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Measuring together

Impact measurement in the youth justice sector

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Executive summary

The last year has seen the collision of two forces which together have created an explosion of interest in impact measurement among charities. On one hand, we see the rise of payment by results, social impact bonds and outcomes-based commissioning. Funders, it seems, are clamouring to base their funding on evidence of impact. On the other hand, cuts in public funding and a growth in many of the needs charities address mean that charities' resources are more stretched than ever, so they have an urgent need to allocate their resources to create as much impact as possible.

The growing interest in charities' impact is welcome. But there is a very real danger that it will be a flash in the pan unless the structural issues underlying charities' slow progress on impact are addressed. Many charities are struggling to work out how to measure their impact, and many feel isolated in their attempts. But at New Philanthropy Capital (NPC), we believe that a coordinated approach to impact measurement can overcome these barriers.

This is the first in a series of reports from NPC exploring impact measurement at a sector level—in this case looking at youth justice. In this sector, the problems that charities try to address are costly and damaging to society. There is demand for information and progress on impact measurement, and the sector has the potential to benefit significantly from a coordinated approach.

A structure for sector impact measurement

By addressing five key questions, we can create a framework to explore how to improve measurement in a field:

1. **What is the outcome to be measured?** Do organisations in the sector agree on a single outcome or set of outcome measures?
2. **How is that outcome defined?** Has it been defined by a measurement tool or set of criteria?
3. **How should the outcome be captured?** Are the right systems in place to enable charities to capture it?
4. **How can the outcome be attributed to an intervention?** Can charities explain what would have happened to young people without their intervention?
5. **How can the outcome be valued?** Are there good financial proxies that can be used to estimate value?

Impact measurement in the youth justice sector

What to measure

Most youth justice charities aim to reduce re-offending and agree that this is the outcome they need to measure. It is also helpful to consider interim outcomes, such as improved relationships or gained qualifications, on the path to understanding what works.

To build up a fuller picture of effectiveness, charities can collect data about young people's offending history and risk profile, looking at factors such as chaotic family background and substance misuse. They can also collect case studies of their work to illustrate how they have helped individual young people.

How to measure

There are two ways to gather information on re-offending. Charities can either use existing data on individuals held by statutory sources, such as the police and Youth Offending Teams, or gather their own data from the young people they work with. However, both methods can prove problematic. Statutory data can be hard to access, and many charities do not have the systems in place to track young people themselves.

One particularly acute issue for impact measurement, particularly in youth justice, is attribution. Young offenders often receive several services at different stages of the criminal justice process, which makes it hard to ascertain how much each service contributes to change. Charities can tackle this problem to some extent by using national data on average rates of re-offending. Randomised controlled trials or a good comparison method should ideally be used to prove a new approach works.

Understanding value

Economic analysis is a powerful way of articulating social impact by comparing the costs of social problems and solutions. Charities can use methods such as break-even analysis and cost-benefit analysis to understand the value of their work, drawing on certain financial proxies based on the high costs associated with crime (although the final figures are contested).

Recommendations

Charities, funders and the government all have a part to play in improving impact measurement in the youth justice sector.

Charities should start to collect data from the young people they work with and analyse what they find. They should work closely with other charities to coordinate their measurement efforts, and work with statutory agencies to maximise their chances of accessing the best data.

Funders should invest in charities that measure their results, pay for evaluation, and fund projects that are designed to improve measurement, both for individual charities and for the sector as a whole.

The government should make it easier for charities to access re-offending data, publish performance data on individual prisons, and publish quality data on the costs of different youth justice services.

Contents

Introduction	5
A coordinated approach to measurement.....	5
Background	5
About this report	7
1. What to measure	9
Outcomes data	9
Other data	11
A hierarchy of data.....	12
2. How to measure	13
Collecting data.....	13
Research design and attribution	16
A hierarchy of evidence.....	20
3. Understanding value.....	22
Costs.....	22
Two types of economic analysis	24
4. Conclusion and recommendations	25
Recommendations for charities	26
Recommendations for funders.....	27
Recommendations for government	28
Next steps	29

Introduction

A coordinated approach to measurement

Thousands of charities around the country do important work that changes lives and provides good value for money. Yet many struggle to prove their impact, and many funders struggle to identify the best projects to fund. In today's tough climate of cuts and austerity, it is more important than ever before that charities measure their results effectively. Only then can we ensure that the best approaches are scaled up, the least effective approaches are challenged, and maximum benefit is achieved.

Yet there are some major gaps when it comes to measuring charities' outcomes. At New Philanthropy Capital (NPC), we believe that the best way to address these gaps is through a coordinated programme of research and action around sector measurement, examining how charities measure and should measure their outcomes in specific fields, such as mental health, youth justice and young people not in education, employment and training.

If measurement within sectors was coordinated, charities and funders could compare the impact of different services and allocate resources to achieve maximum impact. Different sectors face different measurement problems, so by looking at measurement in a sector as a whole, drawing on existing research and knowledge, we can identify the main challenges and propose solutions.

Such an approach could help to identify the most effective ways for charities to measure results, and improve progress on measurement across the charity sector as a whole. It would also encourage cooperation between charities and funders working within the same field, and avoid charities working in isolation to develop their own frameworks.

This report, focusing on youth justice, is NPC's first sector measurement report.

Background

Young people in trouble with the law face a bleak future, and many come from troubled backgrounds. They may have been excluded from school, grown up in care, or have experienced physical or sexual abuse.^{1,2,3} They commonly have mental health problems and learning disabilities, and struggle with basic numeracy and literacy.^{4,5}

The government estimates that there are 600,000 offenders in England and Wales under the age of 18.⁶ Despite the encouraging drop in the number of children sentenced to custody in the last three years, England and Wales still have some of the highest custody rates in western Europe.^{7,8} Three quarters of young people leaving custody go on to re-offend, and the current 'get tough' stance on crime is not working.⁹

Crime is also expensive. In 2009/2010, the cost of managing young offenders, not including police and court costs, was £800m, of which £500m was spent through the Youth Justice

¹ HM Inspectorate of Prisons and Youth Justice Board (2009) *Children and young people in custody 2008-2009*.

² Department of Health (2003) *Outcome indicators for looked-after children*.

³ Widom, C. and Maxfield, M. (2001) *An update on the 'Cycle of Violence'*. National Institute of Justice, US Department of Justice.

⁴ Department of Health et al. (2009) *The health needs of young people who offend*. Youth Justice Trust.

⁵ Audit Commission (2004) *Youth Justice 2004: A review of the reformed youth justice system*.

⁶ Home Office et al. (2008) *Impact assessment for the youth crime action plan*.

⁷ Children and Young People Now website. <http://www.cypnow.co.uk/news/1026359/Youth-Justice-Dont-lock-em/>

⁸ Barnardos (2009) *Locking up or giving up?*

⁹ Ministry of Justice (2009) *Reoffending of juveniles: Results from the 2007 cohort, England and Wales*.

Board.¹ The Audit Commission has estimated that preventing just one in ten young offenders from ending up in custody in the UK would save society over £100m a year.²

But the true cost of youth offending is even greater than this. Victims can be traumatised, families can break down, and communities can become fearful. There are also significant costs to offenders over their lifetimes—the costs of poorer educational outcomes and reduced employment and earning prospects.

Charities play a vital role in reducing youth crime and helping this vulnerable and challenging group get back on track. From prevention to resettlement, charities divert young people from crime, support those in trouble and provide alternatives to custody. They also campaign to improve the system.

The importance of measurement

Given the significant costs of youth offending, it is vital that charities in this field provide evidence of their impact. If they do not prove whether and how their programmes work, they will find it hard to gain funding, win government contracts and manage their resources effectively. This will have damaging consequences for young people.

Measurement is important in all sectors, but in youth justice the need is particularly acute for a number of reasons:

- **The impact on communities and individuals:** Offending blights the lives of victims, offenders and their families, as well as creating fearful and divided communities. It is important that effective crime reduction programmes are promoted.
- **The high cost of crime:** Dealing with crime through the police, prisons and courts is expensive. It is essential that funds are spent on effective programmes that offer value for money.
- **The potential to prevent harm:** A number of approaches have been found to be harmful to vulnerable young people and even increase offending. For example, inconsistent and short-lived mentoring relationships are damaging to young people who have no positive role models in their lives.³ Scared Straight programmes, that aim to prevent offending behaviour by showing young people what life in prison is like, increase the risk of offending by 70%.⁴ Robust measurement can help to ensure that such harmful interventions are recognised and stopped.
- **Reliance on public funding:** Many charities in the field are reliant on public funding. For example, 78% of Nacro's funding and 89% of Catch-22's funding come from statutory sources.^{5,6} There is stiff competition to provide services like mentoring, resettlement and advocacy, and commissioners want robust evidence that the programmes they are being asked to invest in reduce offending and offer value for money. This is particularly pertinent given that the Ministry of Justice is facing cuts of 6% per year with 3,000 fewer prison places over four years, and local councils are receiving 7% less central government funding from April 2011.^{7,8}

¹ The National Audit Office (2010) *The Youth Justice System in England and Wales: Reducing offending by young people*. Ministry of Justice.

