ASSET

THE EVALUATION OF THE VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE YOUTH JUSTICE BOARD'S ASSESSMENT FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS

Findings from the first two years of the use of ASSET

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our thanks to:

- the teams who have taken part in this project - we are very grateful to them for taking the time to collect the data requested and for providing so much feedback;
- staff at the Youth Justice Board and the Offenders Index section of the Home Office;
- Gill Kelly and Bernadette Wilkinson of KWP for their invaluable help and assistance;
- Martina Feilzer, Andrew Ryder, Eva Pinnington and Nia Jones for all their work on the *ASSET* database;
- Professor Roger Hood, Catherine Appleton and other research colleagues;
- Margaret Ross and all the administrative support staff at the Centre for Criminological Research, University of Oxford.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The introduction of *ASSET* in April 2000 meant that, for the first time, a common structured assessment profile was being used across the youth justice system in England and Wales. Its implementation was a key initiative of the newly established Youth Justice Board (Youth Justice Board) who were keen to promote consistency of practice in the multi-disciplinary environment of youth offending teams (Yots) and saw high quality assessment practice as central to achieving the objective of reducing offending by young people. The design of *ASSET* was shaped by a review of the research literature on risk factors contributing to offending by young people and by discussion with a wide range of individuals and organisations working in the field of youth justice.

THE STUDY

This report presents the results of an eighteen-month study involving 39 Yots from across the country. The data sample consisted of 3395 *ASSET* profiles completed by Yot staff. Of these, 82% were male and 18% female whilst 10% were from ethnic minorities and 90% were white. The data set also included 627 'What do YOU think?' forms completed by young offenders and comparative self-assessment data from a school population.

An interim report published in March 2001 (Roberts et al 2001) found that, although *ASSET* was being completed in the majority of cases, it was not being used to its full potential. There was some confusion about its purpose, some resistance to its use as a tool for gathering data and reluctance to share assessments with colleagues or other agencies. Despite these difficulties, however, Yots were beginning to see the potential of *ASSET* to guide and inform their work with young people. The Youth Justice Board has taken action on the key problems highlighted in that report by, for example, funding additional training for Yot staff, commissioning guidance on effective practice with dangerous offenders and supporting the design of a shorter version of *ASSET* for final warning cases.

ASSET PROFILES

One of the benefits of a common assessment profile is the potential to aggregate data (both locally and nationally) to build up a clearer picture of the youth offending population and to provide information relating more specifically to particular groups such as female, ethnic minority or younger offenders. The report contains a very detailed description of the characteristics of this sample of young people as assessed by Yot practitioners. Much of this fits well with the existing research literature but the analysis of *ASSET* has also provided additional information. Some examples of the information provided by *ASSET* in this study are given below.

Living arrangements

Only 30% of the sample were living with both their mother and their father. Forty three percent were living with their mother but not their father and 7% with their father but not their mother. Nine percent lived with their mother and a step-parent, but only 2% lived with their father and a step-parent.

Learning needs, school attendance and educational performance
Twenty five percent of cases had special needs identified, just over 60% of those having a statement of SEN. Fifteen percent of the young people were currently excluded from school, 27% had previous permanent exclusions and 32% had experienced fixed term exclusions in the last year. Forty one percent of the sample were regularly truanting and 42% were rated as under-achieving at school.

Peers
40% of young people were assessed as associating with pro-criminal peers, nearly 20% as having a lack of age-appropriate friends and nearly 25% as having friends who were all offenders.

Substance use
Three-quarters of the sample were known to be using tobacco, and a similar proportion were using alcohol. Over half the sample were recorded as having used cannabis and 13% were known to have used Class A drugs (including cocaine and heroin). Significantly more males than females had used Class B drugs (49% compared with 39%).

Thinking and behaviour
Nearly three-quarters of the sample were considered to be impulsive and to act without thinking. Forty four percent were assessed as being easily bored/having a need for excitement and a similar proportion were considered to give in easily to pressure from others.

Positive factors
Living arrangements and family/personal relationships were rated highly in nearly three-quarters of cases. In 50% of cases, education and employment were considered to be positive factors.

Vulnerability
Approximately 20% of the sample were considered vulnerable to harm because of the behaviour of other people, specific events or circumstances. Twenty five percent were assessed as vulnerable because of their own behaviour whilst 9% were considered to be at risk of self-harm or suicide (15% in the case of females).

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF ASSET

A thorough test of *ASSET*'s predictive validity was required in order to establish its credibility and relevance to Yot practice. This study shows that the current *ASSET* rating score predicted reconviction with 67% accuracy. This is comparable to the results for tools currently used with adult offenders and is particularly encouraging given the greater difficulties in predicting the future behaviour of young people who are often at an early stage in their criminal careers simply as a result of their age. The predictive accuracy of *ASSET* was maintained in relation to specific groups within the sample (for example, females, ethnic minorities and the younger age groups). The current *ASSET* score was also found to be predictive of frequency of reconviction and sentence at reconviction.

The current rating system in *ASSET* includes only dynamic factors i.e. those that can potentially be changed. The report presents several options for improving the

rating system through the inclusion of static criminal history data. Each of these alternatives was found to increase the predictive accuracy of *ASSET* (to 69% for revised score 1 and 70% for revised score 2). They were also able to differentiate reconviction rates better across scoring bands. This is illustrated in tables 1 and 2 below which show the improved differentiation obtained with revised score 2 when compared to the current score.

Table 1: Percentage reconvicted within 12 months by current ASSET score band (N=1081)

Score band	No. of cases	Percent reconvicted
0-4 (Low)	203	26.6%
5-9 (Low-Medium)	204	33.8%
10-16 (Medium)	238	49.2%
17-24 (Medium-high)	209	64.6%
25-48 (High)	227	75.8%
All cases	*1081*	*50.6%*

Table 2: Percentage reconvicted within 12 months by Revised Score 2 (weighted) bands (N=1063)

Score band	No. of cases	Percent reconvicted
0-7 (Low)	232	23.3%
8-14 (Low-Medium)	200	36.0%
15-24 (Medium)	214	48.6%
25-34 (Medium-high)	203	65.0%
35-64 (High)	214	83.6%
All cases	*1063*	*50.9%*

Both tables: significance of difference (chi-square) =<.001

The calculations required for the revised rating options are relatively straightforward, as with the current *ASSET* score. It was seen as important for any new score to be one that could be easily understood so that practitioners can see how the ratings are derived in relation to the individual young people that they work with.

The results of this study into the reliability of *ASSET* were generally encouraging. There was some variation in the extent to which different sections of *ASSET* were completed and this could partly be accounted for by the different professional backgrounds of the assessors. Various tests of inter-rater reliability were made. There were some inconsistencies between Yots but a generally good level of reliability between teams within Yots and between staff from different professional backgrounds. A high degree of consistency was found in the ratings of individual assessors.

SELF-ASSESSMENT DATA

Although practitioners were very positive in their feedback about the 'What do YOU think?' form, actual use of it in practice was lower than expected. From the 627 forms collected in this study, however, it was possible to provide an interesting account of the offenders' own views. There were interesting comparisons between the responses for different groups of young people, for example between the older and younger age groups or between offenders at final warning and pre-sentence report stages.

Self-assessment data from known offenders was compared with 'What do YOU think?' forms completed by young people from a small sample of schools. This showed some similarities between the two groups (for example, on issues such as emotional problems). There were also interesting differences on other issues such as education or peer groups, with the offenders being more likely to report problems in these areas. Comparison of core *ASSET* profiles with 'What do YOU think?' forms suggested that the level of agreement between practitioners and young offenders varied for different questions. There were a number of issues for which the offenders reported having more problems than had been identified by practitioners.

ON-GOING RESEARCH

This report was based on 12-month reconviction data but additional analysis will be undertaken during 2003 after a 2 year follow up period. Work is also in progress to assess the accuracy of *ASSET* in measuring change over time and the results of this are expected to be available in 2004. On-going research is important to enable the Youth Justice Board and Yots to build on the positive outcomes already identified in this report and to continue to develop practice so as to obtain the most benefit from *ASSET*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report presents encouraging findings on the validity and reliability of *ASSET*, demonstrates the wealth of data that *ASSET* can provide and suggests a number of areas for future research. The key recommendations are:

1. amend the core profile by incorporating 'revised score 2' to improve the predictive accuracy of *ASSET*;
2. consider whether other changes are required for the core profile e.g. removing items not associated with reconviction or altering the current division of sections;
3. ensure that the results of research concerning *ASSET* are made available to managers and practitioners;
4. provide further guidance for Yots on how to interpret and use *ASSET* scores appropriately;
5. consider ways of increasing the use of 'What do YOU think?' and of enabling practitioners to use this more effectively in assessments.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of *ASSET* in April 2000 as a structured risk assessment profile for use by all youth offending teams was a new and significant development in youth justice policy in England & Wales. This is now a timely point – two and a half years on from the initial implementation – to reflect on the use of *ASSET* so far, to make recommendations for improvements and to consider how it can best be used to inform on-going developments in policy and practice with young offenders.

I. YOUTH JUSTICE CONTEXT

Widespread reform of the youth justice system has occurred since 1997 (Goldson 2000, Youth Justice Board 2002) and the development of *ASSET* took place within this context. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 specified for the first time that the primary aim of the youth justice system is 'to prevent offending by children and young people' and that all those who work within the system must have regard to that aim. The Act established the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales as a non-departmental public body with responsibility for setting standards and monitoring performance within the youth justice system. At local level, the Act led to the development of multi-disciplinary youth offending teams (Yots).

To promote consistency of practice within this new multi-disciplinary setting, and to encourage practitioners to target interventions at the factors identified as being most closely associated with offending by young people, the Youth Justice Board set out a specification (in December 1998) for the development of a standard assessment profile to be used by the newly created Yots. The key requirements for the tool were that it should:

- identify the key factors contributing to offending by young people
- provide a prediction of reconviction
- help to identify young people who may present a risk of serious harm to others
- identify situations in which a young offender is vulnerable to being harmed
- identify issues where more in-depth assessment is required.

It was envisaged that the profile would be a 'live' document that would inform plans for working with young people (in both community and custodial settings) and be used to measure change over time when reapplied during, or at the end of, interventions. *ASSET* fulfils a number of purposes, including the collection of aggregate data, but the Youth Justice Board has clearly stated that its most important function is 'to help Yots to assess the needs of young people and the degree of risk they pose and then to match intervention programmes to their assessed need' (Youth Justice Board 2000b).

II. RISK ASSESSMENT AND PREDICTION

The current emphasis on risk assessment within criminal justice (Feeley and Simon 1994, Brown 2000) reflects, in part, an increasing societal preoccupation with risk and risk management (Lupton 1999). There has been a move towards greater reliance on structured assessment tools in fields as diverse as medicine, engineering

and social work (Kemshall 1996). In the criminal justice field, risk prediction tools to assist in parole decision making have been available for some time (Hood and Shute 2000) but there has also been a recent increase in the use of assessment tools in the Probation Service (Robinson 1999, Raynor et al 2000). The introduction of *OASys* as a common tool for both probation and prison staff (Home Office 1999) is a further development of this process.

Clinical assessment – the method traditionally used in social work and probation – relies on the individual professional judgement of each worker. The strength of this approach is that it can take account of personal factors for each individual offender and can identify issues for which professional intervention is required. Its weaknesses are that it leaves the assessment process open to bias (Strachan and Tallant 1996), that practitioners may omit consideration of relevant issues and that there is a likelihood of inconsistent practice between different workers or teams. The use of a more structured approach can promote more comprehensive and consistent assessment practice (Roberts and Robinson 1998).

Evidence also shows that predictions of future criminal behaviour based solely on clinical assessment tend to be inaccurate (Gottfredson and Gottfredson 1986). The alternative approach of actuarial assessment - using statistical data taken from large sample groups as the basis of a numerical calculation of future risk of re-offending – has consistently been shown to provide more accurate predictions (Farrington and Tarling 1995, Grove et al 2000). Actuarial tools have traditionally relied on static factors, in particular criminal history data such as 'age at first conviction' or 'number of previous convictions', but there is now also increasing evidence to support the use of dynamic variables in the prediction of reconviction (May 1999).

This has made it possible to develop 'third generation' risk assessment tools (Bonta 1996) which can provide both a prediction of reconviction and, through the inclusion of dynamic factors that may change over time, help practitioners to identify areas for intervention in order to reduce the risk of further offending. Examples of such tools include the Level of Service Inventory Revised (LSI-r), the Assessment, Case Management and Evaluation System (ACE)[1] and now OASys (Home Office 1999) and *ASSET*.

III. Design and development of ASSET

The Centre for Criminological Research (University of Oxford) successfully tendered to design and produce the new assessment profile for the Youth Justice Board. The Youth Justice Board also appointed a panel to advise on the design of *ASSET* which included representatives from Yots, the secure estate, the Department of Health, the Department for Education and Skills, the Drugs Prevention Advisory Service, the magistracy and the police. This helped to ensure that *ASSET* incorporated and reflected a wide range of perspectives on the risks and needs of young people who offend.

The design of *ASSET* was informed by a review of the literature on risk factors for offending by young people. This drew particularly on 'life course' or developmental perspectives (Sampson and Laub 1993, Loeber and le Blanc 1990) and the 'criminal career' paradigm (Blumstein et al 1998, Graham and Bowling 1995). Research into

[1] Information on both of these tools can be found in Raynor et al, 2000.

criminal careers has identified factors relating to the onset, persistence and desistance of offending and has shown that the factors contributing to one aspect of offending, such as onset, may differ from those which relate to persistence or desistance[2]. The classification of risk factors used by Rutter, Giller and Hagell (1998) provided another useful framework. This distinguishes between 'individual characteristics' (such as hyperactivity or impulsivity), 'psychosocial features' (for example, poor parenting or school exclusion) and 'population-wide influences' (including the availability of drugs or weapons) that may contribute to offending behaviour. The aim in designing *ASSET* was to ensure that all of the key empirically based offending related risk factors were included.

Whilst *ASSET* necessarily focuses on identifying factors contributing to offending behaviour, it also recognises the broad range of needs and problems experienced by this group of young people. Consequently, some items which might not contribute to the prediction of reconviction were included because of their value to practitioners in engaging and working with a young person[3]. *ASSET* also acknowledges the insights of interactional theory which highlights the 'interactive and reciprocal causal influences that develop over time' (Thornberry 1997 p199). Problems in one part of a young person's life (e.g. education) may contribute to difficulties in another area (e.g. family relationships) which in turn affects other aspects of his/her behaviour and attitudes. Appendix 1 provides a diagrammatic representation of the different sections of *ASSET* and shows the interactions between them.

IV. Components of ASSET

Core ASSET profile

This is the core assessment document that should be completed on all young people before any intervention is made. It should also be reviewed and updated at the end of an intervention[4]. It includes information on 'static factors' such as criminal history but focuses on 'dynamic factors' i.e. factors which have the potential to change. There are 13 sections within the profile dealing with dynamic factors such as 'family and personal relationships', 'lifestyle' and 'substance use'.

Each of these 13 sections contains questions requiring a 'yes', 'no' or 'don't know' response and an 'evidence box' for providing descriptive details of any problems or issues identified. Practitioners are then asked to rate (using a 0-4 scale) the extent to which each of these sections is related to the likelihood of further offending by the young person.

ASSET also includes several sections which do not require a numerical rating. To reflect the growing literature on resilience and 'protective factors'[5], the core profile contains a section on 'positive factors' to encourage identification of aspects of a young person's life which could be strengthened during intervention to reduce the

[2] Poor parenting for example, appears to be associated with the onset of offending whereas peer group influences seem to be more relevant to explaining the persistence of offending.

[3] In the analysis in chapter 3, for example, being bullied at school was found not to be predictive of reconviction but it may still be useful for practitioners to know about a young person's experiences of this

[4] National Standards (2000a), 3.1 and 3.6

[5] See for example, Youth Justice Board (2001b), Rutter et al (1998)

risk of re-offending. There is a specific section focusing on vulnerability (i.e. any possibility of the young person being harmed) and an 'indicators of serious harm' section that acts as a 'screen' to identify cases which require a more detailed assessment of the likelihood of a young person causing serious harm to other people.

'What do YOU think?'
This is a self-assessment form designed to provide an opportunity for a young person to directly record their views regarding their life situation and the reasons for their offending. It can provide additional information for practitioners to consider when making an assessment and can facilitate discussion with a young person. The Board has indicated that 'the young person must be invited to complete the self-assessment form and must be given any necessary assistance to do so'[6]. At the moment, young people normally complete this on paper although the use of interactive computer versions is increasing.

Risk of serious harm assessment
This is a more in-depth form for assessing whether a young person poses a risk of serious harm to other people. It is intended for use with only a minority of cases in which some initial indicators of a risk of serious harm to others have been identified.

V. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The initial design, piloting and subsequent modifications to *ASSET* were completed within a period of 9 months. This was so that the new profile would be ready for use when Yots were launched in April 2000 and could quickly become established as an integral part of youth justice practice and culture. The short development period, however, meant that it was not possible to fully test the validity and reliability of *ASSET* before its introduction, hence the need for this current study.

