurable improvements. In the present report, there is a large amount of additional qualitative evidence that reinforces and validates the fact that most ISSP schemes achieved significant changes in behaviour, attitudes and skills, as well as improvements in education and training, and in inter-personal relationships.

- **To demonstrate that supervision and surveillance are being undertaken consistently and rigorously, and in ways that will reassure the community and sentencers of their credibility and likely success.**

The primary evidence in the *ISSP: Initial Report* to show that this objective was being achieved was that so many youth courts have used ISSP in the past three years: this is clear proof of its acceptability to them. There is less additional information and evidence in the present report on this objective.



9. Wiebush, R.G., Le, T.N., McNulty, B., Wagner, D. and Wang, Y. (2004) *The Implementation and Outcome Evaluation of the Intensive Aftercare Program: Final Report*. Washington: National Council on Crime and Delinquency.

in the course of the first and second stages of the evaluation, three major achievements can be discerned

However, analysis of the qualitative interviews shows that staff believed the basic elements of intensive contact and surveillance were being rigorously undertaken, and that this combination was having a positive effect. Families were also keen on the high level of contact, and welcomed the support of ISSP staff. The young offenders frequently complained about the restrictions imposed by the curfew element, which, in itself, indicates that it was probably being applied firmly.

Achievements

In the course of the first and second stages of the evaluation, three major achievements can be discerned from the evidence collected on the introduction of ISSP in England and Wales.

First, the way in which ISSP has been developed and implemented reflects a considerable achievement by the YJB and the vast majority of ISSP schemes:

- **a majority range of multi-modal provisions is in place**
- **a high level of credibility with senrencers has been gained.**

This achievement contrasts with the failures in implementing many recent crime reduction initiatives, and specifically with the problems encountered in achieving the targeted number of starts and completions in the Intensive Control and Change Programme developed for 18 to 20-year-olds.¹⁰

10. Harper, G. and Chitty, C. (2005) *The Impact of Corrections on Re-offending: A Review of 'What Works'*. Home Office Research Study 291. London: Home Office; Home Office (2005) *Performance Report on Offender Management Targets*. London: NOMS.



ISSP has been able to apply rigorous and practicable eligibility criteria and to offer a realistic alternative to custodial disposals. It also seems to be based on a well-balanced and sensible model of supervision and care, which reflects on the best current research knowledge, and on professionally agreed understandings of the most important aspects of delivery methods.

Second, the evidence that reductions in the rate and gravity of offending were achieved gives room for some optimism. Even if the major reason for the reductions is a natural drop in reoffending, as represented by regression to the mean, the opportunities arising from such a reduction need to be exploited in the nature and content of the supervision and surveillance provided.

The longer-term benefits of improvements in educational and training achievements, attitudes and behaviour, and inter-personal relationships are all more likely to be achieved during periods of less offending, and when sanctions for such behaviour do not have to be so severe or incapacitating. If additional improvements could be achieved in tackling substance abuse and meeting accommodation needs, as well as mental health diagnosis and treatment for a minority of such young offenders, then an even greater impact could be made on the future criminal careers of such persistent and/or serious offenders.

ISSP schemes in the majority of instances appear to provide the necessary structure and content, geared to the individual needs of young offenders, to be able directly to influence positive future changes. Moreover, as Smith advises, the importance of meeting the

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needs of juvenile offenders is such that programmes which successfully address social and welfare requirements may be considered effective regardless of the consequences in terms of behaviour change.¹¹

Third, while the research was not able to identify simple factors which produced better results, it is possible to recognise that the quality of staff involvement and local differences in resources do help to determine outcomes. The variations between what different schemes could achieve probably indicates that the competency of the leadership, along with the skills and qualities of ISSP staff, can and do make real differences in what can be accomplished with young people. Variations in the quality of local provision, resources and opportunities are not so easily and readily addressed, but undoubtedly they could also make a significant contribution in encouraging desistance within this group.

11. Smith, D.J. (2005) 'The effectiveness of the juvenile justice system.' *Criminal Justice* 5(2), 181–195.

The full report on which this summary is based
is available from the Youth Justice Board for
England and Wales website.

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