² Audit Commission (2004) *Youth Justice 2004: A review of the reformed youth justice system*.

³ Hall, J. C. (2003) *Mentoring and young people: a literature review*. The Scottish Centre for Research in Education, University of Glasgow.

⁴ Petrosino, A., Turpin Petrosino, C. and Beulher, J. (2003) *Scared straight and other juvenile awareness programmes for preventing juvenile delinquency: a systematic review of randomised experimental evidence*. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 589 (1): p.41-61.

⁵ Nacro (2009) *Report and financial statement year ended 31 March 2009*.

⁶ Catch-22 (2010) *Annual report 2009/10*.

⁷ Joy, I. (2010) *Preparing for cuts: How funders should support charities in a world of government cuts and changing funding structures*. New Philanthropy Capital.

⁸ BBC News, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-11579979>

- **The importance of campaigning:** Charities like the Prison Reform Trust and the Howard League for Penal Reform campaign to reduce the use of custody for children and raise the age of criminal responsibility.¹ Better measurement could strengthen the case they make and help to demonstrate the effectiveness of community sentencing and diversion as an alternative to custody.²
- **The potential to influence sentencing:** Four in five local magistrates say that the effectiveness of local community programmes influences their sentencing decision.³ If charities could provide evidence to support the use of community alternatives, it could lead to a reduction in custody and better outcomes for young people.

A thin evidence base

Despite the need for robust measurement, three quarters of Youth Offending Team managers agree that the evidence for what works is thin.⁴ In our February 2010 report, *Trial and error*, we examined the work of over 50 charities working with young people who have committed or are likely to commit crime.⁵ We found that many charities are delivering excellent and innovative schemes, working with gangs in disadvantaged communities, working with young people on community sentences, or mentoring ex-prisoners on release. These charities are reaching young people that government services struggle to engage.

Yet, many charities are underselling themselves due to poor outcomes measurement. Many collect some monitoring data (for example, tracking young people's behaviour while they are on the project), but few provide hard evidence of their impact on offending or re-offending after a young person has left the project. Too often, charities rely on anecdotal feedback.

About this report

In this report, we use a coordinated approach to measurement to help to build the evidence base for charities that work with young offenders. We address five key questions:

1. **What is the outcome to be measured?** Do organisations in the sector agree on a single outcome or set of outcome measures?
2. **How is that outcome defined?** Has it been defined by a measurement tool or set of criteria?
3. **How should the outcome be captured?** Are the right systems in place to enable charities to capture it?
4. **How can the outcome be attributed to an intervention?** Can charities explain what would have happened to young people without their intervention?
5. **How can the outcome be valued?** Are there good financial proxies that can be used to estimate value?

Although there is no single right approach to measurement, we believe that these questions form a comprehensive framework that will be useful to anyone exploring how to improve measurement in their field. We will use these questions as the analytical framework for future reports on sector measurement.

¹ Prison Reform Trust website, <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/ProjectsResearch/Childrenandyoungpeople>

² Van Poortvliet, M. Joy, I. and Nevill, C. (2010) *Trial and error: Children and young people in trouble with the law. A guide for charities and funders*. New Philanthropy Capital.

³ Audit Commission (2004) *Youth Justice 2004: A review of the reformed youth justice system*.

⁴ The National Audit Office (2010) *The Youth Justice System in England and Wales: Reducing offending by young people*. Ministry of Justice.

⁵ Van Poortvliet, M. Joy, I. and Nevill, C. (2010) *Trial and error: Children and young people in trouble with the law. A guide for charities and funders*. New Philanthropy Capital.

We do not aim to be prescriptive to any charity or funder trying to improve how it measures results—organisations' resources, aims and challenges will define much of what is right for them. But by laying out these questions and suggesting answers to them in this report, we believe that progress can be made across a whole field, rather than just at the level of single organisations.

This report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 1** looks at what outcomes youth justice charities should be measuring in order to demonstrate impact.
- **Chapter 2** explores how youth justice charities should be measuring outcomes and examines the methodological problems they face in capturing outcomes and attributing those outcomes to their services.
- **Chapter 3** considers the role of economic analysis and the challenges that youth justice charities face when valuing their impact.
- **Chapter 4** makes recommendations for charities, funders and government to improve the state of measurement in the youth justice sector.

1. What to measure

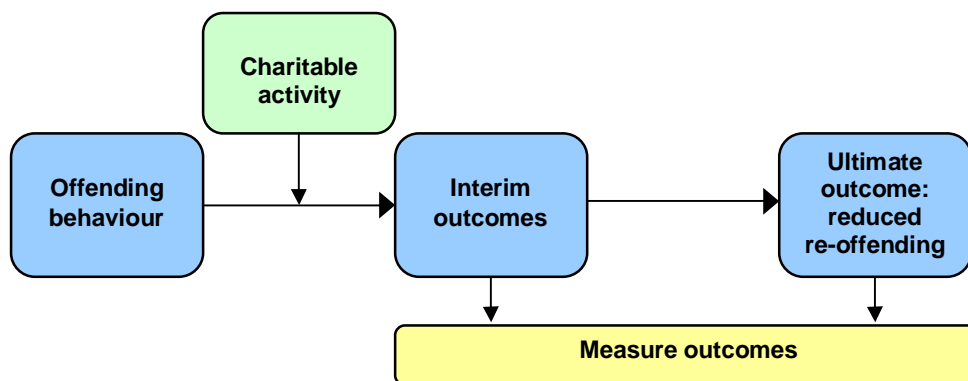
Charities can collect all sorts of data on their work with young offenders, and each has its advantages and disadvantages. As with all good measurement approaches, we recommend that charities gather a tapestry of evidence, supplementing good quantitative data on re-offending and interim outcomes with qualitative case studies to provide depth and richness.

Outcomes data

If charities are to coordinate approaches to measuring outcomes within their field, they need to agree which outcomes to measure.¹ Most youth justice charities aim to reduce re-offending and agree that this is the outcome they need to measure (although there is some debate around the role of interim outcomes, such as improved relationships or qualifications). This report does not therefore apply to charities, such as those working with excluded young people, that see reduced re-offending only as a secondary outcome of their work.

Figure 1 sets out the model path for a young offender that receives an intervention from a charity, and illustrates where measurement can take place along the way.

Figure 1: Reducing re-offending



Re-offending outcomes

The government usually commissions services for young offenders based on reduced re-offending rates. Re-offending is defined by the Ministry of Justice as any offence committed which is proven by a court conviction or an out-of-court disposal, within one year of a prior offence.² Re-offending rates are usually analysed over a one-year period. This is not ideal, and it would be better to measure them over several years, but it is difficult to follow up with young people over a long time period. The Ministry of Justice publishes figures on the frequency and severity of re-offending by conviction offence and disposal.³

Interim outcomes

Some charities argue that services should not be commissioned solely on the basis of reduced re-offending, because re-offending is only part of the problem they are tackling. They are also

¹ In some sectors, including youth justice, the correct outcomes are clearly defined. But for charities working in other sectors, such as mental health, there may be more debate around the right outcomes. Lack of agreement here might be considered an unassailable barrier to progress, but we believe that consensus can be approached by focusing on two simple questions: What outcomes do charities in this field want to achieve? And what outcomes do funders and commissioners want to achieve? We will address these questions in other sector measurement reports, to explore whether consensus can be reached.

² Ministry of Justice Statistics Bulletin (2011) *Reoffending of juveniles: results from the 2009 cohort England and Wales*.

³ *Ibid.*

helping a vulnerable and challenging group of young people to gain confidence and get back on track. Interim outcomes, such as strengthened family relationships, qualifications gained, reduced substance misuse and changed attitudes, can be important steps in a young person's life and should be recognised by government as valid contributions to reducing re-offending.