The study, which commenced in the summer of 2000, had the following key objectives:

- to test the validity of *ASSET* – how effective is it at predicting reconviction?
- to examine the reliability of *ASSET* – is it used with consistency by different practitioners and teams?
- to consider how well *ASSET* works as a risk-related change measure i.e. are changes in *ASSET* ratings over time related to a change in the risk of reconviction?
- to provide profile data from completed core *ASSET* profiles and 'What do YOU think?' forms;
- to provide feedback on users' views of *ASSET*;
- to make recommendations for future modifications to *ASSET*.

Interim findings were presented to the Board in March 2001 (Roberts et al 2001) to provide an early snapshot of the way in which *ASSET* was being used at that time and to give feedback from staff on their views about its purpose, value and design. These findings are summarised in chapter 1 of this report.

[6] National Standards (2000a), 3.3

For this study, it was not possible to address objective 3 above. Very few completed re-applications of *ASSET* were received and it was therefore not possible to comment on changes in risk measurement over time[7]. All of the other objectives are addressed in this report.

VI. THE RESEARCH SAMPLE

For the purposes of this study, data were collected from 39 Yots from across England and Wales (a list of these teams can be found on p19). The sample comprised 3395 *ASSET* profiles, 627 'What do YOU think?' self-assessments completed by offenders, nearly 400 self-assessments completed by a comparative school population sample and 300 'risk of serious harm' forms completed during the period June – September 2000. Twelve month reconviction data were obtained from the Police National Computer (PNC).

VII. SCOPE OF THE REPORT

This report focuses on the key issues of the validity and reliability of *ASSET* and the profile data of the cases in this study. Chapter 1 summarises feedback on *ASSET* obtained from Yot staff through the use of semi-structured questionnaires and focus groups. Chapter 2 provides a detailed profile of the characteristics of the young people in the research sample based on the completed core *ASSET* profiles. The predictive validity of *ASSET* is examined in chapter 3 whilst chapter 4 focuses on the question of its reliability. Data from the 'What do YOU think?' forms are presented in chapter 5 including comparisons between the Yot and school samples and between Yot practitioners and offenders. Conclusions, together with recommendations for modifications to *ASSET* and for further research in this area are given in chapter 6.

There are several areas of on-going work not discussed in this report. The first relates to the analysis of three hundred 'risk of serious harm' forms collected during the study and of interview data from practitioners in 10 Yots concerning the practical use of this particular part of *ASSET*. This analysis is currently being used to inform revisions to the serious harm form. The second area concerns the design of a standard format for intervention plans to follow on directly from *ASSET*. A draft document has been designed, informed by discussions with practitioners about their current use of *ASSET* for planning interventions and with young offenders concerning their perceptions of the assessment process. The proposed format, which attempts to use language that would be understandable for young people, has been pre-tested in a small sample of Yots and additional piloting is on-going. Further details on these developments will be available in due course.

[7] This is currently being examined in a further research project funded by the Youth Justice Board and due for completion in 2004.

CHAPTER 1 – SUMMARY OF INTERIM REPORT: USERS' VIEWS ON ASSET

The interim report on the validity and reliability of *ASSET* (Roberts et al 2001[8]) contained a detailed account of practitioners' views on the purpose, design and use of *ASSET*. Feedback was obtained from staff in 39 Yots through the use of confidential questionnaires. Three hundred and fifty questionnaires were sent to practitioners and 60 to operational managers during autumn 2000. A total of 213 completed questionnaires were received back from practitioners and 42 from operational managers. In addition, group discussions were held with staff from 15 Yots (during January/February 2001) to allow for more in-depth discussion of issues raised in the questionnaire responses. The questionnaire and interview schedules are set out in the interim report.

This chapter summarises the findings from the interim report to provide a snapshot of practitioner opinion during the first year of *ASSET* use.

1.1 PURPOSE OF ASSET

The most frequent responses to the question 'what do you see as the purpose of an *ASSET* form?' were:

- for making a comprehensive and holistic assessment;
- for identifying the needs of a young person;
- for identifying factors contributing to offending behaviour;
- for identifying risk and vulnerability;
- for identifying positive factors as well as problems.

The number of respondents who made explicit reference to identifying factors linked to offending behaviour was relatively small – most referred in more general terms to identifying needs. Ten percent of questionnaire respondents referred to *ASSET* as a tool for collecting statistical information. This was generally viewed quite negatively although there was some recognition of the potential value of gathering such information.

Operational managers placed greater emphasis than practitioners on the potential use of *ASSET* for encouraging consistent practice, strengthening links between assessment and intervention planning and informing decisions about resource allocation.

1.2 PRACTICAL COMPLETION OF ASSET

Twenty percent of practitioner respondents indicated that they had not received any training on *ASSET* at all. Others had received some training, either through national Youth Justice Board funded events held during spring 2000 or through local managers and colleagues, but most teams expressed a wish for further training. Contact with Yots since March 2001 suggests that the demand and need for training remains high. The Youth Justice Board funded training on 'Assessment

[8] Available at www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk/policy/*ASSET*prn.pdf

skills, report writing and supervision planning' delivered during spring 2002[9] and the subsequent provision of training material for teams to use locally will hopefully have gone some way to addressing this issue.

It was estimated that *ASSET* was completed in approximately 80% of PSR cases in the sample teams at the time of the interim report (Roberts et al 2001) but was used less frequently for specific sentence reports. Reapplication of *ASSET* at the end of interventions was rare, partly because of a lack of understanding about the role of *ASSET* for measuring change over time. Other frequently cited reasons for low reapplication rates included a lack of time and problems with IT systems not being fully operational.

In some teams, all staff completed *ASSET* regardless of their professional background whilst, in others, use of *ASSET* was seen as a task only for those from a social work or probation background. Differences in practice were also evident in the way in which *ASSET* fitted into the interviewing process. Some people used it as an interview schedule whilst others completed it after they had interviewed a young person and gathered information from a range of relevant sources.

1.3 ASSET AND FINAL WARNINGS

Practitioners expressed strong views about the use of *ASSET* for final warnings. Whilst there were a few staff who thought that a structured approach to assessment was unhelpful per se (*"gut feeling and experience give a clearer picture"*), most seemed willing to acknowledge the value of a common tool. A majority felt strongly, however, that the full *ASSET* profile was unnecessary and inappropriate at this stage. In response to this, the Youth Justice Board requested that a shorter version of *ASSET* be designed for use with final warning cases and this has now been made available to practitioners.

1.4 ASSET AND PRE-SENTENCE REPORTS (PSRS)

Approximately 60% of those who responded to the practitioners' questionnaire thought that *ASSET* was relevant to the process of preparing PSRs. Twenty percent held the view that the PSR took priority and *ASSET* was either unhelpful or made no difference to the process or quality of their report writing. Experienced practitioners were more likely to view *ASSET* as unnecessary and some perceived it as an insult to their professional skills.

There were concerns that *ASSET* might encourage a return to the style of Social Enquiry Reports given its inclusion of some social, health and welfare issues. This was linked to uncertainty about how much of the information within *ASSET* ought to be included in a PSR. It was recognised that PSRs are targeted towards a specific audience and that not everything within *ASSET* necessarily needed to be included in a report. There were some differences between the professional groups within Yots as to how this information should be selected. For example, some police officers were critical of social workers for leaving out negative information about a young person.

[9] Delivered jointly by KWP and the Midlands Probation Training Consortium

Practitioners were keen to see closer integration between *ASSET* and PSRs through, for example, the use of IT systems to transfer information from *ASSET* more directly. The potential for this is currently being explored by software providers.

1.5 Content and design of the core assessment profile

The discussion groups revealed a diversity of views amongst practitioners as to which sections of *ASSET* they found most helpful. In the questionnaire responses, however, the 'neighbourhood' element was most commonly identified as the least helpful section of *ASSET* whilst 'thinking and behaviour', 'attitudes to offending' and 'motivation to change' were considered the most useful. This may have been because the material in these sections was viewed as being more relevant for PSRs.

Certain sections were perceived as not detailed enough (e.g. statutory education and physical health). In other sections, such as emotional and mental health, practitioners sometimes felt that they were not qualified to make reliable assessments. Particular questions were criticised for being intrusive, for unclear wording, for lacking appropriate response categories, for repeating other questions or because of difficulties experienced in trying to obtain the information required to answer the question accurately. Future modifications to *ASSET* should resolve some of these problems.

Practitioners were asked about the use of *ASSET* with young people of different ages and cultural backgrounds. There were few comments about the content of the form in this regard but staff did emphasise the importance of explaining the concepts used within *ASSET* to young people in a way that they could understand. Reference was also made to the professional skills required for obtaining information from a young person and his/her family in a way that was appropriate to their particular culture and situation.

1.6 Rating the risk of re-offending

Practitioners were often wary of the 0-4 rating system and sometimes found it difficult to use. The most common concern was in regard to the perceived subjectivity of the ratings. It was felt that practice often varied widely between teams, between the different professional groups within Yots and between individuals within the same team. The results on inter-rater reliability outlined in chapter 4 of this report, however, are reasonably encouraging and suggest that some of the concerns raised in the interim report may not be justified in practice (Roberts et al, 2001).

There was evidence amongst staff of uncertainty as to what the ratings actually meant or signified, anxiety about how this data might be used by the Youth Justice Board and a fear that disclosure effects could limit the usefulness of data aimed at measuring change over time.

The 0-4 rating is intended to reflect the extent to which a particular factor is related to the likelihood of re-offending, but there was some confusion about this amongst staff. For example, there were occasions when high ratings were given on the basis of problems which were not actually linked to a pattern of offending.

Notwithstanding these problems, a few teams had begun to collate aggregate data and to look at the distribution of ratings e.g. differences between final warning and

PSR cases. It is hoped that the findings of this report (particularly those concerning validity and reliability) will encourage more teams to begin to analyse the information encapsulated in *ASSET*.

1.7 How were completed ASSET forms used in practice?

There was conflicting feedback from the questionnaires and group discussions on the extent to which *ASSET* was being used to inform supervision planning. This is an issue which the Youth Justice Board has subsequently decided to follow up and work has begun on developing a common framework for intervention planning which will link directly to *ASSET*.

The sharing of *ASSET* information between team members occurred more regularly in the teams that were furthest advanced with the implementation of electronic versions of *ASSET*. In some cases, however, there was reluctance amongst staff to make use of information contained in *ASSET*s previously completed by other practitioners - they were unwilling to trust the judgement of colleagues and preferred to start again with their own assessment.

The sharing of information with other agencies was hindered by concerns about data protection and a feeling by Yot staff that other organisations did not know about or understand the purpose of *ASSET*. Yots stated that they did send copies of *ASSET* to the secure estate for young people receiving custodial sentences, but expressed concern that these would not be read or that, if they were read, the information might be used inappropriately. Examples were also cited of other agencies being unwilling to accept referrals on the basis of *ASSET*.

1.8 'What do YOU think?'

The 'What do YOU think?' form proved to be the most popular part of *ASSET* and 78% of questionnaire respondents indicated that they had made use of it. Staff felt that it was a useful tool in that it prompts discussion, it provides an explicit opportunity for a young person to express their views and it can highlight areas of concern that an assessment might otherwise have missed. One practitioner summed up the positive feeling towards the form by describing it as "*their voice*".

A minority of staff felt that the form was not useful in that it did not provide any information over and above that which would be obtained through the normal interviewing process. Others acknowledged that it could be helpful but felt that they did not have enough time to use it when preparing a PSR or that it might be inappropriate to use in the early stages of contact with an offender given the personal nature of some of the questions.

There was some criticism of the design of the form in that it was felt to be too 'boring' and also too complicated for some young people to understand. The idea of IT based interactive versions of the form was broadly welcomed.

1.9 'Risk of serious harm'

Although the 'indicators of serious harm' section of the core profile and the 'risk of serious harm: full assessment' form deal with issues of *harm to other people*, many Yot staff thought that it was for assessing a young person's own vulnerability to harm. This confusion was often reinforced by team procedures which encouraged an inappropriate use of the serious harm form. Some teams, for example, used the

serious harm form when a young person received a custodial sentence to argue that s/he should be placed nearer to home or in a Local Authority Secure Unit.

The most common criticisms of the 'indicators of serious harm' section were that it drew too many young people into a full harm assessment and that the requirement to complete a full form once an indicator had been ticked did not allow sufficient space for professional discretion. Other concerns included a fear that the completion of a full risk of harm form would automatically lead to a young person being labelled as 'dangerous'.

Additional work on revisions to the 'serious harm' components of *ASSET* is now underway to try and provide a clearer framework for assessment. For many staff, however, this is a new area of practice and there is a pressing need for clear local policies, further guidance and additional training on this issue.

1.10 Electronic versions of ASSET

Although most teams had an electronic version of *ASSET* in place at the time of the interim report (Roberts et al 2001), many were having difficulties in integrating them into practice. Consequently, staff felt that their experiences of using electronic *ASSET* had not matched their expectations. A number of practitioners felt that they lacked basic IT skills and this made it difficult to use an electronic version of *ASSET*. Staff also found that the process of inputting *ASSET* onto IT systems could be very time consuming.

The key benefits of electronic systems were that it became easier to share information within teams and to reapply *ASSET* for reviews or at the end of interventions. Since the interim report was completed, use of electronic *ASSET* has increased and some of the earlier problems (with both hardware and software) have been resolved. A number of difficulties remain, however, including confusion caused by differences between the paper format and the on-screen layout of the electronic versions and the fact that some IT systems produce a print-out which bears little resemblance to the original *ASSET* design.

1.11 Summary

The feedback summarised in this chapter was obtained at a time when *ASSET* was still relatively new and unfamiliar to many staff. A year and a half later, use of *ASSET* has 'bedded in' and become more integrated with other aspects of Yot work. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to suggest that feedback from practitioners now might be more positive.

This is an area to which the Board needs to pay continued attention however, particularly if the target of 100% completion of *ASSET*[10] is to be met. Whilst it is hoped that future amendments to *ASSET* (see 'Conclusion and recommendations') and further improvements in IT systems will remove some of the remaining difficulties surrounding *ASSET* completion, it is ultimately the views and attitudes of practitioners that will determine the success of its implementation. Practitioners need to be convinced of the value and relevance of *ASSET* to their everyday practice if it is going to be completed and used effectively. One step towards achieving this

[10] One of the key performance measures set out in the Youth Justice Board corporate plan (2001a) was 'to ensure *ASSET* is completed for all community sentences and before custodial sentences'.

would be to ensure that staff receive regular feedback about the data being generated by *ASSET* (both locally and nationally) and about the way in which this is being used to influence policy and practice.

CHAPTER 2 – PROFILING FROM CORE ASSET

This chapter provides detailed profile data on the characteristics, problems, needs and positive factors of a large sample of young offenders, as assessed by youth justice practitioners. It is based on an analysis of 3395 *ASSET* forms (completed during the period June-September 2000) from 39 youth offending teams (Yots).

The participating Yots were spread across England and Wales, were varied in size and structure and represented a mix of urban/rural areas (see table 2.1.1. following). Some teams offered to take part whilst others were specifically approached (for example, because of their location or the ethnic diversity of their offending populations) but they all participated on a voluntary basis. As there was an element of self-selection in this process, it is likely that the study did not include teams in which levels of *ASSET* completion were very low at that point it time. This means that the data cannot automatically be taken as representative of the wider youth offending population. However, the composition of the study sample (2.1 below) is similar to the population with which Yots are currently working (Youth Justice Board 2002) in terms of factors such as age, gender and ethnicity. The data presented here can therefore be seen as a useful and relevant profile of young people who offend in England and Wales.

The data presented in this chapter mainly applies to the sample as a whole[11] but some significant differences between sub-groups within the sample are also quoted[12]. Comparisons were made for the following sub-groups:

- **gender;**
- **age** – the categories used were '10-14' and '15-18';
- **ethnicity** – using a classification of white, black, Asian or mixed ethnicity[13] - some categories were relatively small (e.g. Asian, see table 2.1.5) and this needs to be borne in mind when reading the analysis which follows;
- **case stage** – due to the large number of significant differences between Final Warning (FW) and pre-sentence report (PSR) cases, the data on this are presently separately in Appendix 2.

When using *ASSET*, practitioners are asked to rate the extent to which identified problems are associated with a risk of re-offending. The rating scale is as follows.

'0'	Not associated at all
'1'	Slight, occasional or only limited indirect association

[11] Where appropriate the level of missing information is specified. This varies with each question and where helpful the individual 'n' values used for analysis are given.
[12] Chi Square tests were used to determine significance levels. All differences quoted were significant at <.05.
[13] The sample size for the 'Chinese or other ethnic origin' group was too small to allow for any meaningful statistical analysis.

'2'	Moderate, but definite association - could be indirect or direct link; may be related to some offending but not all; tends to become offending related when combined with other factors
'3'	Quite strongly associated - normally a direct link, relevant to most types/occasions of his/her offending
'4'	Very strongly associated - will be clearly and directly related to any offending by the young person; will be a dominant factor in any cluster of offender-related problems

The distribution of these ratings is given in Section 2.2 for each relevant *ASSET* section.

2.1 SAMPLE INFORMATION

Participating Yots were asked to provide copies of all initial *ASSET* profiles from the period June-September 2000. There were, however, a number of administrative difficulties in trying to collect this data retrospectively such that some teams were only able to make available a proportion of the *ASSET*s completed during this time. Table 2.1.1 below shows the number of *ASSET* forms received from each Yot. A low number of forms should not necessarily be taken as representing a low level of *ASSET* completion in any particular Yot as it is may be due to problems experienced in the data collection process.

Table 2.1.1: Number of ASSET forms per Yot

Yot		Yot	
Liverpool	56	Brent	41
Lancashire	155	Kensington/Chelsea	27
Trafford	67	Greenwich	52
Blackpool	24	**London**	**120**
Sefton	38		
North West	**340**		
Coventry	125	Peterborough	40
Warwickshire	97	Norfolk	199
Staffordshire	146	Luton	28
Birmingham	52	Cambridgeshire	32
West Midlands	**420**	**East**	**299**
Caerphilly/Blaenau Gwent	113	Nottingham City	268
Rhondda	85	Nottinghamshire	140
Swansea	37	Leicester City	70
Neath/Port Talbot	19	Derby City	25
NE Wales	40	**East Midlands**	**503**
Wales	**294**		
		Bradford	47
Bristol	40	Leeds	228
Somerset	45	Hull	146
South West	**85**	Kirklees	128
		East Riding	16
Wessex	306	**Yorkshire**	**565**
Oxfordshire	115		
East Sussex	83	Sunderland	123
Medway	7	Gateshead	91
South East	**511**	Northumberland	44
		North East	**258**
		TOTAL	**3395**

Tables 2.1.2 – 2.1.5 show the composition of the data sample. Nearly half of the young people were at PSR stage. As would be expected, the vast majority of the sample were male and nearly 70% were over the age of 15. General ethnic classification headings were used in table 2.1.5 as frequencies for individual ethnic minority groups were too small to analyse[14]. Ten percent of the sample were classified as non-white.

Table 2.1.2: Case Stage

n=3317	
Final Warning	38%
PSR	45%
Post Sentence[15]	17%

Table 2.1.3: Gender[16]

n=3348	
Male	82%
Female	18%

Table 2.1.4: Age[17]

n=3142	
10 to 12	7%
13 to 14	24%
15 to 16	45%
17 to 18	24%

(Mean age was 15.9 years)

Table 2.1.5: Ethnic Classification

n=3228	
White	90%
Black or Black British	4%
Asian or Asian British	2%
Mixed Ethnicity	4%
Chinese or other ethnic group	--

Table 2.1.6 shows the distribution of offences. This refers to the primary index offence (i.e. the most serious) as recorded on *ASSET*. General category headings were used due to small numbers for specific offences. Actual bodily harm (ABH) accounted for 4% of the total sample while common assault accounted for 5%. Domestic burglary and non-domestic burglary accounted for 6% and 3% respectively. Aggravated TWOC (taking without consent) accounted for 4% of the sample whereas theft from a shop proved to be the most prevalent at 8%.

As might be expected, females tended to commit proportionally more offences of theft (32% compared with 20% of the male sample) and fraud (3% compared with 1%). There was a large difference for violent offences - 31% of the female sample

[14] Only 7 young people were classified as Chinese or from 'any other ethnic background'. There were 167 forms (nearly 5% of the total sample) with no ethnicity classified. One percent of the sample highlighted a preferred first language that was not English.
[15] Post Sentence mainly refers to action plan and supervision orders.
[16] Several Yots made the decision to keep the personal details of the young people anonymous which made it impossible to determine their gender.
[17] Age was not recorded for eight percent of the sample.

compared with 18% of the male sample. Males were significantly more likely to be convicted of burglary (16% compared with 8%) and vehicle related crimes (10% compared with 3%).

Vehicle offences, public order and drugs offences all increased significantly with age whilst theft/handling and criminal damage decreased significantly (vehicle theft: younger 4%, older 10%; criminal damage: younger 19%, older 8%). White young people were more likely to be convicted of criminal damage offences than black offenders (white 12%, black 2%) whilst black young people were proportionally more likely to commit offences of robbery (white 3%, black 12%).

Table 2.1.6: Offence Categories

n=3162	
Violence	21%
Sexual	1%
Public order	5%
Burglary	15%
Robbery	3%
Vehicle theft/TWOC	8%
Other motoring offences	6%
Theft/Handling	22%
Fraud/Forgery	1%
Criminal damage	11%
Drugs offences	3%
Racial offences	1%
Breach of court order	1%
Other offences[18]	2%

The Youth Justice Board provided Yots with a set of offence gravity scores i.e. scores graded according to the seriousness of offences. For this study, some amendments were made to the scores based on the validation exercise outlined in chapter 3. Table 2.1.7 shows the distribution of gravity scores for the whole sample (in relation to the primary index offence recorded on *ASSET*). Ninety five percent of offences were of gravity score 5 or below; examples of such offences being assault occasioning ABH (4), domestic burglary (5), aggravated TWOC (5), being carried in a stolen vehicle (3) and theft from a shop (2). Gravity score 6 includes assault with intent to rob whilst 7 includes rape and attempted rape.

Table 2.1.7: Gravity Scores

n = 3164	
1	1%
2	13%
3	36%
4	27%
5	18%
6	4%
7	1%
8	--

(Median Gravity Score: 3)

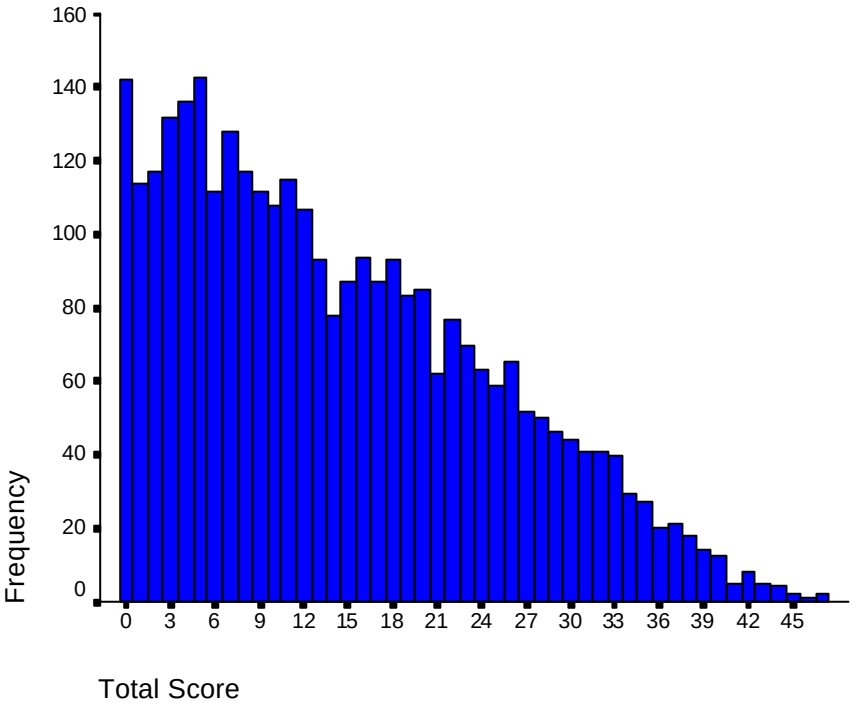
[18] Other offences include crimes such as behaviour likely to cause breach of the peace, disorderly behaviour, drunkenness and perverting the course of justice.

The total *ASSET* score is obtained by adding together the twelve section ratings[19] and the maximum score is therefore 48. The mean rating for the whole sample was 14.4. Table 2.1.8 and figure 2.1.1 show the distribution of these scores. Seventy percent of the sample were rated 19 or below in total. This suggests that there was a relatively small but significant proportion of the sample with high ratings and thus multiple offending related problems.

Table 2.1.8: Total Rating from ASSET

n=3161	%
0-9	40%
10-19	30%
20-29	20%
30-39	9%
40+	1%

Figure 2.1.1: Distribution of total ratings from ASSET



2.2 Section Analysis

The following analysis follows the format of *ASSET* and presents profile data – based on practitioners' judgements - for each of the *ASSET* sections in the order in which they appear on the form.

2.2.1 Victim characteristics

This section was not completed in approximately 37% of cases. This may be due to the limited range of possible answers on the paper version of *ASSET*, for example the lack of a response option to indicate a corporate or public authority victim.

[19] There are 13 sections of *ASSET* that can be rated but only 12 are counted because practitioners are asked to rate either 'statutory education' or 'employment, training and further education' but not both.

As can be seen from table 2.1.1, victims were known to offenders in only 38% of cases. Numbers of vulnerable and repeat victims were also low. A higher proportion of females committed offences on specific and targeted victims (45% compared with 30% of male offenders) whilst males were more likely to commit offences against victims who were not known to them (65% compared with 47%). This is in line with the analysis of offences above where females committed proportionately more violent offences and males were more likely to be involved in burglary or vehicle related crime.

Table 2.2.1: Victim Characteristics[20]

n=2151	YES
Specific targeted victim	33%
Vulnerable victim	8%
Repeat victim	4%
Victim not known to young person	62%

2.2.2 Information sources

Table 2.2.2 shows the main sources of information used for assessments in this sample. Difficulties in obtaining information were mentioned in 9% of cases with problems in getting CPS documents and lack of co-operation from the young person being the most regularly cited problems in this area. Practitioners reported that further information still needed to be obtained in 4% of cases e.g. in relation to education, previous convictions and information from the young person or their family.

Table 2.2.2 suggests that 20% of the young people in the sample were not interviewed during the assessment process. Table 2.2.2 also suggests that a lot of the information used in assessments came from the young person, their family, the police or the CPS. Schools were only recorded as contributing information in 20% of cases and social services in 24% of cases. This may be due to a lack of co-operation on the part of other agencies to provide information or reluctance on the part of the Yot practitioners to ask for it. Even when a young person was accommodated in a home or other institutional setting (7% of the sample, see table 2.2.10) Social Services Departments were only recorded as providing information in 67% of these cases.

Table 2.2.2: Information Section

n=2995	YES
Interview	80%
Case record	22%
Police	57%
CPS	44%
Previous convictions	37%
Victim	16%
YOI	6%
Secure unit	1%
Hostel	1%
Social Services Dept.	24%

n=2995	YES
GP	1%
Mental health services	2%
Other health services	1%
Family	53%
Drug agency	1%
Alcohol agency	1%
School	20%
Local Education Authority	7%
Careers guidance service	2%
Other	5%

[20] More than one response option could be chosen, hence the figures do not add up to 100%.

There were significant differences between the sub-groups. A lower proportion of females were interviewed for example (74% compared with 81% of males). Surprisingly, there were many differences between the ethnic groups in this section, in particular between the white and black samples. A significantly higher proportion of the white sample were interviewed (81% compared with 68%) and had information provided by the family of the young person (54% compared with 39%). Information was provided by schools for a higher proportion of black offenders (28% compared with 19%).

2.2.3 Care history

This section asks for information on both current and previous care experiences[21]. Table 2.2.3 shows the frequency of answers for the whole sample. Eighteen percent of the sample had been accommodated by agreement with parents at some point and 10% were currently (or had previously been) placed on the child protection register.

Table 2.2.3: Care History

	n	CURRENT	PREVIOUS	NEVER	DK
Accommodated by voluntary agreement with parents	2711	6%	12%	77%	5%
Subject to care order	2685	5%	2%	88%	5%
Remand to LA accommodation	2657	3%	8%	85%	4%
Name placed on the child protection register	2667	2%	8%	77%	13%
Any other contact with social services	2748	15%	23%	53%	9%
Social services involvement with siblings	2667	10%	12%	61%	17%

A higher proportion of the female sample were accommodated by voluntary agreement with their parents (22% compared with 17%) and/or subject to a care order (9% compared with 6%). Males were more likely to be remanded to local authority care (12% compared with 6%). A higher proportion of the younger sample were subject to a care order (19% compared with 11%) while a higher proportion of the older sample were remanded to local authority care (25% compared with 14%).

There were also significant differences between ethnic groups. Some of the biggest differences were with the number of young people accommodated by voluntary agreement (Asian 2%, mixed ethnicity 26%, white 18%, black 17%) and with the proportion that had been placed on the child protection register (Asian 4%, mixed ethnicity 21%, white 10%, black 9%).

2.2.4 Criminal History

There was a lot of missing data in this section as can be seen from the lower 'N' values in tables 2.2.4 – 2.2.9 below. This may be explained by reluctance on the part of some practitioners to use the 'don't know' or 'not applicable' answers. It is not clear at this stage why practitioners had problems gathering information for this section but some minor modifications to the *ASSET* form have already been made in an attempt to improve recording practice.

[21] For the purposes of significance analysis, 'current' and 'previous' were combined into one category.

Table 2.2.4 shows the distribution of age at first reprimand. The question was not applicable for 13% of the sample and not available for 22%. Table 2.2.5 shows the distribution of age at first court conviction. The question was not applicable in 23% of cases and the information was not available in 33%.

Table 2.2.4: Age at First Reprimand

n=2181	%
10	6%
11	11%
12	17%
13	21%
14	21%
15	15%
16	7%
17	2%

Mean age 13.7 years

Table 2.2.5: Age at First Court Conviction

n=1487	%
10	2%
11	5%
12	9%
13	15%
14	22%
15	25%
16	14%
17	8%

Mean age 14.2 years

Table 2.2.6 shows the number of previous convictions for the whole sample. This information was not known in nearly 2% of cases and missing in 28% of cases. In cases where data was available, 80% had no or less than three previous convictions with over 50% having no previous convictions. Males had more previous convictions than females (7% of the male sample had more than ten previous compared with 2% of the females).

Table 2.2.6: Number of Previous Convictions

n=2381	%
No previous	52%
One	14%
Two-Three	14%
Four-Five	8%
Six-Seven	4%
Eight-Nine	2%
More than ten	6%

Table 2.2.7 gives the number of previous custodial sentences for the whole sample (although this information was missing in 50% of cases). Where this information was made available, 10% of the sample had previously experienced custody.

Table 2.2.7: Number of Previous Custodial Sentences

n=1693	%
No custodial sentences	90%
One	7%
More than two	3%

From Table 2.2.8 it can be seen that nearly 70% of the sample had committed their current offence within six months of their last recorded offence(s).

Table 2.2.8: Time since Last Offence

n=1877	%
Up to 6 months	67%
Up to 18 months[22]	18%
Up to 2 Years	7%
2 Years +	8%

Table 2.2.9 shows the distribution of answers for the last three questions in the criminal history section. This information was not known in approximately 3% of cases and missing for 9% of the sample.

Table 2.2.9: Criminal History (last three questions)

	n	YES
Convicted of a schedule one offence	2986	4%
Name on sex offenders register	3020	1%
Previous contact with Yots[23]	2979	16%

2.2.5 Living arrangements

This section of *ASSET* focuses on a young person's accommodation. It includes: who s/he lives with, the quality of the accommodation and issues such as absconding. Table 2.2.10 shows the results for question (a) of this section, concerning living arrangements in the six months immediately prior to assessment. It can be seen that more young people were living with their mother than with their father and nearly half lived with siblings.

Table 2.2.10: Who has the young person been mostly living with over the past six months?

Living with … (n=3304)	YES
Mother	73%
Father	37%
Foster Carers	3%
Adoptive parents	1%
Siblings	49%
Grandparents	6%
Step-Parents	11%

Living with … (n=3304)	YES
Other family members	5%
By-self	2%
Partner	3%
Own Children	---
Friends	4%
Home/Institution	7%
Other	5%

Only 30% of the sample were living with both their mother and their father. Forty three percent were living with their mother but not their father and 7% with their father but not their mother. Nine percent lived with their mother and a step-parent, but only 2% lived with their father and a step-parent.

Females were less likely to be living with both parents (25% compared with 30%) and more likely to be living with neither (27% compared with 21%). Differences by ethnicity are highlighted in table 2.2.11 which shows that Asian offenders were more likely to be living with both their mother and their father whereas black

[22] The original version of *ASSET* did not contain an option for between 6 and 12 months; this was rectified in the shortened version of *ASSET* for Final Warnings and will be included in the amended version of full *ASSET*.

[23] There seemed to be some confusion as to what this question was referring to. Some practitioners were using it to refer to contacts with the Yot arising from previous sentences whereas it was originally intended to refer to other types of contact e.g. preventive work.

young people and those of mixed ethnicity were more likely to be living with just their mother.

Table 2.2.11: Living Arrangements by Ethnic Groups

	Mother – Yes Father – Yes	Mother – Yes Father – No	Mother – No Father – Yes	Mother – No Father – No
White (2904)	29%	42%	7%	22%
Black (120)	14%	57%	2%	27%
Asian (78)	64%	17%	6%	13%
Mixed ethnicity(119)	16%	49%	3%	32%

Table 2.2.12 shows the responses to section (c) of 'living arrangements'[24]. There was no specific response option for 'does not apply' in this section but, in line with the explanatory notes to *ASSET* (Youth Justice Board 2000c), a lack of an answer in this section was taken to mean that the issue did not apply to the young person.