One service that is not commissioned on re-offending rates is the London Youth Reducing Re-offending Programme (Daedalus), in which charities working with young offenders at HMP Feltham are paid for supporting young people into sustainable training and employment and for finding them accommodation on release. The early findings from an evaluation are positive, and there are plans to roll out the approach (see Box 1).¹

Interim outcomes, such as training and employment, are easier to track than re-offending outcomes and are a valuable way for charities to demonstrate how they help young people. However, they are not a substitute for re-offending outcomes. Only by measuring both interim and re-offending outcomes can charities build up a picture of what works.

Box 1: The London Youth Reducing Re-offending Programme (Daedalus)

LYRRP (Daedalus) is a new approach to resettling young people coming out of the Heron wing of Feltham Young Offender Institute, delivered by the Greater London Authority, the London Development Agency, the Youth Justice Board and the National Offender Management Service. It is an example of payment by results, where a charity is funded for the outcomes it has achieved—in this case, a young person gaining qualifications, employment and accommodation on release.

This is an unusual example of youth justice services being commissioned on the basis of interim rather than re-offending outcomes.* But although charities taking part in LYRRP (Daedalus) are being paid in accordance with interim outcomes, re-offending data will also be used in the final impact evaluation, due in March 2012.[†]

So far, 43 young men have been through the programme, 24 have been released, and none have re-offended.[‡] While these results sound good, we must bear in mind that the participants have been moved to the Heron wing and referred to the programme because they are considered to be motivated. This means that cherry picking is embedded within the programme—those who enter it are already less likely to re-offend.

It is encouraging that the government is exploring the possibility of commissioning services on the basis of interim outcomes. However, the LYRRP (Daedalus) pilot has exacerbated concerns that payment by results leads to cherry picking, and it remains to be seen whether the approach has succeeded in reducing re-offending. It will be essential that the final evaluation involves a robust analysis of re-offending outcomes using an accurate comparison with a group that has a similar risk profile—in other words, other 'motivated' offenders.

* The other example of payment by results in the sector is Social Finance's pilot of the Social Impact Bond with adult offenders in Peterborough prison, which is paid for on the basis of re-offending outcomes (see Chapter 2).

[†] Ipsos MORI (2010) *Evaluation of the London Youth Reducing Reoffending Programme (Daedalus): Emerging findings*.

[‡] Greater London Authority website, <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/crime-community-safety/time-action/project-daedalus>

¹ Ipsos MORI (2010) *Evaluation of the London Youth Reducing Re-offending Programme (Daedalus): Emerging findings*.

Other data

It is crucial to collect outcomes data when making the case for charities' work with young offenders, but it is not the only data to collect. Other information, including young people's offending history and risk profile, and case studies of their work with a charity programme, can complement data on outcomes and build up a fuller picture of a charity's effectiveness.

Offending history

Data on offending history allows charities to understand the likelihood of a young person re-offending if they were not to receive an intervention, as the Ministry of Justice publishes figures on usual rates of re-offending by conviction offence and disposal.¹ With this data, charities can demonstrate the value that they add, by comparing expected re-offending rates with actual re-offending rates.

Risk profile

There are many factors associated with a young person becoming involved in crime, including a chaotic family background, homelessness, exclusion from school and substance misuse.² Collecting data on these risk factors can help charities to target their interventions and demonstrate that they are working with the hardest to reach young people.

By collecting data on risk factors, charities can avoid the accusation, or the reality, that they are cherry picking the young people who are easiest to help. Focusing on outcomes can encourage such cherry picking, particularly with payment by results, where there is a financial incentive to target the easiest cases. In the case of Project Daedalus, for example (see Box 1), there is deliberate targeting of 'motivated' inmates.

Charities that collect data on risk factors can direct service provision more effectively and demonstrate that they are working with challenging cases, although they should stop short of using data on risk factors to predict re-offending.³

Case studies

The most common information collected by charities working with young offenders, and the easiest to gather, is qualitative case studies. These are stories of how the charities have helped individuals, often with quotes from the young people themselves.

While case studies are useful for understanding how a charity works, they are not a substitute for systematic quantitative data on outcomes. This is because case studies usually follow success stories, they are subjective, and they generally do not represent the experiences of all young people the charity works with.

However, case studies can be representative, drawn from a sample of cases that is not biased towards success. When they are used appropriately in this way and in conjunction with other evidence, case studies form part of a valuable qualitative evidence base.

¹ Ministry of Justice Statistics Bulletin (2010) *Reoffending of juveniles: results from the 2008 cohort England and Wales*.

² Youth Justice Board (2005) *Risk and protective factors*.

³ ASSET is a risk assessment tool developed by Oxford University on behalf of the Youth Justice Board. It is used by Youth Offending Teams to direct service provision and predict re-offending. Trials show that the tool is 67% accurate at predicting 12 month re-offending. This might sound good, but it is in fact only 17 percentage points better than chance. See Baker, K., Jones, S., Roberts, C. and Merrington, S. (2002) *The evaluation of the validity and reliability of the Youth Justice Board's Assessment for young offenders*. Centre for Criminological Research: University of Oxford. See also Farrington, D.P. (2000) *Explaining and preventing crime: the globalisation of knowledge – the American Society of Criminology 1999 Presidential Address*, Criminology, 38:1-24.

A hierarchy of data

Table 1 summarises the kinds of data that youth justice charities could collect. Generally, the less robust the evidence, the quicker and easier it is to collect, so charities will find it easier to collect data on interim outcomes, offending histories and case studies first. However, they should try to prioritise collecting data on re-offending, because this is the primary aim of the work they do.

Ideally, charities should collect all four kinds of data. This would enable them to build a comprehensive picture of their impact, demonstrate what works and provide a strong argument for funding.

Table 1: A hierarchy of data—the higher up the table, the more robust the evidence

Data	Explanation	Example	Advantages	Disadvantages
Re-offending outcomes	Re-offending is defined by the Ministry of Justice as any offence committed in the one-year follow up period proven by a court conviction or an out-of-court disposal.	Dance United followed the young people it worked with over a year and compared their re-offending rates with the usual rate of re-offending for young people on community sentences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data on re-offending can be used to demonstrate what works. Charities can compare one year re-offending data with Ministry of Justice figures to demonstrate the value they add. The government commissions services based on reduced re-offending. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staying in touch with young people requires time and effort, and it can be difficult to make contact. To be conservative, it is necessary to assume that all young people the charity loses contact with have re-offended. The Ministry of Justice publishes data on re-offending over one year. Ideally charities should capture data over a longer period. Data is not available at level of individuals.
Interim outcomes	Interim outcomes are changes that contribute to a reduction in re-offending—for example, qualifications, employment, housing, substance misuse, behaviour and attitudes.	The Boxing Academy collects data on young people's literacy, qualifications, attendance and substance misuse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is feasible to collect data while working with young people. Interim outcomes provide evidence of the impact of projects on a young person's life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners rarely commission services on the basis of interim outcomes. These outcomes are not a substitute for data on re-offending, and only by capturing both can charities demonstrate what works.
Offending history and risk profile	History and risk profile include information on prior convictions and factors such as a chaotic family background or whether the young person has been excluded from school.	St Giles Trust uses data on the length of custodial convictions to understand what the rate of re-offending would have been if it were not for its Through the Gates programme. ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This background information can be used to direct service provision effectively. It can be used to understand the likely re-offending of the group a charity is working with. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offending history and risk profile do not include data on outcomes, so cannot be used to prove impact. It is difficult to predict re-offending on the basis of risk factors.
Case studies	To build case studies, interviews are conducted with a small number of young people to find out how the intervention has helped them.	2nd Chance systematically collects detailed case studies on the young people it has helped.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies provide colour and depth that complements figures. They are useful for understanding what works and how activities link to outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies are subjective and not very robust, unless they are based on a random/representative sample. They are not useful for understanding a charity's overall impact.

¹ St Giles Trust (2009) *Through the Gates: an analysis of economic impact 10th December 2009*. A presentation by Pro Bono Economics and Frontier Economics.

2. How to measure

Once charities in a sector have agreed and defined their common outcomes, they then need to decide how best to measure those outcomes, including the research design and the methods or tools to use.

Some sectors need new tools to be developed in order to capture the outcomes they have identified. For example, NPC has recently worked with a consortium of charities that help the families of prisoners. There was a need for new measurement tools in the area, so we designed two new questionnaires—one to look at family relationships and one to look at the experience of visiting prison—to enable these charities to measure their success.¹

Outcomes vary in how straightforward they are to measure. Objective outcomes, such as re-offending and employment, are tangible and therefore generally easier to recognise and capture than subjective outcomes, such as improved self-esteem or relationships. However, there can still be methodological problems with capturing objective outcomes and attributing them to a charitable intervention.