Table 2.2.12: Living Arrangements (section c)

	n	DOES NOT APPLY	USUAL	CURRENT	DK
No fixed abode	3359	89%	2%	3%	6%
Unsuitable to YP needs	3359	85%	4%	4%	7%
Deprived household	3359	72%	12%	9%	7%
Living with known offenders	3359	75%	8%	8%	9%
Absconding/Staying away	3359	78%	10%	3%	9%
Disorganised/Chaotic	3359	80%	7%	5%	8%
Other problems	3359	82%	5%	7%	6%

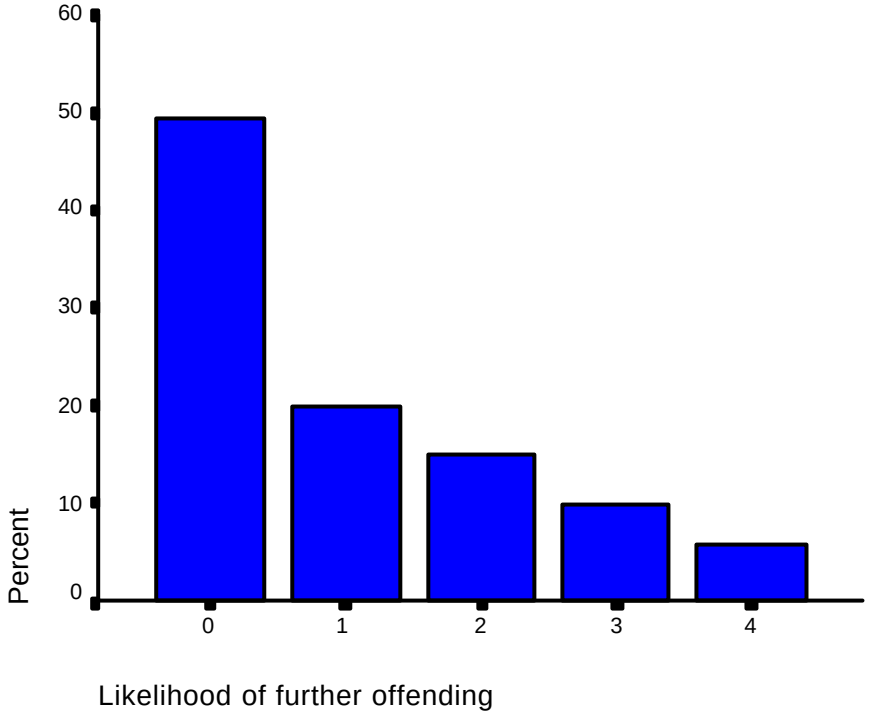
Many of the items in this section tackle issues that are recognised risk factors for the onset of offending behaviour (Youth Justice Board 2001). For example, 21% of this sample lived in a deprived household, 13% absconded or regularly stayed away from home and 16% lived with known offenders.

A significantly higher proportion of the younger sample usually or currently lived in deprived housing (25% compared with 14%) and absconded or stayed away (17% compared with 10%). A higher proportion of the older sample had no fixed abode (8% compared with 1%). Mixed ethnicity offenders were more likely to live in deprived conditions (for example, mixed ethnicity 33%, Asian 18%, white 21%) and to abscond/stay away (mixed ethnicity 22%, Asian 9%, black 13%). Young people who were not living with their biological father were significantly more likely to have problems identified in all of the section c questions.

The assessed association between 'living arrangements' and the risk of re-offending for the whole sample is shown in Figure 2.2.1 below.

[24] For significance tests, 'usual' and 'current' were combined to form one answer.

Figure 2.2.1: Perceived link of 'living arrangements' with likelihood of further offending



2.2.6 Family and Personal Relationships

This section focuses on personal relationships with family members, carers and other significant adults. It also covers relationships with a partner but not wider friendships and peer groups as these are addressed in the 'lifestyle' section of *ASSET* (see section 2.2.10 below). Table 2.2.13 shows the information from question (a) concerning significant people the young person had contact with in the previous six months. This table suggests that a high number of young people had contact with significant family members (mother, father, siblings) even if they did not live with them (compare with table 2.2.10).

Table 2.2.13: Which family members or carers has s/he been in contact with over the past six months?

Contact with … (n=3023)	YES	Contact with … (n=3023)	YES
Mother	89%	Grandparents	38%
Father	60%	Other family members	19%
Adoptive parents	1%	Step-Parents	17%
Foster Carers	3%	Other significant adults	9%
Siblings	69%	Boy/girlfriend	14%

Only 55% of young people had contact with both their mother and their father, 34% with just their mother and 5% with just their father. Six percent of the sample had no contact with either their mother or their father. Of those young people who did not live with their father, only 36% had contact with him outside of the home environment.

As Table 2.2.14 shows, there were significant differences between ethnic groups in terms of contact between young people and their parents. Differences between all the ethnic groupings were significant at <.005 (except black offenders compared

with mixed ethnicity offenders where there were no significant differences). The Asian sample were more likely to have contact with both their mother and their father while the black and mixed ethnicity offenders were more likely to have contact with just their mother (table 2.2.14).

Table 2.2.14: Contact with parents by ethnic groups

	Mother – Yes Father – Yes	Mother – Yes Father – No
White (2595)	56%	33%
Black (103)	42%	48%
Asian (62)	76%	19%
Mixed ethnicity (107)	42%	47%

The section (b) responses from the 'family and personal relationships' section of *ASSET* are shown in table 2.2.15. It can be seen that a quarter of the sample were in contact with significant people (from table 2.2.13) who were also involved in criminal activity and a similar proportion experienced inconsistent supervision. A fifth were shown little care and attention by significant adults whilst 21% of the sample had suffered a significant bereavement or loss.

Table 2.2.15: Family and Personal Relationships (section b)

	N	YES	NO	DK	NA[25]
Question a) contact: criminal activity	3195	25%	61%	13%	1%
Question a) contact: heavy alcohol abuse	3173	12%	67%	20%	1%
Question a) contact: drug/solvent use	3177	12%	68%	19%	1%
Significant adults fail to show care…	3164	19%	73%	7%	1%
Inconsistent supervision	3148	24%	61%	12%	3%
Experience of abuse	3111	16%	58%	24%	2%
Witness other violence in family	3128	15%	55%	28%	2%
Significant bereavement or loss	3086	21%	57%	20%	2%
Difficulties with care of own children[26]	3003	1%	43%	4%	52%
Other problems	2666	22%	56%	14%	8%

A higher proportion of the female sample were recorded as having experienced abuse (21% compared with 15% for males). Females were also more likely to be in contact with significant people (from table 2.2.13) involved in criminal activities, heavy alcohol abuse and drug/solvent use (for example, criminal activity: 29% compared with 24%). The older sample were more likely to be in contact with people involved in drug use (13% compared with 8% for the younger sample).

A lower proportion of the Asian sample had problems in section (b) whilst the mixed ethnicity sample were significantly more likely to have difficulties here. For example, twenty two percent of the mixed ethnicity sample were recorded as having experienced abuse compared to 6% of the Asian sample and 16% of the white sample.

When section (b) was analysed in relation to contact with birth parents the results were consistently worse for the young people who had contact with only one or

[25] The 'Not Applicable' option in this section has been removed in the updated version of *ASSET* except for the question concerning 'difficulties with care of own children'.
[26] This question has caused confusion for some practitioners and most of the 'no' answers should be interpreted as 'not applicable'.

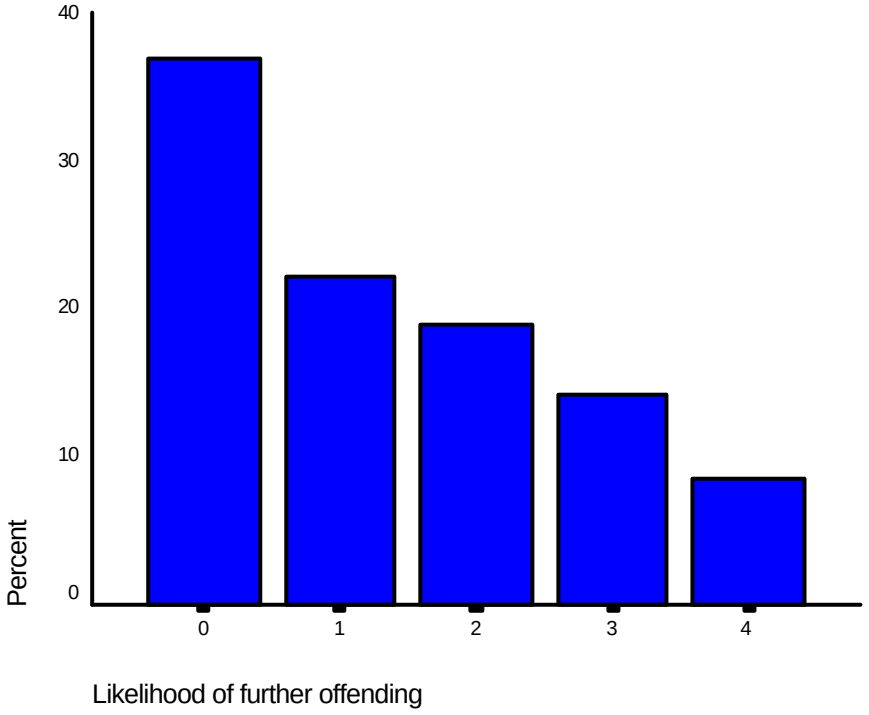
neither of their parents. As table 2.2.16 shows, if the young person had contact with their father but not their mother they were more likely to be lacking in care and to have experienced abuse.

Table 2.2.16: Section C responses in relation to contact with parents

	Mother – Yes Father – Yes (1619)	Mother – Yes Father – No (964)	Mother – No Father – Yes (136)	Mother – No Father – No (171)
Question a) contact: criminal activity	24%	29%	36%	32%
Significant adults fail to show care	14%	23%	30%	29%
Experience of abuse	11%	20%	25%	27%
Significant bereavement/loss	16%	24%	42%	33%

The assessed association between 'family and personal relationships' and the risk of re-offending for the whole sample is shown in figure 2.2.2 below.

Figure 2.2.2: Perceived link of 'family and personal relationships' with the likelihood of re-offending



2.2.7 Statutory education

This section of *ASSET* should be completed on all young people. For a young person of school age, his/her current and recent (past 6 months) experiences should be considered. If s/he has left school, the section should be completed on the basis of his/her past experiences.

Table 2.2.17 shows the results for question (a) of this section concerning sources of educational provision in the six months prior to the point of assessment. Less than 60% of the sample attended mainstream school and 15% attended either a special school or a pupil referral unit.

Table 2.2.17: What has been his/her main source of educational provision over the last six months?

Educated in … (n=2613)	YES
Mainstream school	59%
Special school	7%
Pupil referral unit	8%
Other specialist unit	3%
Community home	1%
Home tuition	4%

A significantly higher proportion of females attended mainstream education (67% compared with 57%) and a higher proportion of males attended special schools (8% compared with 2%). Once again there were differences between ethnic groups. A much higher proportion of the Asian sample attended mainstream education (75% compared with 58% for the white sample and 51% for the mixed and black ethnicity offenders) and none were attending a special school.

Twenty five percent of cases had special needs identified with just over 60% of those having a statement of SEN issued. Fifteen percent of the young people were currently excluded, 27% had previous permanent exclusions and 32% had experienced fixed term exclusions in the last year.

As can be seen from table 2.2.18, over 40% of the sample were regularly truanting with a similar proportion under achieving at school. Over a third had a lack of attachment to school and poor relationships with their teachers. Again these are all factors which have been identified in the research literature as being associated with youth offending (Youth Justice Board 2001).

Table 2.2.18: Statutory Education (section e)

	n	YES	NO	DK	NA
Regular truanting	2574	41%	46%	8%	5%
Regularly absent	2484	18%	65%	12%	5%
Under-achievement	2509	42%	39%	17%	2%
Difficulties with literacy/numeracy	2514	27%	59%	12%	2%
Bullied at school	2493	17%	64%	17%	2%
Poor relationship with teachers	2528	32%	49%	16%	3%
Lack of attachment with school	2477	34%	53%	9%	4%
Negative parental care	2487	10%	75%	12%	3%
Other problems	2110	26%	57%	11%	6%

A lower proportion of the female sample had difficulties with numeracy/literacy (14% compared with 30% for males) and males were more likely to be identified as having a 'lack of attachment' to school (36% compared with 27%). Males were recorded as being bullied less (15% compared with 22%). White young offenders truanted more than black and Asian young offenders (42% compared with 25% of the black sample and 31% of the Asian sample). A higher proportion of the mixed ethnicity sample were under-achieving (51% compared with 43% of the white sample and 33% of the Asian sample) and a higher proportion of the white sample were assessed as having difficulties with basic numeracy and literacy (28% compared with 9% of the Asian sample and 17% of the mixed ethnicity sample).

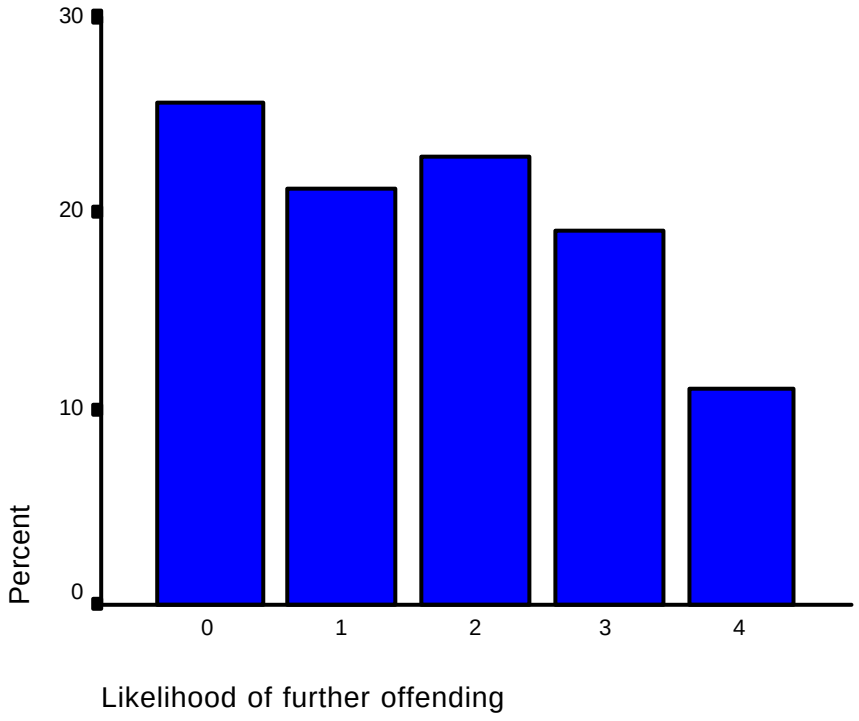
The association between truanting and other risk factors was also explored. For young people assessed as being regular truants there was an increased likelihood of problems being identified in the other education questions (Table 2.2.19).

Table 2.2.19: Association of truanting with other education risk factors

	Regularly Truanting	Not Regularly Truanting
Regularly absent for other reasons	32% (n=933)	7% (n=1181)
Under-achievement in relation to educational ability	64% (n=984)	25% (n=1157)
Difficulties with basic literacy/numeracy	37% (n=975)	18% (n=1167)
Bullied at school	21% (n=968)	15% (n=1161)
Poor relationships with most teachers	51% (n=987)	18% (n=1160)
Lack of attachment to school/own education	62% (n=949)	15% (n=1139)
Negative parental attitude towards education/school	17% (n=953)	4% (n=1145)
Other problems	38% (n=738)	17% (n=1000)

Figure 2.2.3 shows the assessed association between 'statutory education' and the risk of re-offending for those in the sample of statutory school age.

Figure 2.2.3: Perceived link of 'statutory education' with likelihood of further offending



2.2.8 Employment, training and further education

This section of *ASSET* is primarily aimed at young people who will not be receiving any further statutory educational provision. It can also be used to note information in regard to employment or work experience for a young person still at school, but should only be scored if the young person is past school age.

Table 2.2.20 shows the results of question (a) where completed. Thirty six percent were in full-time, part-time or temporary employment and 28% were attending some form of training or an educational course.

Table 2.2.20: Which of the following describes his/her situation in regard to employment training and further education?

Currently in … (n=1188)	YES
Full-time employment	19%
Part-time employment	7%
Casual/temporary employment	10%
Unemployed	39%
New-deal	1%
Pre-employment skills	5%
College/further education	16%
Other training courses	6%
YP unable to work	2%
Looking after family	1%
Doing something else	3%

Males were significantly more likely to be in full-time employment than females (20% compared with 13%) with females more likely to be attending college or further education (21% compared with 14%). Sample sizes for ethnic minorities in this section were very small, however, the data suggests that black offenders were significantly more likely than the white sample to be in college or another form of further education (43% compared with 14%).

Table 2.2.21 shows the results for section (b) of 'employment, training and further education'. A large proportion of the sample were believed to lack qualifications that would help them secure employment, but only 11% were assessed as having negative attitudes towards employment.