In youth justice, there are two major challenges that arise when capturing re-offending outcomes. Firstly, young offenders can lead chaotic lives, making them hard to track. This is a challenge of collecting data.² Secondly, it can be difficult to attribute reduced re-offending to a particular intervention, because each young person usually receives several services at once and at different points in the youth justice system.³ This is a challenge of research design and attribution. We explore these issues in turn.

Collecting data

There are two ways to gather re-offending data. Charities can either use existing data on individuals held by statutory sources, such as the police and Youth Offending Teams, or gather their own data from the young people they work with. Of the two, it is preferable to use statutory data as it is likely to be more complete. However, both methods can be problematic.

Data from statutory sources

Data on the offending of children under the age of 18 is held by a number of statutory bodies. The police hold data on reported crime, arrests and convictions on the Police National Computer. Youth Offending Teams hold data from the courts on convictions and sentencing, as well as their own assessments of young people's needs. This data is collated at a central level by the Youth Justice Board. Data on people over the age of 18 is held by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).

Accessing statutory data is a thorny issue. Commissioners want charities to evidence their impact on offending rates, so ideally charities would be able to access this data. Yet there is no system to enable charities to check administrative records. Data protection laws mean that charities cannot access data on individuals without their permission. Yet even with this consent, there are significant barriers:

- data is held on different databases depending upon where the young person is in the criminal justice system;
- charities that want to access data need to sign strict confidentiality agreements;

¹ de Las Casas, L., Fradd, A., Heady, L. and Paterson, E. (2011) *Improving prisoners' family ties: Piloting a shared measurement approach*. New Philanthropy Capital.

² Van Poortvliet, M., Joy, I. and Nevill, C. (2010) *Trial and error: Children and young people in trouble with the law. A guide for charities and funders*. New Philanthropy Capital.

³ *Ibid.*

- the Youth Justice Board and the police will not release identifiable data, meaning that it must be aggregated before it is given to charities; and
- little detailed data is published on groups—for example, the re-offending rates of individual prisons.

Nevertheless, these barriers are not insurmountable, and a number of significant developments could pave the way for wider sharing of youth justice data:

- **The Ministry of Justice is seeking feedback on a proposal to make criminal justice statistics more transparent and user friendly.** Although this is likely to affect only published group data, not data on individuals¹, it will hopefully result in the wider release of more detailed data, for example, on the performance of individual prisons and the unit costs of youth justice services. At present, only academic organisations (like the Institute for Criminal Policy Research) can access fine-grained group data from the Youth Justice Board for the purpose of research, and only after signing strict confidentiality agreements.²
- **Social Finance has launched its pilot of the Social Impact Bond.** In this pilot, which began in March 2010, government funding is tied to the reduced re-offending of short sentence male prisoners leaving HMP Peterborough. Charities working with inmates at the prison, including Ormiston Children and Families Trust, St Giles Trust, the YMCA, and Crime Reduction Initiatives, will be given a share of the savings to government if re-offending rates are reduced by 7.5% or more.³ Payment by results incentivises government to put the mechanisms in place to track individual prisoner outcomes through NOMS, and NOMS is contractually obliged to release that data. However, this is a pilot and it remains to be seen how it will work in practice. Also, critically, there is no incentive for government to release data more widely to charities. Nevertheless, the current government is a keen supporter of the open data movement, so it may in future exert more pressure for such data to be shared.
- **The Prince's Trust has accessed data using the Police National Computer.** The charity worked closely with the National Police Improvement Agency to design software that enables it to check the re-offending rates of a sample of young offenders on its programmes (see Box 2).

Despite these promising developments, accessing statutory data is still a major challenge for charities. Statutory bodies such as the police and Youth Offending Teams are resource-constrained, and collating and releasing the right offending data to charities takes time and stretches resources. Academic bodies and large charities, including The Prince's Trust, are able to invest the time and resources to build the necessary relationships with statutory agencies. They employ researchers who can explain the importance of using data and have the skills to analyse it when released. But it is not so straightforward for smaller charities.

If small charities are willing and able to invest time in building close ties with local Youth Offending Teams and the police, they may be able to persuade them to release data on young people. The Boxing Academy in London has managed to do this, as Box 3 explains. With investment from government, independent funders, or a consortium of charities, the process that The Prince's Trust went through has the potential to be scaled up and used more widely by other charities working with young offenders.

¹ Ministry of Justice website, <http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/statistics-cp171110.htm>

² Youth Justice Board website, <http://www.yjb.gov.uk/en-gb/yjb/Whatwedo/Research/RESEstudy.htm>

³ Social Finance and Ministry of Justice (2010) *Press release: Minister launches social impact bond pilot.*

Box 2: The Prince's Trust pilot with the National Police Improvement Agency

The Prince's Trust spent a year working with the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA) developing and piloting a computer programme that would enable them to match a sample of 1,744 young people on the charity's programmes with data on the Police National Computer (PNC). The aim was to test whether it was feasible to assess The Prince's Trust's impact on re-offending using statutory data.

Following the signing of a Non-Disclosure Agreement, The Prince's Trust provided data on young people's names, addresses and dates of birth to the NPIA, and this data was compared with PNC records. Where there were direct matches, the software counted the number and severity of offences recorded in the two years before and after the young person joined the programme. The analysis showed that young people's offending behaviour fell by 35% on average after participating in one of The Prince's Trust's programmes.*

The exercise was a first step for The Prince's Trust in demonstrating the relationship between its services and re-offending. However, a significant challenge is that the NPIA is only able to provide aggregate data. This limits the depth of analysis, so it is not possible to control for other effects on offending behaviour or explore what works by groups of young people or modes of delivery.

The NPIA is being wound up due to public spending cuts. However, The Prince's Trust plans to continue working with whoever takes over the management of the PNC going forward. Only by continuing to use this data can it develop a fuller picture of what works in reducing re-offending.

*Chadwick, R. (2009) *Summary of Prince's Trust work with the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) on measuring young people's offending rates*. The Prince's Trust.

Data from young people

Rather than tracking young people using statutory data, charities can track the young people they work with themselves. In order to be able to compare their results with national data on re-offending, charities need to track re-offending for a year after their intervention. However, there are a number of challenges to doing this:

- **Charities have limited resources.** Tracking young people is time consuming and can be expensive, and charities usually want to ensure that as much money as possible goes to delivery. Funders want evidence of impact, yet few consistently fund monitoring and evaluation, and one in three never do.¹
- **Young offenders often lead chaotic lives.** They can be difficult to maintain contact with after a programme has finished, which can make it hard to prove long-term impact.
- **The young people who are easiest to maintain contact with are less likely to re-offend.** This can result in a biased sample that overestimates the impact of an intervention. In order to be conservative, charities must assume that all young people they lose contact with re-offend.
- **Charities are wary of data collection negatively affecting relationships.** All projects working with young people find that building relationships is a critical factor in their success.² This is particularly true of charities working with young offenders, who, through contact with the police or prisons, may lack trust in adults or people in positions of authority.

¹ Lofgren, G. and Ringer, L. (2010) *Well-informed: Charities and commissioners on results reporting: A National Performance Programme report for charities, funders and support providers*. New Philanthropy Capital.

² Stephenson, H., Giller H. and Brown, S. (2009) *Effective Practice in Youth Justice*.

- **Youth justice charities often work with a small number of young people.** Small projects find it hard to collect enough quantitative data to provide robust evidence of impact. This makes it all the more important for charities to share the data they collect.

Despite these challenges, charities that put the right systems in place can be very successful at tracking the young people they work with. Many youth justice charities work intensively with young offenders over a long period of time. **Action for Children**, for example, provides Intensive Fostering. Charities delivering such long-term interventions have the potential to measure change over a longer period and develop an enduring relationship that will make it easier to stay in contact with the young person after the programme has ended.

In the final section of this report, we make suggestions for charities that want to track young people, including strategies for maintaining contact and building relationships with local agencies.

Box 3: The Boxing Academy

The Boxing Academy in Tottenham, north London, is a sports-based alternative to a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), working with young people who have struggled in mainstream schools. Many of these young people are known to the police and are on community sentences. The Academy combines boxing training with other sports and regular lessons, such as English and maths. Staff work intensively with young people over two years.

The Academy is good at tracking its progress with young people, and keeps systematic records on attendance, behaviour, literacy and qualifications achieved. Because it earns the trust of the young people over the two years of the programme, the Academy is able to keep in touch with the young people after they leave, to see how they are getting on. The Academy has also fostered close ties with Haringey Police, so it is the first to know if a pupil or ex-pupil is in trouble.