Table 2.2.21: Employment, training and further education (section b)

	n	YES	NO	DK	NA
Lack of qualifications etc.	1378	64%	27%	6%	3%
Negative attitudes – further education	1379	21%	71%	6%	2%
Negative attitudes – employment	1369	11%	82%	5%	2%
Other problems	1090	10%	14%	61%	15%

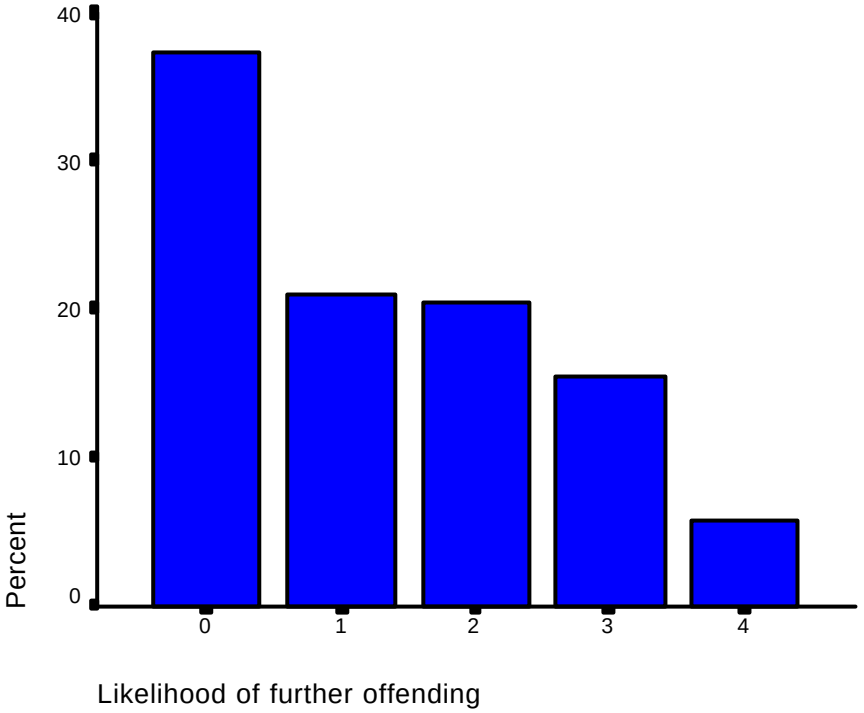
A higher proportion of the white sample were assessed as lacking qualifications when compared to the black sample (65% compared with 46%). The items in table 2.2.20 were tested against whether they young person had regularly truanted while at school. The results are highlighted in table 2.2.22 and show that those who were assessed as having regularly truanted in the past were more likely to have problems in the employment related risk factors.

Table 2.2.22: Association of truanting with employment risk factors

	Regularly Truanted	Did Not Regularly Truant
Lack of qualifications, skills or training	89% (n=286)	39% (n=287)
Negative attitudes towards further education/training	33% (n=280)	8% (n=297)
Negative attitudes towards employment	17% (n=283)	3% (n=293)
Other problems	22% (n=190)	7% (n=241)

Figure 2.2.4 shows the assessed association between 'employment, training and further education' and the risk of re-offending for the whole sample.

Figure 2.2.4: Perceived link of 'employment, training and further education' with the risk of re-offending



As an additional point, the interim report on *ASSET* suggested that the split scoring of sections 3 and 4 was not being used appropriately (Roberts et al 2001). This was tested by assessing how many young people should have been scored in relation to section 3 and how many to section 4 by virtue of their age at the time of the assessment (the explanatory notes accompanying *ASSET* (Youth Justice Board 2000c) make clear that this is how the scoring of the sections should be differentiated). The correct section was rated in 86% of cases, 85% for those under the age of 16 and 88% of those over the age of 16 (based on 2954 cases).

2.2.9 Neighbourhood

To complete the 'neighbourhood' section of *ASSET*, practitioners are asked to give consideration to the area in which a young person spends most of his/her time. For the majority of young people, this will be the area where they live. However in some cases it could be a different area, for example, if a young person is living in Local Authority accommodation but spends most of their time with their friends in a different neighbourhood. Table 2.2.23 shows the responses from question (a) of this section[27]. Over half of the young people were living in council estates and nearly 30% lived in 'older housing'. Less than 10% of the sample lived in areas classified as 'rural'.

[27] These categories are based on the ACORN system of neighbourhood classification (derived from census data) used in the British Crime Survey

Table 2.2.23: Which of the following best describes the neighbourhood in which s/he spends most of their time?

Lives in … (n=2927)	YES
Rural area	9%
Modern family housing	8%
Older housing	12%
Older terraced housing	17%

Lives in … (n=2927)	YES
Council estates	52%
Metropolitan area	6%
Non-family area	1%
Affluent suburban housing	2%

The only significant differences between sub-groups were in relation to ethnicity and these are shown in table 2.2.24 below.

Table 2.2.24: Neighbourhood by ethnic grouping

	White (n=2503)	Black (n=104)	Asian (n=66)	Mixed ethnicity (n=103)
Rural area	10%	1%	1%	3%
Older terraced housing	16%	21%	45%	15%
Council estates	53%	36%	26%	48%
Metropolitan areas	5%	31%	11%	19%

Neighbourhood was described as a crime 'hotspot' under the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act in 24% of cases (although as most practitioners indicated that they did not have access to information about hotspots, this figure may reflect their own views about what constitutes a hotspot rather than the areas actually identified in local crime audits[28]).

Table 2.2.25 shows the results for section (c). A large number of young people were assessed as living in areas with a lack of age-appropriate facilities and nearly 10% in isolated locations with a lack of transport.

Table 2.2.25: Neighbourhood (section c)

	n	YES	NO	DK
Obvious signs of drug-dealing (ci)	3189	24%	62%	14%
Isolated location/lack of transport (cii)	3175	9%	87%	4%
Lack of age-appropriate facilities (ciii)	3182	36%	56%	8%
Racial or ethnic tensions (civ)	3146	6%	76%	18%
Other problems (cv)	2784	9%	84%	7%

Young offenders of black or mixed ethnicity were significantly more likely than the white or Asian offenders to live in areas where there were obvious signs of drug dealing (white 23%, black 34%, Asian 20%, mixed 34%). Young people of Asian origin were most likely to live in areas with racial or ethnic tensions (26% compared with 14% for black offenders and 5% for white offenders).

When broken down by area classification the response rates to section c varied considerably. Table 2.2.26 shows this association using the areas described in section a[29]. It can be seen that obvious signs of drug-dealing were more prevalent in council estates and areas assessed as metropolitan. Rural areas unsurprisingly had a higher incidence of isolation and lack of amenities. Racial and ethnic tensions were

[28] Interim *ASSET* report, Roberts et al (2001) p42

[29] Excluding 'non-family area' and 'affluent suburban' housing due to low N values.

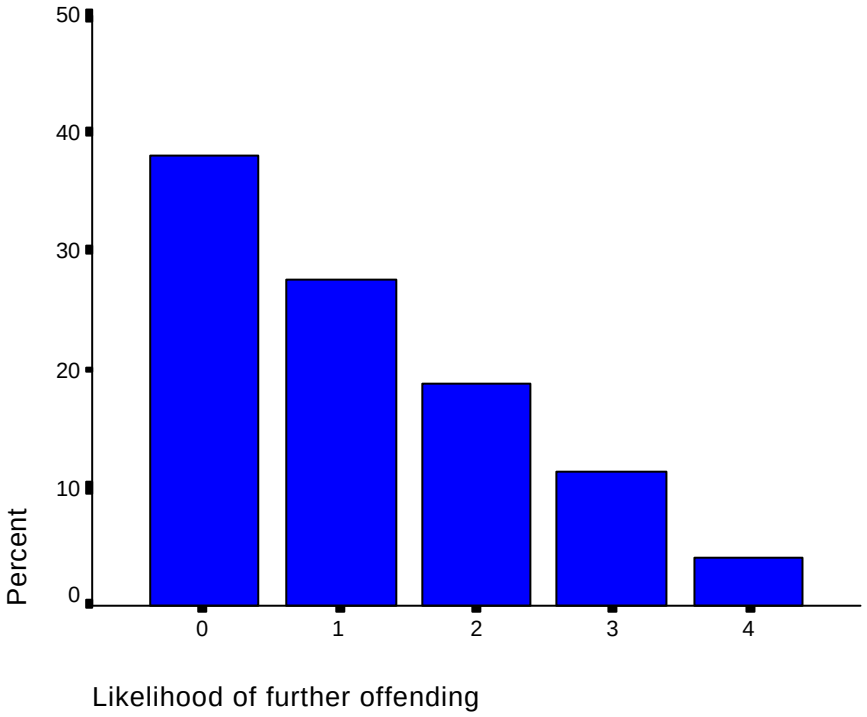
more prevalent in areas described as having lots of older terraced housing and in those areas described as metropolitan.

Table 2.2.26: Section c of neighbourhood by area classification

Question	Rural	Modern	Older	Terraced	Council	Metropol.
Ci	11% (n=232)	8% (n=206)	16% (n=325)	26% (n=421)	40% (n=1223)	34% (n=148)
Cii	48% (n=256)	6% (n=219)	6% (n=344)	6% (n=467)	9% (n=1399)	5% (n=174)
Ciii	61% (n=246)	31% (n=203)	31% (n=338)	38% (n=448)	44% (n=1343)	27% (n=165)
Civ	2% (n=210)	3% (n=194)	6% (n=307)	15% (n=404)	7% (n=1136)	15% (n=148)
Cv	26% (n=213)	9% (n=193)	4% (n=308)	8% (n=413)	12%(n=1154)	8% (n=143)

Figure 2.2.5 shows the assessed association between 'neighbourhood' and the risk of re-offending for the whole sample.

Figure 2.2.5: Perceived link of 'neighbourhood' with the risk of re-offending



2.2.10 Lifestyle

This section of *ASSET* looks at a young person's friends and associates, what they do in their spare time and money issues. Table 2.2.27 shows that 40% of the sample were assessed as associating with pro-criminal peers, nearly 20% as not having age-appropriate friends and nearly a quarter as having only friends who also offended. Non-constructive use of time was assessed as a problem for over half of the sample whilst over a third had lacked adequate legitimate personal income. Again these are areas commonly addressed in the research literature (Patterson and Yoerger 1997).

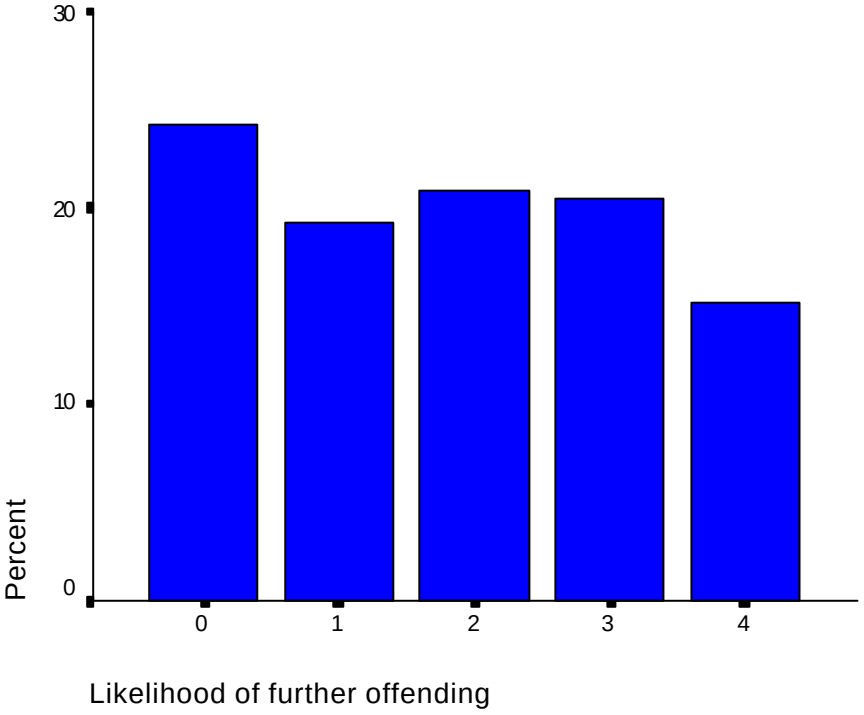
Table 2.2.27: Lifestyle Section

	n	YES	NO	DK
Lack of age appropriate friends	3268	19%	76%	5%
Associating with pro-criminal peers	3279	40%	52%	8%
Absence of non-criminal friends	3248	24%	66%	10%
Non-constructive use of time	3266	53%	43%	4%
Participation in reckless activity	3229	36%	56%	8%
Inadequate legitimate personal income	3189	34%	58%	8%
Other problems	2652	27%	62%	11%

Males were significantly more likely to be assessed as having problems in this area, especially in regard to associating with pro-criminal peers (41% compared with 35% for females), absence of non-criminal friends (26% compared with 19%) and participation in reckless activities (37% compared with 27%).

Figure 2.2.6 shows the assessed association between 'lifestyle' and the risk of re-offending for the whole sample.

Figure 2.2.6: Perceived link of 'lifestyle' with the risk of re-offending



2.2.11 Substance use

Table 2.2.28 contains a breakdown of the information that could be obtained from *ASSET*. The version of *ASSET* used in this study lacked specific response options to say that a young person was not using particular substances. This has since been corrected in a recent revision of *ASSET* but for this analysis, it was presumed that, if the 'ever' or 'recently used' options were not ticked for any specific substance on the list, then the young person had not used it[30]. Due to the nature of the information required in this section, the N values were generally lower than in other

[30] This was in line with the guidance given to practitioners in the *ASSET* 'Explanatory Notes' (Youth Justice Board 2000c)

sections and it is likely that the actual rates of substance use amongst young people in this sample were higher than this data might suggest. Table 2.2.28 provides response rates for each substance on the *ASSET* form and table 2.2.29 gives the information by statutory drug classification. Nearly three quarters of the sample were known to have used tobacco and alcohol. Over half of the sample were known to have used cannabis and 13% had used Class A drugs (including cocaine and heroin).

Table 2.2.25: Substance use

	n	Known to have used[31]	Not known to have used[32]	Mean age of first use
Tobacco	3016	74%	26%	13
Alcohol	2920	73%	27%	13
Solvents	2578	12%	88%	13
Cannabis	2765	46%	54%	14
Ecstasy	2555	10%	90%	15
Amphetamines	2563	10%	90%	15
LSD/Acid	2537	5%	95%	14
Poppers	2536	5%	95%	14
Cocaine	2544	8%	92%	15
Crack	2544	4%	96%	16
Heroin	2558	6%	94%	15
Methadone	2549	2%	98%	15
Illicit prescription	2566	5%	95%	15
Other drugs	2672	1%	99%	14

Table 2.2.29: Substance use by legislative classification

	n	Known to have used	Not known to have used
Class A	2561	13%	87%
Class B[33]	2766	47%	53%
Class C	2567	5%	95%

Males were significantly more likely to have used class B drugs than females (49% compared with 39%) and, as might be expected, the older offenders were more likely to have used tobacco, alcohol and all classes of drugs.

There were several differences between the ethnic groups, for example:

- use of alcohol: white 75%, black 59%, Asian 28%, mixed ethnicity 70%;
- use of tobacco: white 75%, black 61%, Asian 49%, mixed ethnicity 75%;
- use of cannabis: white 47%, black 48%, Asian 26%, mixed ethnicity 53%;
- use of ecstasy: white 11%, black 6%, Asian 2%, mixed ethnicity 19%).

The mixed ethnicity sample were significantly more likely to have used class A and C drugs than the other three ethnic groups.

In a recent survey of 14,000 young people in English, Scottish and Welsh secondary schools (Beinart et al 2002), 30% of boys and 25% of girls in year 11 reported using

[31] This combines 'ever used' and 'recent use' on the *ASSET* form.
[32] This does not include answers of 'don't know/no information'.
[33] At time of writing Class B included cannabis.

cannabis at least once. Ten percent of girls and 8.5% of boys in years 9 and 10 admitted use of solvents. The *ASSET* data suggests a higher frequency of substance use amongst known offenders (although it should be noted that the age bands for the school data were narrower than those used for the *ASSET* sample).

Table 2.2.30 shows the results from section (b) of 'substance use'. Ten percent of the sample were considered to see substance use as a positive part of their lives whilst substance use had a noticeably detrimental effect on the lives of 14% of the sample.

Table 2.2.30: Substance Use (section b)

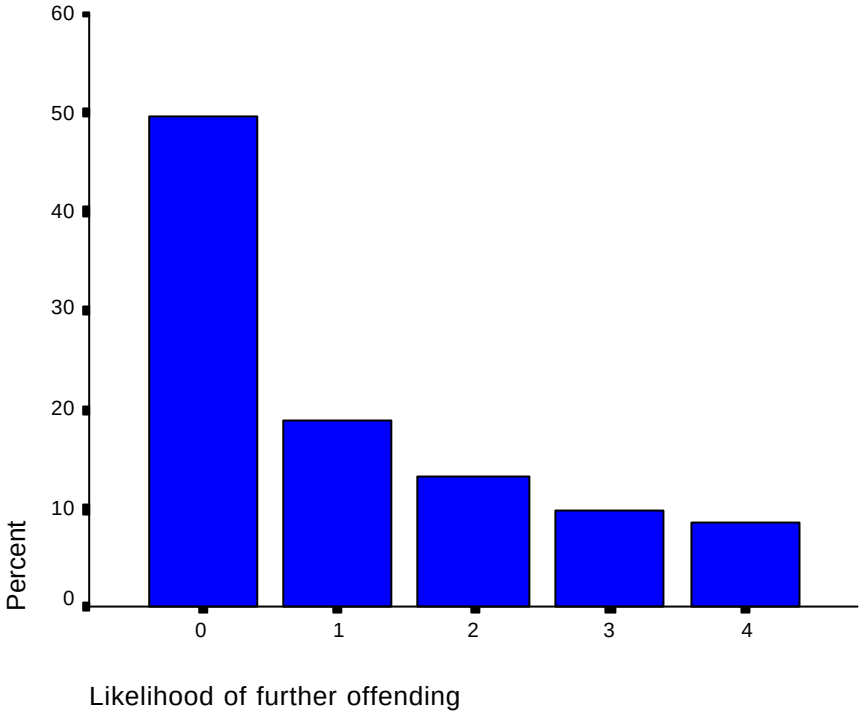
	n	YES	NO	DK
Practices which put them at risk	3029	5%	81%	14%
Substance use a positive part of life	3009	10%	77%	13%
Detrimental effect on life etc.	2999	14%	73%	13%
Offending to obtain money	2995	11%	75%	14%
Other links to offending	2847	18%	68%	14%

A significantly higher proportion of the older sample were assessed as seeing substance use as a positive part of their life (13% compared with 5% for the younger age group). Substance use was also considered to have a more detrimental effect on the lives of the older sample (18% compared with 6%) and this group were assessed as being more likely to commit offences in order to obtain money for substances (15% compared with 5%).