The rich data that the Academy gathers allowed NPC to demonstrate the value created by the charity for young people and the local community.* The Boxing Academy costs half as much as a PRU and has better outcomes. Young people who attend the Academy are more likely to achieve qualifications than their peers in PRUs, and less likely to re-offend. This means that The Boxing Academy is highly cost-effective: for every £1 invested, it creates £3 of value for the young people it works with and for society.

*Nevill, C. and van Poortvliet, M. (2010) *Teenage kicks: the value of sport in tackling youth crime*. New Philanthropy Capital.

Research design and attribution

Determining attribution means understanding what the added value of a service is, or how much it contributes to reduced re-offending when other factors or services that might have an impact are taken into account.

Attribution is an issue for impact measurement in all sectors, but is particularly acute in youth justice, especially for charities working in prison. This is because young offenders often receive several services at different stages of the criminal justice process, which makes it hard to ascertain how much each service contributes to change.

Charities need to work out what would have happened to the young people they have helped if the intervention had not been there. This issue is closely tied to that of research design—more advanced research designs are better for understanding added value. There are two options for charities that want to understand their contribution, the latter being far easier than the former—either conduct a randomised controlled trial, or construct an accurate comparison using data on re-offending outcomes. In addition, charities should collect data on interim

outcomes, as this provides evidence of how their intervention has contributed to reduced re-offending.

Using randomised controlled trials

The best method for attributing change to a particular intervention is to conduct a randomised controlled trial (RCT). RCTs involve the random allocation of a group of subjects either to the intervention or to services as usual. With a large enough group, the random allocation should mean that the only systematic difference between the groups is the intervention. Any differences in re-offending outcomes can then be attributed to the intervention.

RCTs have been used effectively in the US to prove that three community treatment programmes reduce re-offending: Functional Family Therapy, Multisystemic Therapy and Intensive Fostering.¹ These programmes are now being trialled in the UK.² One of the trials of Multisystemic Therapy is being conducted by **The Brandon Centre**, a charity in north London (see Box 4).

However, conducting an RCT is not feasible for many youth justice charities. RCTs are relatively expensive, they require effort and expertise to do well, and they take a long time. For this reason, charities that do use RCTs tend to work in partnership with academics and be funded by government as part of a formal pilot. Also, it can be impractical to allocate young people randomly to the intervention group. For instance, a charity working in prison may find it hard to explain to inmates why only half of those who want to take part in a football club are allowed to participate.

Although RCTs are effective for telling you whether an intervention works, they do not tell you why it works. This means that results can be difficult to generalise, as success may be dependent on aspects of local implementation, such as the staff members involved.

If a charity cannot use randomisation, there are techniques that can be used for analysing differences between the experimental group and the comparison group, and attributing change. Propensity score matching, for example, is a method of correcting systematic bias in a sample. It was used to evaluate the Youth Justice Board's Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme.³ However, such techniques also require research expertise that many small charities lack.

¹ Kumpfer, K.L. (1993) *Strengthening America's Families: Promising Parenting and Family Strengthening Strategies for Delinquency Prevention*. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, US Department of Justice.

² Department for Children Schools and Families (2009) *Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care in England: Annual project report 2008*.

³ Gray, E., Taylor, E., Roberts, C., Merrington, S., Fernandez, R., and Moore, R. (2005) *The Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme: The final report*. The Youth Justice Board.

Box 4: The Brandon Centre

The Brandon Centre in north London works with young people who have been involved in serious anti-social behaviour, violence and substance abuse. It uses an intervention called Multisystemic Therapy (MST), in which a therapist works with 11 to 17 year olds and their families to help them change behaviour patterns, resolve conflicts and introduce rules to improve conduct.

The Brandon Centre has been running the first randomised controlled trial of MST in the UK in partnership with Camden and Haringey Youth Offending Services and Imperial College London, supported by the Department of Health, Department for Education and Youth Justice Board. Children referred from the local Youth Offending Teams are randomly assigned either to MST or to services as usual.

The findings are very promising. Children who receive MST show significantly reduced offending, anti-social and aggressive behaviour compared to those who receive usual services.* MST also improves family relationships and reduces the chances of young people being sent to custody.† The results will be used to support the roll out of MST and demonstrate that it can be an effective community alternative to custody.

The Brandon Centre has reviewed its own impact and services, and has shared lessons and raised standards across a whole sector. This is particularly important when a charity is testing a new, unproven approach.

*The Brandon Centre (2009) *A study of Multisystemic Therapy (MST): A new type of help in the UK for young people in trouble with the law.*

† The Brandon Centre website, <http://www.brandon-centre.org.uk/multisystemic/what-is-multisystemic-therapy>

Constructing a comparison

RCTs may be the gold standard for testing new, unproven approaches, but they are beyond the resources of many youth justice charities. A more realistic alternative is to construct a comparison using national data on crime or re-offending rates.

The Ministry of Justice publishes figures on the one-year re-offending rates of young people, including characteristics such as demographics, offence committed and sentence type.¹ Charities can use statutory data on offending history and sentence type to estimate the usual rate of re-offending for young people in one year. If a charity then tracks the actual rate of re-offending of the young people it works with, this can be compared to the predicted rate to infer the impact of the programme. This method has been used effectively by charities like **Dance United** (see Box 5). Table 2 outlines two sources of data that charities could use, one on re-offending and one on sentencing.

Alternatively, charities providing preventative programmes in the community can understand their impact by analysing recorded crime in the local area. **Kickz** is a national government programme that uses football to work with hard-to-reach young people in deprived areas, run in partnership with the Metropolitan Police. Arsenal FC delivers Kickz in Elthorne Park, north London. NPC compared Metropolitan Police data on recorded youth crime within a one-mile radius of Elthorne Park before and after the project started, and found that recorded crime, including gang violence, has dropped by two thirds since the project started.² Unfortunately, local recorded crime statistics are not published, so charities will need to develop a relationship with their local police force in order to request access.

¹ Ministry of Justice Statistics Bulletin (2011) *Reoffending of juveniles: results from the 2009 cohort England and Wales.*

² Nevill, C. and Van Poortvliet, M. (2011) *Teenage Kicks: The value of sport in tackling youth crime.*

Table 2: Sources of data on crime and re-offending

Source	Description	Example
Ministry of Justice Statistics Bulletin (2010) <i>Re-offending of juveniles: results from the 2008 cohort England and Wales.</i>	A report containing re-offending data on juveniles released from custody or commencing a non-custodial court disposal. A re-offence is defined as any offence committed in the one-year follow-up period proven by a court conviction or out of court disposal.	Page 28: 63.7% of young people on community penalties will re-offend, committing an average of 4.7 crimes each. 75.7% of young people on custodial sentences will re-offend, committing an average of 6.4 crimes each.
Youth Justice Board (2010) <i>Youth Justice Board Annual Workload data 2008/09.</i> Youth Justice Board / Ministry of Justice Statistics bulletin.	The Youth Justice Board oversees the youth justice system in England and Wales. This document contains annual statistics on offences that have resulted in a disposal, court remands, ISSP, custody and key performance indicators for YOTs.	Page 2: In 2008/2009, there were 244,583 proven offences that resulted in a disposal, committed by children and young people aged 10–17. This is a decrease of 12% from 2007/2008.

Using interim outcomes

National data can be used to understand the usual rate of re-offending or to demonstrate a reduction in crime. However, if there is more than one charity working with a young person, it can be hard to separate out the contributions. In this situation, it is important to map providers to understand the full range of services a young person is receiving, and then for those providers to collect data on their interim outcomes, such as qualifications achieved or family relationships developed. In this way, charities can make a case for their contribution to any reduction in re-offending observed.