It is likely that disclosure effects influence the quality of information in this section. Young people may not open up about substance use until a good relationship has been established with their case worker. Prior knowledge of the criminal justice system may also discourage a young person from disclosing any information they believe might be detrimental to the outcome of a court appearance. Appendix 2 illustrates the differences between FW and PSR cases for substance use and it can be seen that young people at PSR stage were more likely to be assessed as having used each of the substances listed. This may be partly explained by a greater amount of information being available on young people who have had more contact with the criminal justice system.

Figure 2.2.7 shows the assessed association between substance use and the risk of re-offending for the whole sample.

Figure 2.2.7: Perceived link of 'substance use' with the risk of re-offending



2.2.12 Physical health

This section looks at the impact of any health problems on a young person's daily life. This may include conditions such as ADHD which has been associated with criminal behaviour in young people (Farrington et al 1990). Health problems may also have an adverse impact on many other aspects of a young person's life, including educational and school experiences, peer group interactions, self-presentation and self-esteem. Table 2.2.31 demonstrates that 8% of the sample were assessed as having a medical condition that significantly affected their everyday functioning.

Table 2.2.31: Physical Health

	n	YES	NO	DK
Condition significantly affects everyday functioning	3232	8%	89%	3%
Immaturity/delayed development	3226	4%	93%	3%
Not registered with GP[34]	3209	5%	84%	11%
Lack of access to appropriate health care	3204	4%	88%	8%
Health put at risk through own behaviour	3189	11%	81%	8%
Other Problems	2309	9%	80%	11%

Although the actual number of cases involved was small, it is interesting to note that males were significantly more likely to be assessed as experiencing delayed development than female offenders (5% compared to 1%). A higher proportion of females put their health at risk through their own behaviour (17% compared to 10%).

[34] Practitioners found the phrasing of this question unclear so the results may not represent the actual number of young people not registered with a GP. The wording of this question has since been amended.

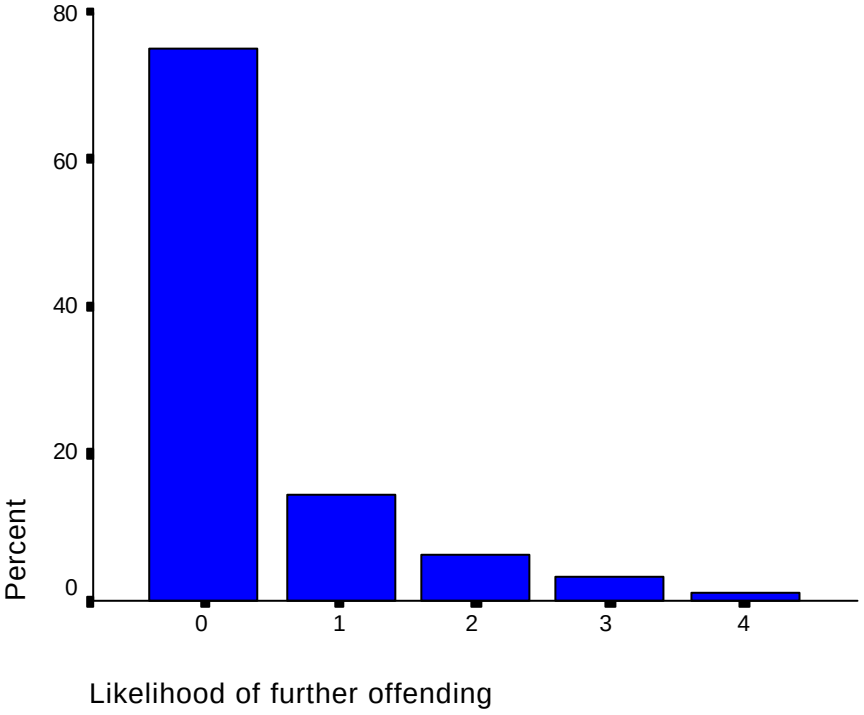
Lack of access to appropriate health care was tested against the description of the area given in the neighbourhood section above (table 2.2.23 above). Differences in provision are highlighted in table 2.2.32 which shows that young people living in council estates had least access to appropriate healthcare facilities.

Table 2.2.32: Lack of appropriate healthcare facilities by area

Lack of access to appropriate health care facilities in…	(n=109)
Rural Areas	8%
Modern higher income family home	6%
Older, intermediate housing	7%
Older terraced housing	23%
Council estates	55%
Inner metropolitan areas	6%
High-status non-family area	2%
Affluent sub-urban housing	1%

Figure 2.2.8 shows the assessed association between physical health and the risk of re-offending for the whole sample.

Figure 2.2.8: Perceived link of 'physical health' and the risk of re-offending



2.2.13 Emotional and mental health

ASSET uses a broad definition of emotional and mental health. It includes issues about mental illness but recognises that, for young people, issues such as personal relationships and social environment may influence mental and emotional well being. The importance of assessing problems in these areas was recently highlighted in a report by the Mental Health Foundation (Hagell 2002) which suggested that the rate of mental health problems amongst young offenders was at least three times higher than for those within the general population (and even higher for young

people in custody)[35]. The nature of the problems will often be the same as those experienced by the general adolescent population but the effects are likely to be more severe for those young people in contact with the criminal justice system.

Table 2.2.32 deals with the responses for section (a), table 2.2.33 for section (b) and table 2.2.34 for section (c) of 'emotional and mental health'. Practitioners assessed nearly a third of the sample as being significantly affected in their everyday lives by problems coming to terms with a past event and by concerns about the future.

Nearly 10% of the offenders had deliberately harmed themselves at some point in the past and 5% had previously attempted suicide.

Table 2.2.32: Emotional and mental health (section a)

Daily functioning significantly affected by…	n	YES	NO	DK
Coming to terms with significant past events	3210	32%	56%	12%
Current circumstances	3176	34%	55%	11%
Concerns about the future	3139	29%	58%	13%

Table 2.2.33: Emotional and mental health (section b)

	n	YES	NO	DK
Formal diagnosis of mental illness	3217	2%	91%	7%
Any other contact with mental health services	3136	11%	81%	8%

Table 2.2.34: Emotional and mental health (section c)

	n	YES	NO	DK
Affected by other emotional or psychological problems	3187	9%	81%	10%
Deliberately harms themselves	3203	8%	82%	10%
Previously attempted suicide	3186	5%	85%	10%

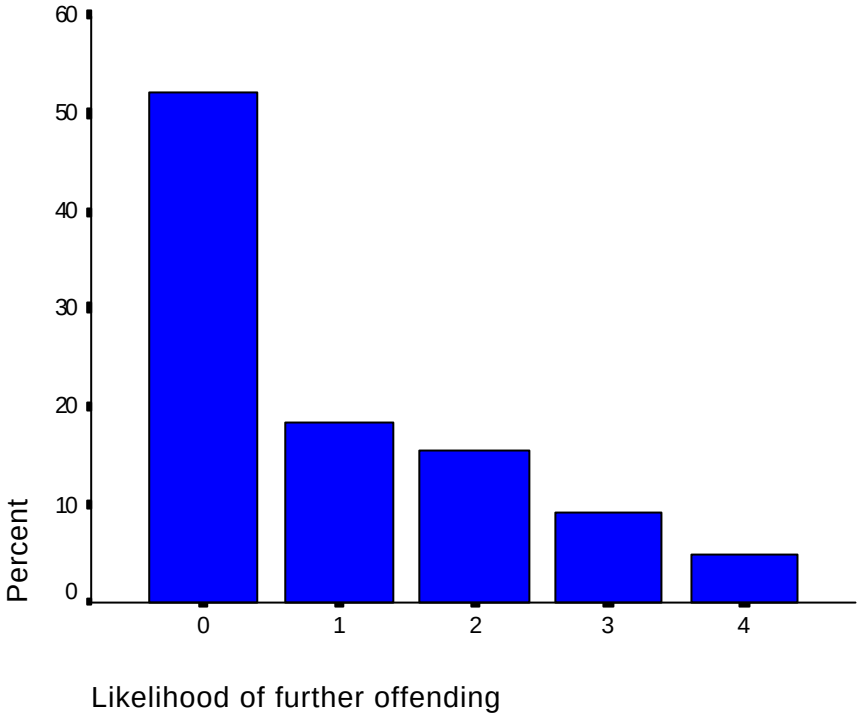
Practitioners were more likely to assess female offenders as having problems in this section, especially coming to terms with significant past events (40% compared with 30% for males), current circumstances (42% compared with 33%) and deliberately harming themselves (17% compared with 7%) or previously attempting suicide (11% compared with 4%).

A higher proportion of mixed ethnicity young offenders experienced problems in the items above. This was especially noticeable in relation to the questions about coming to terms with significant past events (47% compared with 31% for the white sample and 16% for the Asian sample) and having concerns about the future (41% compared with 28% for the white sample and 24% for the Asian sample).

Figure 2.2.9 shows the assessed association between 'emotional and mental health' and the risk of re-offending.

[35] See also chapter 5 for self-assessment data

Figure 2.2.9: Perceived link of 'emotional and mental health' with the risk of re-offending



2.2.14 Perception of self and others

The focus of this section of *ASSET* is on young people's understanding of how they – and others – fit into the world around them. As with the other components of the core profile, this section reports the views of practitioners rather than self-assessment data from offenders. In table 2.2.35 it can be seen that a quarter of the sample were considered to display inappropriate levels of self-esteem (either too high or too low) and a similar proportion were assessed as showing a lack of understanding for other people.

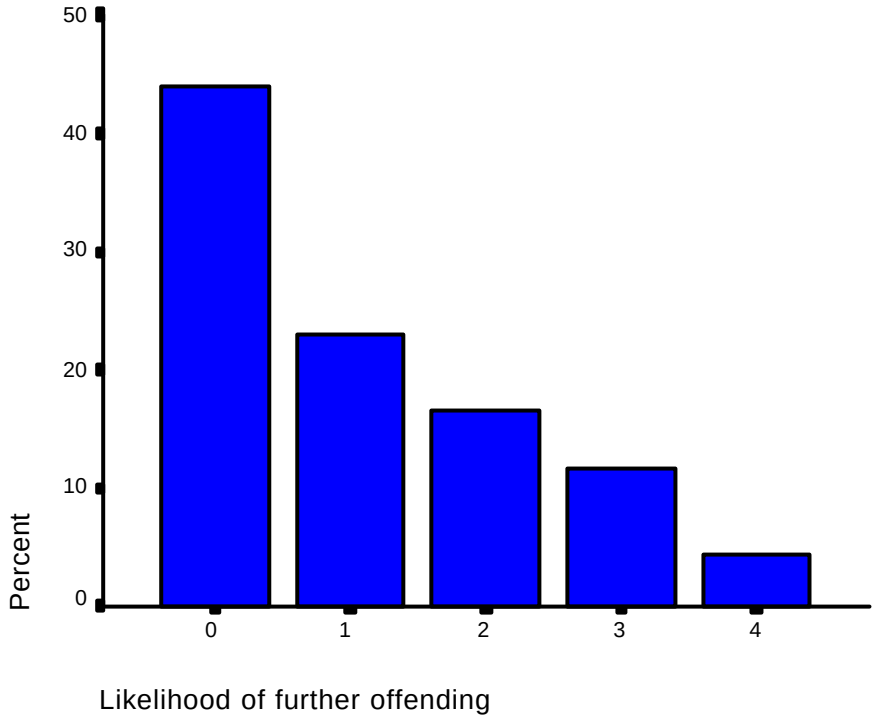
Table 2.2.35: Perception of Self and Others

	n	YES	NO	DK
Difficulties with self-identity	3183	9%	81%	10%
Inappropriate self-esteem	3209	26%	65%	9%
General mistrust of others	3207	22%	67%	11%
Displays a lack of understanding for other people	3184	25%	68%	7%
Displays discriminatory attitudes	3169	6%	82%	12%
Sees him/herself as an offender	3189	19%	72%	9%

Males were more likely than females to be assessed as displaying a lack of understanding for other people (26% compared with 19%) and to see themselves as offenders (20% compared with 14%). Twenty six percent of the mixed ethnicity offenders and 18% of the Asian young offenders had difficulties with self-identity compared to 8% of the white sample and 10% of the black sample. A higher proportion of black offenders and mixed ethnicity offenders held a general mistrust of others and displayed a lack of understanding for other people.

Figure 2.2.10 shows the assessed association between 'perception of self and others' and the risk of re-offending.

Figure 2.2.10: Perceived link of 'perception of self and others' with risk of re-offending



2.2.15 Thinking and behaviour

This section identifies problematic patterns of thinking and types of behaviour. Judgments in this section can be drawn from information about behaviour at home, at school, with friends, in the neighbourhood, with staff and, of course, details of the offences committed. Table 2.2.36 shows the answers for section (a) and table 2.2.37 the results for section (b) of 'thinking and behaviour'. Nearly three quarters of the sample were considered to be impulsive, nearly half had a constant need for excitement (got easily bored) and a similar proportion were assessed as giving in easily to pressure from others.

Table 2.2.36: Thinking and Behaviour (section a)

	N	YES	NO	DK
Lack of understanding of consequences	3260	45%	52%	3%
Impulsive – acting without thinking	3252	74%	23%	3%
Need for excitement (easily bored)	3235	44%	47%	9%
Giving in easily to pressure from others	3232	44%	47%	9%
Poor control of temper	3238	40%	51%	9%
Inappropriate self-presentation	3196	9%	86%	5%

Table 2.2.37: Thinking and Behaviour (section b)

	N	YES	NO	DK
Destruction of property	3204	27%	67%	6%
Aggression towards others	3204	42%	53%	5%
Sexually inappropriate behaviour	3174	4%	83%	13%
Attempts to manipulate/control others	3168	10%	76%	14%

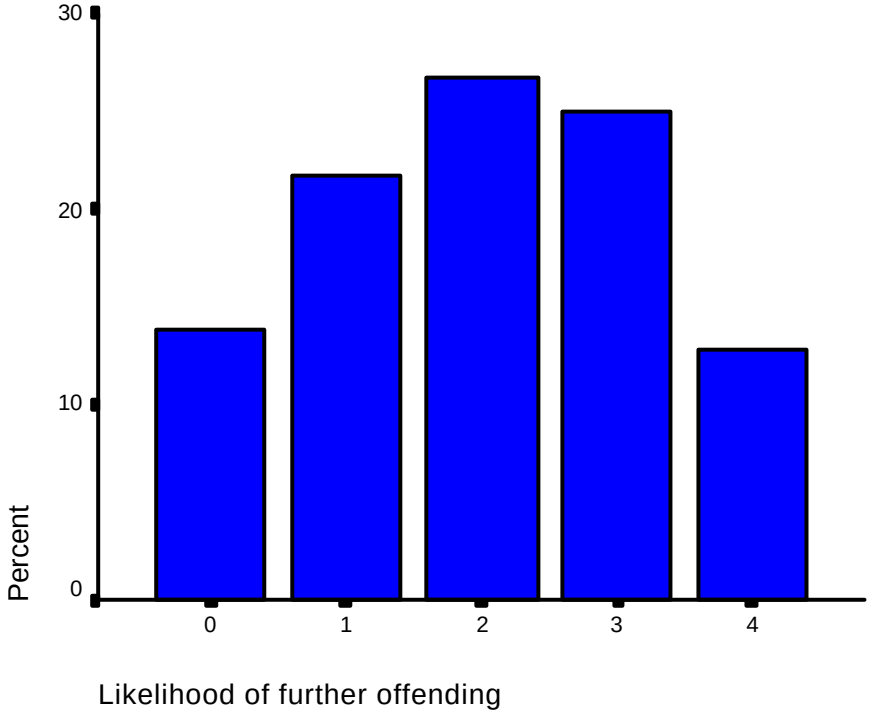
Males were assessed as being more likely to lack understanding of consequences, to be impulsive/act without thinking, to have a need for excitement and to be involved in destruction of property.

As might be expected, the younger age group were more likely to have problems in the area of thinking and behaviour. Differences from the older age group were particularly noticeable in regard to questions concerning understanding of consequences, need for excitement and poor control of temper.

There were also some differences between ethnic groups. White offenders, for example, were assessed as being more impulsive than Asian offenders (74% compared with 56%).

Figure 2.2.11 shows the assessed association between 'thinking and behaviour' and the risk of re-offending.

Figure 2.2.11: Perceived link of 'thinking and behaviour' with the risk of re-offending



2.2.16 Attitudes to offending

In this section of *ASSET*, practitioners are asked to focus on a young person's attitudes about offending. In particular, this relates to the offence/s which triggered the assessment, although if attitudes to past offences are particularly significant they can also be considered. As table 2.2.38 shows, over a third of the sample were assessed as showing a lack of understanding for the victim. Over a quarter denied the seriousness of the offence and a similar proportion showed a lack of remorse. Further offending was thought to be inevitable in 13% of cases.[36]

[36] It is interesting to compare this with the actual reconviction rate for the sample of 52% (see page 52).

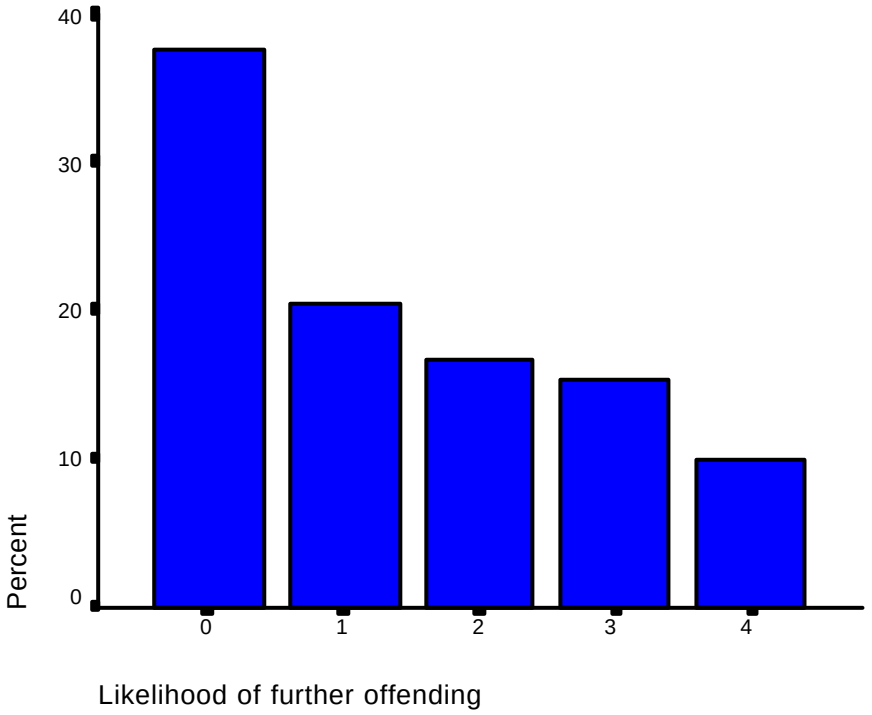
Table 2.2.38: Attitudes to Offending

	n	YES	NO	DK
Denial of the seriousness of offence	3264	25%	73%	2%
Reluctance to accept any responsibility	3272	15%	83%	2%
Lack of understanding of the effects on victims	3253	34%	63%	3%
Lack of remorse	3255	27%	70%	3%
Lack of understanding of the effects on family	3280	27%	69%	4%
Belief that certain types of offending is acceptable	3222	17%	73%	10%
Belief that certain people/groups are acceptable targets	3225	8%	81%	11%
Thinks that further offending is inevitable	3218	13%	76%	11%

Practitioners identified males as being more likely to deny the seriousness of their offence (26% compared with 19% for females) and to lack understanding of the effects of their behaviour on both victims (36% compared with 26%) and their family (29% compared with 19%). A higher proportion of black offenders were assessed as denying the seriousness of their offence when compared with the white sample (36% compared with 24%). A significantly lower proportion of Asian offenders believed that further offending was inevitable (4% compared with 13% for white offenders and 12% for those of mixed ethnicity).

Figure 2.2.12 shows the assessed association between 'attitudes to offending' and the risk of re-offending.

Figure 2.2.12: Perceived link of 'attitudes to offending' to risk of re-offending



2.2.17 Motivation to change

In contrast to the preceding sections, 'yes' responses in the motivation section of *ASSET* are seen as positive. As table 2.2.39 shows, all the questions in this section prompted a high proportion of 'yes' answers with over 80% of the sample rated positively for each individual item.

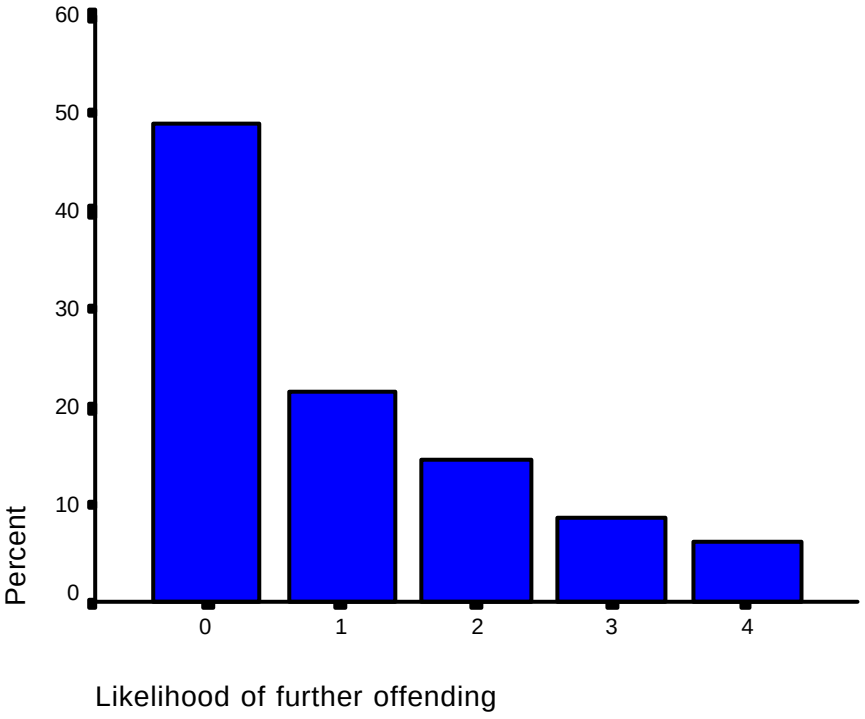
Table 2.2.39: Motivation to Change

	n	YES	NO	DK
Some understanding of problems in life	3206	85%	11%	4%
Some evidence of wanting to deal with problems	3198	81%	14%	5%
Understands consequences of further offending	3214	88%	9%	3%
Can identify reasons to stop offending	3202	81%	13%	6%
Some evidence of wanting to stop	3195	82%	12%	6%
Likely to receive support from family etc.	3198	82%	10%	8%
Willing to co-operate to achieve change	3156	83%	8%	9%

The older age group were assessed as being more motivated to change than the younger group. There was some evidence of wanting to change for 84% of the older offenders compared with 76% of the younger group for example and 91% of the older sample were considered to understand the consequences of further offending compared with 82% of the younger offenders.

Figure 2.2.13 shows the assessed association between 'motivation to change' and the risk of re-offending.

Figure 2.2.13: Perceived link of 'motivation to change' with the risk of re-offending



2.2.18 Positive factors

In addition to the sections described above which identify risk factors, *ASSET* also includes a section on 'positive factors'. Table 2.2.40 relates to question (a) 'social and family circumstances' and table 2.2.41 relates to question (b) 'personal factors'. The highest numbers of positive factors identified were in the areas of living arrangements and family and personal relationships.

Table 2.2.40: Positive Factors (question a)

	n	YES
Living arrangements etc.	3010	74%
Family/Personal relationships	3009	74%
Education and employment	3009	50%
Professional help/support	3006	30%
Other positive factors	3005	11%

Table 2.2.41: Positive Factors (question b)

	n	YES
Lifestyle	3008	33%
Resilience	3008	29%
Attitudes and thinking	3007	54%
Actions and behaviour	3008	36%
Motivation	3009	59%
Other positive factors	3008	8%

Females were assessed as having more positive factors than males (for example, in the areas of receiving professional help, attitudes/thinking and motivation). The younger group were more likely to be assessed as having professional help and support as a positive factor (36% compared with 27%) whilst items in the 'personal factors' question were more likely to be identified as positives for the older group. These included resilience (32% compared with 23% for younger offenders), attitudes and thinking (57% compared with 47%) and motivation (63% compared with 50%).

Asian offenders had the highest proportion of positive factors in the area of family relationships and living arrangements. For those of mixed ethnicity, 'receiving professional help and support' was more likely to be identified as a positive than for other ethnic groups (50% compared with 25% of the Asian sample and 30% of the white sample).

There were some anomalies in the data however which suggest inconsistencies between the completion of this and the other sections of *ASSET*. Motivation was only described as a positive factor in 59% of cases, for example, even though the 'motivation to change' section showed that practitioners were assessing large numbers of young people as being ready to address the problems associated with their behaviour. Some amendments to this section of *ASSET* have since been made which should help practitioners to complete it more accurately and, as staff become more familiar with the process of identifying positive factors, it is hoped that this will become a more central feature of assessments.

2.2.19 Indicators of vulnerability

This section of *ASSET* focuses on a young person's vulnerability to being harmed. This is broadly defined so as to include harm caused by others and harm which a young person may inflict on themselves.

Table 2.2.42 contains the results from question (a). This deals with general issues surrounding harm arising from the actions of other people, specific events or

circumstances and a young person's own behaviour. Approximately 20% of the sample were classified as being vulnerable in one or more of these respects.

Table 2.2.42: Indicators of Vulnerability (question a)

	n	YES	NO	DK
Vulnerable because of the behaviour of other people	3094	21%	71%	8%
Vulnerable because of events or circumstances	3044	17%	75%	8%
Vulnerable because of own behaviour	3033	25%	68%	7%

Table 2.2.43 refers to the very specific question of whether the young person is at risk of self-harm or suicide. Nine percent or 270 young people were believed to be at risk of self-harm or suicide at the point of assessment.

Table 2.2.43: Indicators of Vulnerability (question b)

	n	YES	NO	DK
Young person at risk of self-harm or suicide	3075	9%	84%	7%

Table 2.2.44 provides the response rate for section (c) regarding protective factors that may reduce the young person's vulnerability.

Table 2.2.44: Indicators of Vulnerability (question c)

	n	YES	NO	DK
Protective factors that reduce vulnerability	2589	25%	57%	18%

A higher proportion of females were considered at risk of self-harm or suicide (15% compared with 8% for males). Younger offenders were more likely to be considered vulnerable as a result of the behaviour of other people (26% compared with 20% for older offenders). They also had lower levels of protective factors to reduce vulnerability (27% compared with 22%).

Differences between the ethnic groups included vulnerability due to events and circumstances (for example, Asian 9%, mixed ethnicity 29%) and vulnerability because of their own behaviour (Asian 12%, mixed ethnicity 35%). Protective factors were lower for the white (25%) and mixed ethnicity (14%) samples than for the Asian sample (34%).

2.2.20 Indicators of serious harm

The 'indicators of serious harm' section of the core *ASSET* profile is intended to be a 'filter' to help practitioners identify cases in which there may be a risk of a young person going on to cause serious harm to **other people** in the future[37]. If there is a 'yes' answer to any one of the ten questions in this section, a more detailed risk of harm assessment should then be completed.

From the original sample of 3395 cases, the 'indicators of serious harm' section was completed in 3012 of the forms. Of these 3012, an indicator of serious harm was identified in 913 cases (30%). As table 2.2.45 shows, this high proportion can largely be explained by responses to one particular question concerning 'behaviour

[37] 'Serious harm' is defined in *ASSET* as 'death or injury (either physical or psychological) which is life threatening and/or traumatic and from which recovery is expected to be difficult, incomplete or impossible'.

that could unintentionally have led to serious harm'. The original wording of this question was ambiguous and caused some confusion amongst practitioners. In response to this, the question has since been re-worded and it is hoped that this well reduce such problems in future.

Table 2.2.45: Indicators of serious harm

Indicator	n	YES	NO	DK
Behaviour by the young person which resulted in serious harm actually being caused	2949	11%	86%	3%
Behaviour which indicates that s/he was intending or preparing to cause serious harm	2956	6%	90%	4%
Behaviour that could – unintentionally – have led to serious harm	2949	24%	71%	5%
Other features of his/her offending which indicate that there may be a risk of serious harm	2960	5%	93%	2%
Attitudes/motives which indicate that there may be a risk of serious harm	2954	5%	92%	3%
Current interests/activities which indicate that there may be a risk of serious harm	2953	1%	96%	3%
Any other disconcerting or disturbing behaviour by the young person	2956	2%	93%	5%
Concerns about possible harmful behaviour expressed by the young person	2943	4%	94%	2%
Concerns about possible harmful behaviour expressed by other people e.g. family, school	2934	6%	91%	3%
Any other intuitive or 'gut' feelings about possible harmful behaviour	2905	7%	90%	3%

Male offenders were more likely than females to be assessed as having an indicator of serious harm (31% and 26% respectively) and a similar pattern applied to older offenders (31%) and younger offenders (26%).

There were no significant differences between white young people and those from black or Asian backgrounds in this respect. There was however, a difference between white young people and those of mixed ethnicity. At least 1 serious harm indicator was identified in 30% of cases involving white young people (N=2590) and in 42% of cases from a mixed ethnic background (N=106).

Practitioners were more likely to identify an indicator of serious harm at PSR or post-sentence stage than at the final warning stage as shown in table 2.4.46.

Table 2.2.46: At least 1 serious harm indicator identified (case stage)

Case stage	n	%
Final Warning	1112	13%
PSR	1365	44%
Post Sentence	468	29%

Table 2.1.47 below shows the proportion of cases for specific offence groups in which an indicator of serious harm was identified.

Table 2.2.47: At least 1 serious harm indicator identified (offence type)

Offence type	n	%
Violence	583	53%
Sexual	35	74%
Public order	143	35%
Burglary	414	23%
Robbery	93	39%
Vehicle theft/TWOC	241	41%
Other motoring	175	29%
Criminal damage	311	26%

Further analysis was undertaken on the 'violence' group. When these cases were looked at separately, there were no differences by gender but differences in age and case stage remained significant.

Analysis of *ASSET* data relating to 'serious harm' is on-going and the more in-depth 'risk of serious harm: full assessment' form is currently being revised. Additional details on this will be published in due course.

2.3 SUMMARY

This chapter has demonstrated the wealth of information that can be generated from *ASSET* on the young offender population. It can provide data on which to make evidential decisions at both a local and national level and has the potential to be continually updated with the collection of new *ASSET* forms (this should become easier with increased use of electronic versions of *ASSET*).

ASSET also facilitates the gathering of information on particular groups of offenders including female offenders, those from ethnic minorities and those at the younger end of the age range. As *ASSET* is primarily a profile of the characteristics of young offenders (from the perspective of assessors), it cannot in itself provide explanations for why differences between particular groups may exist. The profile data does, however, help to identify issues where further detailed research may be required. In this study, for example, offenders of mixed ethnicity were generally rated by practitioners as having more problems, less positive factors and a higher risk of re-offending. The reasons for this are currently unclear but it is an area in which additional research, using a bigger sample, would be valuable.

The profiling information presented here will help to put the following chapters on validity (chapter 3) and reliability (chapter 4) into context. Together with the data from the self-assessment questionnaire ('What do YOU think?') in chapter 5, the report provides an interesting picture of the complex lives and characteristics of the 3395 young people on whom information was available for this study.

CHAPTER 3 – VALIDITY OF ASSET

Validity refers to the extent to which a tool measures the constructs that it is supposed to assess. A risk/need tool such as *ASSET* should be able to demonstrate various forms of validity such as face validity, construct validity, predictive validity and discriminant validity (Hine and Merrington 2001, Andrews and Bonta 1995). This chapter focuses primarily on predictive validity i.e. the ability of *ASSET* to predict re-offending but also includes reference to testing of its internal validity using factor analysis.

3.1 DESIGN OF THE VALIDATION STUDY

Throughout the study, reconviction was used as a proxy measure for re-offending. Despite the problems associated with this (Lloyd et al 1994, Friendship et al 2001), reconviction still provided the best available outcome measure for this study.

The validation of *ASSET* consisted of three stages:

- testing the predictive validity of the current rating score;
- constructing new, improved versions of the score;
- validating the new scores.

Prediction scores of this kind can be validated by following up cases for a set period to see whether they were reconvicted or not. This procedure was followed for example in a recent reconviction study of ACE and LSI-R assessments of adult offenders in England and Wales (Raynor et al 2000). This study presents results for *ASSET* based on 12 month reconviction data. A further validation using 24 month data will be carried out during 2003.

There are two national sources of reconviction data, the Home Office Offender Index (OI) and the Police National Computer (PNC). The latter was chosen because the time lags involved in using OI data ruled it out. The PNC includes data on reprimands, final warnings and court convictions. As this was a study of re-offending the data consisted almost entirely of reconvictions. Pseudo reconvictions[38] were excluded from the analysis wherever possible.

Arguably, a high *ASSET* score should not only indicate a higher probability of reconviction but also a likelihood of more frequent offending and, possibly, of more serious offences. The current rating score has therefore been validated in three ways: against the occurrence of reconviction and also against frequency and seriousness of offence on first reconviction.

The improved scores were validated in the same way i.e. against reconviction. However, there are two further ways in which they could be validated:

[38] Offences committed before, but sentenced after, the date on which the *ASSET* assessment was made.