There is great potential for collaborative efforts to improve measurement in areas where a number of charities work with a group of service users. For example, if a young person is receiving support from a mentoring programme, a sports project and a counselling service, the best way for those charities to understand and measure their interim outcomes is to consider their interventions together as a system. This kind of dialogue and collective work on outcomes is still relatively uncommon, but there are examples of well-integrated groups of organisations that have been able to measure their outcomes together and therefore improve their work—for example, the Strive programme in Cincinnati¹, the Harlem Children's Zone in New York², and Total Place pilots in the UK.³

Charities should aim systematically to record objective outcomes, such as qualifications, employment and housing. Substance is a social research organisation that provides case management software and monitoring and evaluation tools for charities that want to track interim outcomes with young people, through its platform, Views.^{4,5} Another tool is the Outcomes Star, which helps charities working with homeless people to track a variety of outcomes. A version for offenders has been discussed, although it is not yet being developed.⁶ Subjective outcomes, including improved self-esteem and relationships, can be harder to

¹ Strive Together website, <http://www.strivetogether.org>

² Harlem Children's Zone website, <http://www.hcz.org>

³ HM Treasury & Department for Communities and Local Government (2010) *Total place: a whole area approach to public services.*

⁴ Substance website, <http://www.substance.coop>

⁵ Views website, <http://www.views.coop/>

⁶ Outcomes Star website, <http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/other-versions-being-discussed/>

measure accurately, and are best captured using questionnaires. There are a number of good tools that charities can use to measure such outcomes with young people (see Table 3).¹

Table 3: Tools that measure subjective outcomes

Tool	Outcomes measured	Details
NPC's Well-being Measure ²	Self-esteem, resilience, emotional well-being, relationships with family, relationships with friends, enjoyment of school and local community	An academically robust and simple to use 41-item questionnaire measuring seven aspects of 11 to 16 year olds' well-being. The questionnaire has been turned into an online tool that charities can use to measure the well-being of the young people they work with.
Life-effectiveness questionnaire ³	Self-esteem, communication skills, understanding personal boundaries, setting goals	A customisable questionnaire with 65 items containing 17 scales. It was originally designed to assess the outcomes of adventure-based youth at risk programmes, but contains questions that are relevant to much work with young offenders.
Family relationships questionnaire ⁴	Strength of prisoners' family relationships	A questionnaire developed with a consortium of charities working with prisoners and their families.
Locus of Control Scale ⁵	Responsibility	A 29-item scale that measures the extent to which an individual views him or herself as causally responsible for his or her own experiences.

A hierarchy of evidence

Table 4 outlines a simple hierarchy of research evidence that youth justice charities could use to prove their impact on re-offending. The hierarchy focuses on research design rather than on the way the data is collected. The research designs outlined have the common aim of proving impact on re-offending, but they do not explore why any change has occurred. Charities should collect interim outcomes too in order to provide evidence of how they have helped a young person and contributed to a reduction in re-offending.

Academics working in youth justice have made efforts to grade the quality of research evaluation in the field. The Maryland Scale of Scientific Method is used by academics in the US to rate the quality of research into what works in reducing re-offending.⁶ Such scales are certainly useful. However, many charities lack the resources or expertise to attempt advanced research design, such as a randomised controlled trial.

The Greater London Authority has produced a detailed set of guidelines for judging high-quality projects that are backed up by good evidence, as part of Project Oracle. The aim of Project Oracle is to tackle youth violence across the capital. The standards were developed by the

¹ Wilderdom website, <http://wilderdom.com/tools/ToolsSummaries.html>

² New Philanthropy Capital website,

http://www.philanthropycapital.org/how_we_help/big_ideas/wellbeing_project.aspx

³ Wilderdom website, <http://wilderdom.com/tools/leg/YouthDevelopmentLEQScalPaper.htm>

⁴ de Las Casas, L., Fradd, A., Heady, L. and Paterson, E. (2011) *Improving prisoners' family ties: Piloting a shared measurement approach*. New Philanthropy Capital.

⁵ Wilderdom website, <http://wilderdom.com/games/descriptions/LocusOfControlExercise.html#TypesMeasures>

⁶ Sherman, L. W., Gottfredson, D. C., MacKenzie, D. L., Eck, J., Reuter, P., and Bushway, S. D. (1998) *Preventing Crime: What works, what doesn't and what's promising*. National Institute of Justice: Research in Brief.

Social Research Unit, Dartington, and are advanced.¹ However, there is a plan to produce a simpler online self-assessment toolkit for charities that should provide more practical guidance on how to improve monitoring and evaluation.

Table 4: A hierarchy of evidence—the higher up the table, the more robust the evidence

Research design	Explanation	Example	Advantages	Disadvantages
Randomised controlled trial (RCT)	Young people are randomly assigned to an intervention or non-intervention group, and tracked a year or more after the intervention finishes.	The Brandon Centre (Box 4)	Recognised by academics as the most robust method for demonstrating that an intervention reduces re-offending.	Expensive, takes a long time and requires effort to do well. Impractical for many charities.
Comparison between one year re-offending data and local data, matched by offence category	Using data on prior convictions and offending history, an accurate comparison is constructed, then compared to one-year data on the actual severity and frequency of re-offending.	Dance United (Box 5)	Can provide a robust picture of what would have happened anyway. Cheaper and more practical than an RCT.	May be differences other than offence type that have not been controlled for, such as willingness to engage with the programme. Requires collection of accurate re-offending data.
Comparison between one year re-offending data and national averages, unmatched	Basic data on re-offending, ideally for a year after the intervention, is compared to national re-offending averages.	The Boxing Academy (Box 3)	Can give an indication of the likely impact of the intervention. Cheaper and more practical than an RCT.	Not particularly robust. Difficult to know whether the comparison is good. Requires collection of re-offending data.
Estimation of likely impact using existing research	Existing research about a particular intervention is used by a charity providing the same kind of intervention, in order to predict impact.	Action for Children (Intensive Fostering placements. ²)	Quick and cheap. Does not require any re-offending data. Can be effective for accredited interventions with a strong theoretical basis and strict guidelines for implementation.	There may be little robust existing research for some interventions. Requires assessment of the extent to which delivery is consistent with the intervention it is being compared to. Inconsistencies may invalidate the comparison. Need to use the most conservative estimate of impact.

¹ Standards of evidence for the Greater London Authority (2010) *An Evaluation Standard produced as part of the Project Oracle Evaluation Toolkit*

² Utting, D., Monteiro, H. and Ghate, D. (2007) *Interventions for Children at Risk of Developing Antisocial Personality Disorder*. Policy Research Bureau.

3. Understanding value

Once charities in a sector have agreed their common outcomes and how best to measure them, they then need to value those outcomes. Economic analysis is a powerful way of articulating social impact by comparing the costs of social problems and solutions. It can provide valuable insights and speaks in a language that many funders understand.

However, it is easier to apply economic analysis in sectors where the outcomes have a recognised financial value. For example, there is good data on the average earnings that people achieve with different levels of qualifications, so it is relatively easy to place a value on someone getting a certain qualification. Health care costs are also well established. Other outcomes, such as improved relationships or happiness, are harder to value.¹ In the field of youth justice, certain costs are fairly well established, such as the costs of crime to individual victims, whereas others are less easily quantified, like the lifetime cost of an offender, or are contested, such as the cost of prison.

Costs

There are large costs associated with youth offending, including costs to the police, criminal justice system, victims and communities. Youth justice charities with good outcomes data are ripe for economic analysis and can use these costs to demonstrate the value they are creating, as **Dance United** has done (see Box 5).

Box 5: Dance United

Dance United engages with young offenders and young people at risk of offending. Its Academy offers an intensive 12-week programme in which young people are treated as professional dancers who must follow strict principles and routines. This helps to build group cohesion and provides an atmosphere of mutual respect and support in which young people can thrive. For many, the structure of the programme is a challenging and rewarding alternative to their previously chaotic lives.

An evaluation by Manchester University compared outcomes for Academy participants with outcomes for young people on community sentences in the same area.* Over three-quarters of young people in Bradford and Leeds on community sentences are expected to re-offend—higher than the national average. Yet Dance United found that of those who engaged with its programme, only half re-offended. In addition, of those who did re-offend, the frequency and severity of their offending was reduced.

Using these figures, NPC estimates that Dance United saves society £413,200 each year. With the programme costing £7,000 a head, this means that that Dance United provides over £2 of value for every £1 invested. The charity has been able to demonstrate the value it creates by collecting robust data, and communicating this value will enable it to win funds and campaign for community programmes like its Academy to be scaled up.

*Miles, A. and Strauss, P. (2008) *The Academy: a report on outcomes for participants*. ESRC Centre for Research on Socio-cultural Change, University of Manchester.

The cost of service provision

It is important for charities to understand their costs, because only then can they judge whether they provide good value. The unit cost of a service (ie, the cost for each participant) is the total

¹ Charities that want to learn more about how they might start to measure social value can read the SROI Network's guide: The SROI Network (2009) *A guide to Social Return on Investment*. The Cabinet Office and Office of the Third Sector.

cost of the programme divided by the number of people completing the programme. When calculating the cost of their projects, charities should include all inputs, including gifts and donated time, and all overheads.¹

The cost of crime

Charities also need to understand the costs of the outcomes they are preventing—in this case, the costs of crime. The government estimates that each prolific young offender costs society £80,000 a year, and the ‘career criminal’ costs society £300,000 over his or her lifetime.²

Charities should approach these figures with caution, because data on costs is extremely variable. Some costs provided by government (particularly the cost of prison) have been contested, and the Ministry of Justice does not publish the unit cost of different sentencing options. Although official figures put the cost of each inmate of a Youth Offending Institute at £60,000 a year, a report by the Foyer Federation claims that the true cost is likely to exceed £100,000.¹

In any case, the costs associated with crime are high, and when looking at the costs of re-offending, charities should try to use published sources and always reference them. Table 5 outlines the most commonly referenced sources on the costs of offending.

Table 5: Sources of data costs of youth offending

Source	Description	Examples
Brand, S. and Price, R. (2000) <i>The economic and social costs of crime</i> . Home Office Research Study 217.	A report calculating the unit costs of all crime, including commercial and drug crime. The costs of crime against individuals and households in this report are out of date—a better source is the 2005 Home Office report (see next row).	Page 45: The average cost of shop robbery or till snatch is £5,000 (in 2000 prices). Page 50: The estimated cost of trafficking and possession of drugs to the criminal justice system is £1,200m annually (in 2000 prices).
Home Office (2005) <i>The economic and social costs of crime against individuals and households 2003/04</i> .	A report calculating the unit cost of crimes against individuals and households. Unit costs include costs to the criminal justice system and victims. Unit cost is calculated by dividing the total cost per crime type by the number of reported crimes as measured by the British Crime Survey.	Page 7: The average cost of robbery is £7,282 (in 2003 prices), including £2,601 in criminal justice costs and £3,048 in physical and emotional impact on victims. The average cost of criminal damage is £866 and the average cost of common assault is £31,438.
Home Office, Department for Education and Ministry of Justice (2008) <i>Impact assessment for the youth crime action plan</i> .	A document outlining interventions and options for the government action plan to tackle youth crime in the UK.	Page 3: The criminal ‘careers’ of prolific offenders might cost £300,000 per offender. Young people aged 10–16 are responsible for 25% of crime, costing £6bn per year. Page 13: Estimates of the cost to society and services of these high category offenders is £80,000 per year.
Foyer Federation (2009) <i>Young offenders: A secure foundation, Stage Two: Proposals for the establishment of a Young Offenders Academy pilot project</i> .	A report presenting the case for the establishment of a Young Offenders Academy as a pilot project. The report sets out the costs and benefits of such a pilot project, with the aim of reducing by two-thirds the number of young offenders in custody.	Page 59: The estimated cost of custody is £100,000. This is based on the figures stated by the Youth Justice Board plus the Foyer Federation’s own estimates of the ‘substantial other costs associated with custody’, referred to by the Chair of the Youth Justice Board (£60,000 + £40,000 = £100,000).

¹ A good guide on calculating unit costs has been written by the Personal Social Services Research Unit at the University of Kent: Beecham, J. (2000) *Unit costs: not exactly child’s play: A guide to calculating unit costs for children’s services*. Department of Health, Dartington Research Unit and PSSRU.

² Home Office et al. (2008) *Impact assessment for the youth crime action plan*.

Two types of economic analysis

It is important for charities and funders to understand the costs of services and the value of outcomes. However, this is not a substitute for good outcomes measurement, as economic analysis is a way of using data that has been already collected. Ideally, charities should measure their outcomes first, then use those outcomes to compare the cost of their programmes with the value created through reduced offending.

Table 6 outlines two types of economic analysis. Even without good outcomes data, a compelling argument for investing in an intervention can be made if the cost of the intervention is far less than the cost of the problems it aims to prevent. **Catch 22**, for example, worked with a range of charities to develop an integrated resettlement package for young offenders as part of a two-year partnership called RESET. It commissioned a piece of research to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of RESET before it had collected any data on re-offending outcomes.²

However, while it can be useful to compare costs of solutions and problems, this is no substitute for measuring outcomes. Some data on outcomes, however patchy, is always better than no data at all.

Table 6: Two types of economic analysis—the higher up the table, the more robust the analysis

Type of analysis	Explanation	Examples
Cost-benefit analysis	Far more robust than break-even analysis, cost-benefit analysis incorporates outcomes data on reduced re-offending and enables an estimate of the return on investment for a service to be made.	Dance United works with young offenders on community sentences (see Box 5). NPC used its data on re-offending and costs to demonstrate that Dance United creates over £2 of value for every £1 invested in the programme. ³
Break-even analysis	Break-even analysis compares the relative costs of the service and the outcomes it prevents. Without outcomes data, it is possible to demonstrate the level of success required to justify investment in the programme. Charities could then look at existing research to see if there is any evidence to suggest that the work they do might sufficiently reduce re-offending.	2nd Chance uses sport to work with young people in HMP Ashfield, and is relatively cheap to run at only £87,000 a year for roughly 400 young people. NPC demonstrated that 2nd Chance only needs to prevent one young person from re-offending to break even. ⁴

¹ Foyer Federation (2009) *Young offenders: A secure foundation, Stage Two: Proposals for the establishment of a Young Offenders Academy as a pilot project*.

² Renshaw, J. (2007) *The costs and benefits of effective resettlement*. RESET.

³ Van Poortvliet, M. Joy, I. and Nevill, C. (2010) *Trial and error: Children and young people in trouble with the law. A guide for charities and funders*. New Philanthropy Capital.

⁴ Nevill, C. and Van Poortvliet, M. (2011) *Teenage Kicks: The value of sport in tackling youth crime*. New Philanthropy Capital.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

It is vital that charities measure the outcomes of their work, and at NPC, we believe that in order to make real progress, charities and funders need to address the major gaps within each social sector. The framework we have laid out, drawing on existing research and analysis, is a useful guide for charities and social enterprises working with young offenders that are trying to design or improve approaches to measuring their outcomes.

We hope that this framework can form the basis for new efforts to coordinate measurement across different sectors. If groups of charities and infrastructure bodies come together around a framework such as this, they could make progress on answering key questions in their field. We aim to facilitate such processes by publishing more reports like this one.

This report is a guide for youth justice charities that want to measure their impact, and for funders that want to know what good measurement looks like. Table 7 outlines the five key questions that we have addressed in this research—questions that we believe need to be answered in any sector before it is possible to measure and communicate outcomes effectively. We will use these questions as the template for future reports on sector measurement.

Table 7: The five key questions for sector measurement

Question	Explanation	Youth justice
1. What is the outcome to be measured?	Does the sector agree on a single or set of outcomes measures?	Yes, there is largely consensus that the outcome is re-offending, with data on interim outcomes being useful for understanding what works.
2. How is that outcome defined?	Has that outcome been defined by a measurement tool or set of criteria?	Yes, re-offending is defined by the Ministry of Justice.
3. How should that outcome be captured?	Are the right systems in place to enable charities to capture that outcome?	No, charities have problems accessing statutory data on re-offending, and many do not have the systems in place to track young people themselves.
4. How can the outcome be attributed to an intervention?	Can charities understand and explain what would have happened to young people if they were not there?	To some extent, by using national data on average rates of re-offending. RCTs or a good comparison should ideally be used to prove a new approach works, yet many small charities lack the resources and expertise to achieve this.
5. How can the outcome be valued?	Are there some good financial proxies that can be used to estimate value?	Yes, there are high costs associated with crime, although the final figures are contested.

The main challenges for measurement in the youth justice sector are around capturing re-offending outcomes and attributing them successfully to a particular service. To meet these challenges and to improve measurement in the sector, we have produced recommendations for charities, funders and the government.

Recommendations for charities

Get started

It is vital that charities working in the youth justice sector prioritise measurement and put systems in place to capture their outcomes. For charities that are just starting to think about measuring their outcomes, it may seem daunting to attempt to quantify the full impact of their work. However, in our experience, just starting to collect data and analyse what you find is a valuable first step and will be a useful learning process. Look at the hierarchy of outcomes and research evidence described in this report, and keep it simple to start with.

Build foundations

Form a foundation of systematic record-keeping and case management, prioritise re-offending data. If you do not have the resources, keep records on prior offending and behaviour while you work with young people. Try to understand the full costs of your services, and the cost of the negative outcomes you are preventing.

Many youth justice charities could benefit from building their expertise in research methods and design. Training courses, such as those offered by Charities Evaluation Services and Courses in Applied Social Surveys, can be an excellent way to develop these skills.

Work together

While we believe that individual charities can and should make progress on measurement themselves, it is through coordinated work across the field that most progress can be made. A consortium of youth justice charities could come together on the subject of outcome measurement to develop and agree a framework for what good measurement looks like. They can then use this as the basis of coordination across the sector. Through such collaborative work, the group could also start addressing the need for standard protocols to enable charities to access statutory data on re-offending.

Work with statutory agencies

Charities find it difficult to access statutory data on re-offending, so to maximise their chance of using this kind of data in future, charities should:

- **Form a consortium to explore access to statutory data.** The Prince's Trust has demonstrated that it is possible for charities to access data on individual young people via the Police National Computer. A new consortium could explore what lessons can be learnt from this pilot to develop a protocol with statutory agencies that might give charities wider access to data on re-offending. The consortium could also lobby government for wider access to other relevant data, such as on criminal justice. At NPC, we are exploring how we might support such a consortium.
- **Forge relationships with local partners,** including the police, Youth Offending Teams and schools. The Boxing Academy's relationship with the local police, for example, means that it knows when an ex-pupil has re-offended (see Box 3). Youth Offending Teams hold data on risk profile and convictions. Schools can provide data on interim outcomes such as attendance and attainment. There are data protection issues around accessing statutory data, particularly on offending, and charities may need to sign strict confidentiality agreements. Local charities should work together on accessing this data, as it can provide an invaluable means of evidencing impact.

Collect data from young people

Despite the challenges involved, charities that put the right systems in place can be very successful at tracking young people they work with, especially if they work intensively with

young people and build lasting relationships. There are a number of steps that youth justice charities can take to make data collection from young people easier:

- **Maintain a database.** Collating and using evidence is much easier in a database than in paper form. Charities' databases often capture quantitative outcomes, such as qualifications achieved, attendance rates and re-offending, as well as qualitative case management notes. You might choose to develop your own database or to use existing tools. One case management software solution that incorporates monitoring and evaluation tools for charities that work in youth justice is Substance's Views.¹ All data on individuals should be kept securely and password protected.
- **Engage young people in the research process.** Relationships are often critical to the success of an intervention. As a result, a common concern for charities is that asking intrusive questions about young people's lives will harm trust. You should engage young people in the research process so they understand the importance and impact that the data could have, both for securing funding and improving the project. If charities explain this to young people, then the data collection process can become a way of empowering rather than alienating them.
- **Explain to young people that any data they provide is confidential.** It is essential that charities treat data from young people carefully and comply with the Data Protection Act (1998). All data should be held in a password protected document. You should explain to young people that re-offending and other outcomes will only be analysed at a group level.
- **Keep in touch with young people to find out how they are.** It can be difficult to maintain contact with young offenders because many lead chaotic lives. To have the best chance of staying in touch, you could ask for permission to use a young person's email and mobile number. Social networking sites, such as Facebook, are another possibility, and you could ask for the contact details of a stable family member too. If you want to use follow-up contact with young people to track offending outcomes, you should explain this to young people and ask for their consent before they leave the programme.
- **If you do not have the resources to track all the young people you work with, follow a sample.** It is time-consuming to maintain contact with young people, so rather than trying to maintain contact with everyone you have worked with, you could select a representative sample and channel your efforts into following up that group well. This is important because in order to be conservative, charities have to assume that any young person they have lost contact with has started re-offending. You should aim to minimise any bias in the sample by selecting a representative or random group.

Recommendations for funders

Funders have a real opportunity to make a big difference to charities working to reduce re-offending. They should invest in charities that measure their results, pay for evaluation, and fund projects that are designed to improve measurement, both for individual charities and for the sector as a whole. In particular, we recommend that funders:

- **Fund charities to measure their results.** Funders want evidence of impact, yet few consistently fund monitoring and evaluation and one in three never do.² Funders should find out whether there are systems in place to evaluate the impact of the projects they fund. Many charities would not only benefit from flexible core funding to support monitoring and evaluation, but would also benefit from non-financial support (for example, consultancy support on what outcomes to measure and how to measure them).³ Funders

¹ Views website, <http://www.views.coop/>

² Lofgren, G. & Ringer, L. (2010) *Well-informed: Charities and commissioners on results reporting: A National Performance Programme report for charities, funders and support providers*. New Philanthropy Capital.

³ Hedley, S., Lumley, T. and Pavey, H. (2011) *Helping grantees focus on impact*. New Philanthropy Capital.

should encourage and support charities to collect data on risk factors and interim outcomes, and to follow up with young people to capture data on re-offending.

- **Support coordinated efforts to improve measurement.** If funders want to help charities to make significant progress on measuring their impact, we believe that the best way for them to do this is by funding consortia of charities within the youth justice field to explore measurement together, using frameworks like the one in this report.
- **Fund independent research and policy analysis.** Further research is required for us to understand what works best across a wider range of youth justice projects. A small number of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) in the sector have been funded in the UK, largely by government. RCTs are expensive but valuable, and funders should consider funding more RCTs or other high-quality research to contribute to the evidence base. This would aid policy making and charities' ability to measure and communicate the effectiveness of their interventions.
- **Fund a pilot for a range of youth justice charities to access re-offending data.** The Prince's Trust has demonstrated that it is possible for charities to access data on individual young people via the Police National Computer. Funding is needed to adapt the protocol for use by other charities, then to pilot it with a range of services.
- **Work with other funders.** Funders may find it easier to support efforts to advance measurement in the youth justice sector if they approach the challenge together. For example, if a group of trusts and foundations were to support coordinated efforts to establish outcomes frameworks, we believe that they could harmonise their reporting requirements for grantees working in the youth justice field.

Recommendations for government

The Ministry of Justice's consultation on making criminal justice statistics more transparent and user-friendly is a step in the right direction, but it remains to be seen what will come out of it. In the current climate of cuts and austerity, commissioners want robust evidence that the programmes they are investing in offer good value for money. The government needs to prioritise access to data to enable charities to achieve this. We recommend that the government agencies should:

- **Enable access to re-offending data.** It is essential that the government enables charities to access anonymised data on the young people that they work with at a group level. The government needs to find ways to overcome the logistical barriers to anonymising and sharing data. This is particularly important in the current climate of cutbacks, as the government has a pressing need to identify and fund effective and cost-effective services. Only by doing this will charities be able to demonstrate their impact and will commissioners have the information they need to commission effectively.
- **Publish performance data on individual prisons.** Basic performance data on individual prisons is not publically available—indeed, even prison governors cannot access this information. It would be useful for both prison governors and charities working in prisons to access data on inmates so they can understand what works best with the young people in their care and provide the most effective charity interventions.
- **Publish quality data on unit costs.** There is a lack of robust data on the unit costs of different youth justice services, such as prison, probation and community sentencing options. By publishing better data on costs, it will be easier for charities and the government to understand what services provide value for money.

Next steps

By working together to improve measurement in the youth justice sector, with the support of funders and government agencies, charities have the potential to understand their impact, improve their work, and transform the lives of more young people in trouble with the law.

We want this report to be the first of many looking at the challenges of impact measurement in different sectors, and their potential solutions. These reports should be useful in their own right, as a guide to those seeking to deepen their knowledge of impact measurement in their field. But we also want them to provoke further enquiry and prompt charities to take practical steps to work together and measure their impact.

We have already published a report looking at charities that work with prisoners and their families, in which we helped six charities to explore common aspects of their work and develop new measurement tools to help them better capture their impact.¹ We are also exploring a number of other sectors in which a research overview like this report, or practical collaboration on measurement, might be valuable. We are discussing these ideas with potential funders and partners, and we aim to publish a number of *Measuring together* reports over the coming months and years.

If you are interested in using this approach in your sector, or in building on this report through practical follow-up work in the youth justice sector, please contact Tris Lumley at tlumley@philanthropycapital.org. We believe that there is huge potential for coordinating work on impact measurement, and we are excited to be setting out on what we hope will be a long and fruitful journey.

¹ de Las Casas, L., Fradd, A., Heady, L. and Paterson, E. (2011) *Improving prisoners' family ties: Piloting a shared measurement approach*. New Philanthropy Capital.



New Philanthropy Capital

New Philanthropy Capital (NPC) is a charity think tank and consultancy dedicated to helping funders and charities to achieve a greater impact.

We provide independent research, tools and advice for funders and charities, and shape the debate about what makes charities effective.

We have an ambitious vision: to create a world in which charities and their funders are as effective as possible in improving people's lives and creating lasting change for the better.

For **charities**, this means focusing on activities that achieve a real difference, using evidence of results to improve performance, making good use of resources, and being ambitious to solve problems. This requires high-quality leadership and staff, and good financial management.

For **funders**, this means understanding what makes charities effective and supporting their endeavours to become effective. It includes using evidence of charities' results to make funding decisions and to measure their own impact.

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