As a dynamic predictor *ASSET* should be tested by comparing score changes with reconviction. Offenders whose scores improve during supervision could be expected to have lower reconviction rates than similar offenders whose scores deteriorate. Secondly, it would be useful to validate *ASSET* scores by checking them against offender self assessments. A high level of agreement would indicate reliability and self assessments could also be checked against reconviction.

Neither of these was possible within the time limits for this study.

3.2 THE RECONVICTION SAMPLES

Two samples were sent to the Home Office Offenders & Corrections Unit for extraction of reconviction data from the Police National Computer. The first covered people on whom *ASSET* assessments were completed in June/July 2000 and the second covered August/September 2000. The first sample was used as a construction sample for testing the current rating score and for the creation of an improved *ASSET* reconviction predictor. The second sample was used as a validation sample for the new predictor.

Table 3.2.1 gives details of the sample sizes and the success in matching with PNC data. In the construction sample there was an 84% success rate in matching[39] (which is about average). Unfortunately 2% of successful matches could not be followed up for 12 months because of time spent in custody, leaving 82% available for analysis. In the validation sample there was a lower success rate with matching and only 76% were available for use.

Table 3.2.1: The reconviction samples

	Construction sample	Validation sample
Cases submitted to Home Office	1474	1776
No match found	228 (16%)	414 (23%)
Match found, but 12 month follow-up not possible	36 (2%)	15 (1%)
Match found and reconviction data useable	1210 (82%)	1347 (76%)

3.3 SUMMARY OF RECONVICTION RATES IN THE CONSTRUCTION SAMPLE

Taking the construction sample of 1210 cases, 52% were reconvicted at least once during the 12-month follow-up period. This is a significantly higher rate than the 41-42% recorded in a similar study of adult offenders (Raynor et al 2000) and it is likely that this is due to the difference in ages.

The reconviction rate for males was significantly higher than for females - 55% compared to 40%. The reconviction rate for black and Asian offenders was lower than for whites, but not significantly so. The older offenders (aged 16 or over) were more likely to be reconvicted than those aged 15 or less - 57% compared to 49%.

There was also a significant difference in reconviction rates between final warning cases and PSR cases. This is not surprising since the final warning sample consisted of young people who, by definition, were at an earlier stage in their criminal careers and thus it included a higher proportion of cases who would go no further. The final warning reconviction rate was 32% (N=452), very similar to the 30% found by

[39] Reasons for non-matching included: PNC-Id number not available, missing information on date of birth or date of sentence.

Hine and Celnick (2001). The PSR group's reconviction rate was much higher at 68% (N=574).

Frequency of reconviction was measured both by the number of sentencing occasions in the 12 month follow-up period and also by the number of offences dealt with on those occasions. Table 3.3.1 gives details.

Table 3.3.1: Frequency of reconviction over 12 months

	Reconvicted offenders (N=627)	
	Occasions	Offences
Mean number	2.1	4.8
Minimum	1	1
Maximum	9	29

Seriousness of offence on reconviction was measured by offence gravity and by disposal. Some validation research was undertaken based on the Youth Justice Board's 1-8 classification of offence seriousness which produced a more rigorous classification based on sentencing data. The mean offence gravity on reconviction was 3.2, and as table 3.3.2 shows, most offences fell into categories 2 and 3 which indicate less serious offences. When compared with table 2.1.7 in chapter 2, it can be seen that offence gravity on reconviction tended to be lower than for initial offences.

Table 3.3.2: Offence seriousness on reconviction (N=569)

Offence gravity	Frequency
1	1%
2	33%
3	32%
4	20%
5	12%
6	2%
7	-
8	-

Disposal on reconviction was analysed by grouping sentences into three bands: custody, community supervision, and other disposals (principally fines and conditional discharges). As table 3.3.3 shows, only 13% fell into the custody category.

Table 3.3.3: Disposal on reconviction (N=627)

Disposal	Frequency
Custody	13%
Community intervention	46%
Other	41%

3.4 Accuracy of current ASSET rating in predicting reconviction

The core *ASSET* form as originally designed allows the risk of re-offending to be rated on a 0-4 scale for each of the 13 risk/need sections. These combine to produce

a score between 0 and 48[40]. This rating (referred to as the *current* score) will be examined initially before possible improvements are considered.

The total can be misleading if some of the sections have not been rated. In this study, cases where less than 80% of section scores were present were excluded. Of the 1210 cases in the construction sample, 1081 (89%) met this requirement. Using this sample, the average current rating score was 14.9[41] with a standard deviation of 10.5. This tendency for scores to be bunched at the lower end is confirmed by table 3.4.1.

Table 3.4.1: Distribution of current ASSET scores (N=1081)

Score range (quintiles)	Frequency
0-9	38%
10-19	31%
20-29	19%
30-39	11%
40-48	1%
Total	100%

3.4.1 Accuracy in predicting whether reconvicted or not

The first procedure for testing the accuracy of prediction followed that used by Raynor et al (2000) and involved calculating a 'percent correctly predicted'. This was done by splitting the *ASSET* scores into 'high' and 'low' at a point corresponding to the proportions actually reconvicted and treating all high scores as predicting reconviction and low scores as predicting non-reconviction. Reconvicted high scorers and non-reconvicted low scorers were counted as correct, the rest being incorrect. For reasons explained by Copas (1992), the proportion correctly predicted cannot normally exceed 75% if the actual reconviction rate is 50%. The proportion correctly predicted should also not fall below 50% since this can be achieved by random allocation.

The accuracy rate of the current *ASSET* score was 67% which is very encouraging. This was obtained by adding together the percentages of the two correctly predicted groups shown in table 3.4.2, that is, non-reconvicted low scorers (32.7%) and reconvicted high scorers (34.3%).

Table 3.4.2: Percent correctly predicted: current ASSET score (N=1081)

	Reconvicted		Not reconvicted		Total	
Score 0-12 (low)	176	(16.3%)	354	(32.7%)	530	(49%)
Score 13-48 (high)	371	(34.3%)	180	(16.7%)	551	(51%)
Total	547	(50.6%)	534	(49.4%)	1081	(100%)

Significance of difference (chi-square) = .000

In the report by Raynor et al (2000), the comparable figures for predictive accuracy were 62% for ACE, 65% for LSI-R and 67% for OGRS. This means that the current version of *ASSET* is comparable to the most accurate reconviction predictors currently in use for adult offenders.

[40] Only 12 ratings are added to produce the total because practitioners are asked to rate either section 3 'statutory education' or section 4 'employment, training and further education' but not both.

[41] This is very similar to the average score of 14.4 for the whole sample (page 21)

A second accuracy check was to compare the difference between the average *ASSET* scores of those reconvicted and not reconvicted. As table 3.4.3 shows, this was highly significant.

Table 3.4.3: Difference in current ASSET scores between those reconvicted and not reconvicted (N=1081)

	No. of cases	Mean score	Standard deviation of score	Significance of difference (t-test)
Reconvicted	547	18.7	10.5	.000
Not reconvicted	534	10.9	9.0	

3.4.2 Accuracy across the score range

The third procedure was to test the accuracy of prediction at the extremes of the scoring range. This was done by dividing the *ASSET* scores of the sample into five equal-sized bands (quintiles) and examining the proportion in each band who were reconvicted at least once within the 12 months. As table 3.4.4 shows, the differentiation of risk levels was generally good, except that the 'low' and 'high' bands did not stretch as far down and up as one would wish (ideally they would be closer to 10% and 90% respectively).

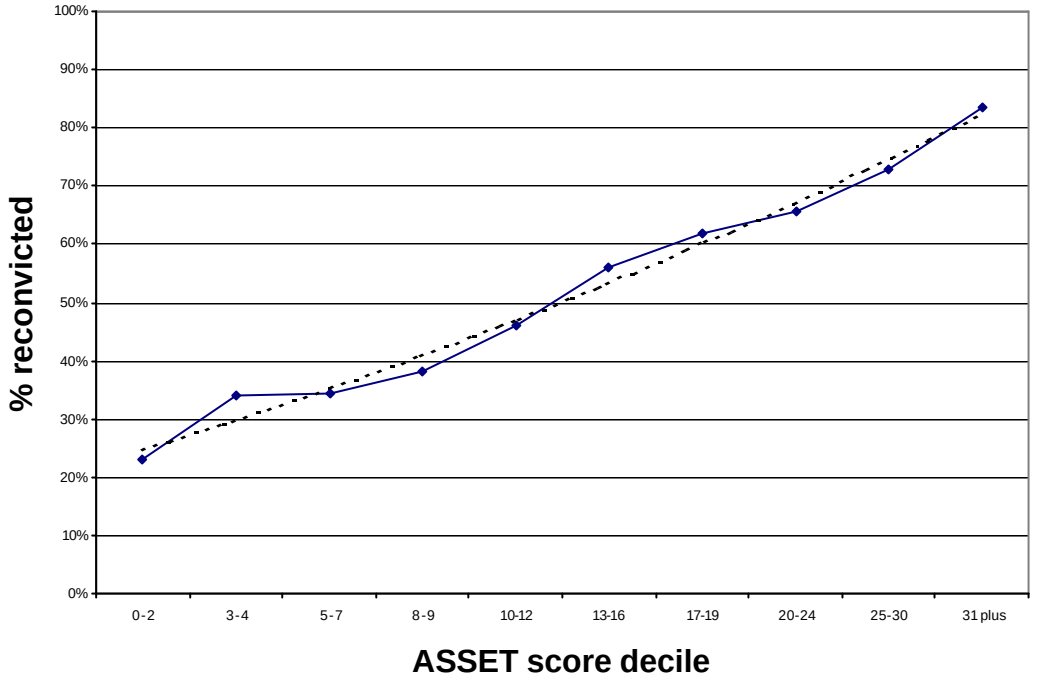
Table 3.4.4: Percentage reconvicted within 12 months by current ASSET score band (N=1081)

Score band		No. of cases	Percent reconvicted
0-4	(Low)	203	26.6%
5-9	(Low-Medium)	204	33.8%
10-16	(Medium)	238	49.2%
17-24	(Medium-high)	209	64.6%
25-48	(High)	227	75.8%
All cases		*1081*	*50.6%*

Significance of difference (chi-square) = .000

Figure 1 below shows the same information but by score deciles (ten equal sized bands) instead of quintiles.

Figure 1: Current ASSET score by % reconvicted



The Area Under Curve (AUC) summary measure[42] for the current *ASSET* score was calculated at 0.719. This is similar to comparative figures for OGRS in relation to adult offenders.

3.4.3 Accuracy in predicting frequency of reconviction

The second way of testing the current version of *ASSET* was to examine its ability to predict frequency of reconviction.

Frequency was measured in two ways as described above: number of offences and number of sentencing occasions. The first step was to examine whether there was a significant difference in the *ASSET* scores of those reconvicted on one occasion compared to those convicted on more than one occasion. As table 3.4.5 shows, the average scores of those convicted more than once were significantly higher.

Table 3.4.5: Difference in initial ASSET scores by number of reconviction occasions (N=539)

	No. of cases	Mean score	Standard deviation of score	Significance of difference (t-test)
Reconvicted once	248	15.5	10.2	.000
Reconvicted more than once	291	21.4	9.8	

The same check was done using number of offences. As table 3.4.6 shows, the result is similar to that for reconviction occasions. Those convicted of 4 or more offences had significantly higher *ASSET* scores.

[42] Obtained by using the Receiver Operating Characteristic methodology (Fergusson et al 1977, Mossman 1994)

Table 3.4.6: Difference in current ASSET scores by number of reconviction offences (N=542)

	No. of cases	Mean score	Standard deviation of score	Significance of difference (t-test)
Reconvicted of 1-3 offences	306	16.1	10.1	.000
Reconvicted of 4 or more offences	236	21.8	10.0	

3.4.4 Accuracy in predicting seriousness of reconviction

The third way of testing the current version was to examine its ability to predict seriousness of reconviction.

As mentioned above, seriousness was measured in two ways: gravity of principal offence on first reconviction and disposal for that offence. Firstly, the *ASSET* scores of those reconvicted for lower gravity offences were compared with those reconvicted for higher gravity offences. As table 3.4.7 shows, there was no significant difference between the current *ASSET* scores for these two groups.

Table 3.4.7: Difference in current ASSET scores by gravity of offence on reconviction (N=488)

	No. of cases	Mean score	Standard deviation of score	Significance of difference (t-test)
Gravity 1-4	420	18.8	10.5	.854
Gravity 5-8	68	18.5	10.4	

This test was repeated on disposal. As table 3.4.8 shows, there was a strong difference between the *ASSET* scores of those receiving custody on reconviction and the rest. There was only a slight difference, however, between the *ASSET* scores of those getting community supervision and other disposals. In other words, *ASSET* can be a useful predictor of custody on reconviction.

Table 3.4.8: Difference in current ASSET scores by disposal on reconviction (N=542)

	No. of cases	Mean score	Standard deviation of score	Significance of difference[43] (t-test)
Custody	73	24.7	8.4	.000
Community intervention	242	18.7	9.8	
Other e.g. fines, discharges, warnings	226	16.6	10.9	.028

3.4.5 Prediction accuracy by population sub-groups

It was noted in 3.3 above that reconviction rates were different for males and females and also for younger as against older offenders. To what extent was the current *ASSET* score able to predict these differences? Table 3.4.9 shows that *ASSET* achieved 66% accuracy with females, very similar to the level achieved for the whole sample (as reported in table 3.4.2). This suggests that *ASSET* works

[43] Relative to 'community intervention' cases

equally well with lower risk groups since only 40% of the female offenders were reconvicted.

Table 3.4.9: Accuracy in predicting reconviction by females using current ASSET score (N=200)

	Reconvicted		Not reconvicted		Total	
Score 0-12 (low)	32	(16.0%)	85	(42.5%)	117	(58.5%)
Score 13-48 (high)	47	(23.5%)	36	(18.0%)	83	(41.5%)
Total	79	(39.5%)	121	(60.5%)	200	(100%)

Significance of difference (chi-square) = .000

Table 3.4.10 performs a similar analysis for younger offenders aged 10 to 15. *ASSET* achieved an accuracy of 65.4% which was slightly lower than for the sample as a whole, but still adequate when compared to the other scales mentioned on page 54.

Table 3.4.10: Accuracy in predicting reconviction by younger offenders using current ASSET score (N=609)

	Reconvicted		Not reconvicted		Total	
Score 0-15 (low)	108	(17.7%)	216	(35.5%)	324	(53.2%)
Score 16-48 (high)	182	(29.9%)	103	(16.9%)	285	(46.8%)
Total	290	(47.6%)	319	(52.4%)	609	(100%)

Significance of difference (chi-square) = .000

To test the predictive accuracy of the *ASSET* score in relation to ethnic minority offenders, data from the construction and validation samples were combined to provide sufficient cases for analysis. This produced a sample size of 194 (similar to the female sample in table 3.4.9) and an accuracy rate of 66.5% which was as good as for the sample as a whole.

Table 3.4.11: Accuracy in predicting reconviction by ethnic minority offenders using current ASSET score (N=194)

	Reconvicted		Not reconvicted		Total	
Score 0-12 (low)	31	(16.0%)	67	(34.5%)	98	(50.5%)
Score 13-48 (high)	62	(32.0%)	34	(17.5%)	95	(49.5%)
Total	93	(47.9%)	101	(52.1%)	194	(100%)

Significance of difference (chi-square) = .000

3.4.6 Review

This section has shown that the current rating system in *ASSET* predicted the likelihood of reconviction to a high level of accuracy. Higher scores were also indicative of a risk of repeat conviction and also gave some indication of the likelihood of more serious re-offending as indicated by the use of custody. *ASSET* worked equally well with female and ethnic minority offenders, and almost as well with younger offenders. Although the rest of this chapter considers how it could be improved, in its present form it is already a valuable indicator of risk of further offending.

3.5 Construction of improved ASSET

The next stage of the validation involved developing alternative versions of an improved predictor. The procedure was as follows.

a) Test the association of all *ASSET* items with reconviction (including the ones used in the current scale) and exclude those with a weak association.
b) Test the strongly predictive items in a factor analysis to see how they associate with each other. This reveals factors which represent the main dimensions or constructs measured by *ASSET* and items which do not associate with any of these factors can be excluded.
c) Using the 'collectively strong' items from above, build alternative logistic regression models to predict reconviction.
d) Develop three improved scales with varying degrees of departure from the current scale using progressively more of the logistic regression results.

The first stage in constructing a new or improved predictor was therefore to test all the *ASSET* data items individually to see whether they predict reconviction. Two criteria were used:

- frequency (whether items occurred with a sufficient minimum frequency); and
- whether they were statistically associated with reconviction.

Items were excluded if they were assessed as applying to less than 10% of the sample (data on response frequencies can be found in chapter 2). The rest were subjected to a straightforward chi-square test of their association with reconviction. The results are given in Appendix 3. Items were accepted for the next stage of analysis if the association was significant at .05 level after a conservative adjustment for multiple tests. Even so, 95 items were successful predictors of reconviction. Sections which were well represented included education, relationships, living arrangements, thinking/behaviour and attitudes to offending.

These findings are consistent with those for older offenders (Raynor et al 2000), where attitudes and lifestyle were particularly important for prediction. In their study of young offenders given final warnings, Hine and Celnick (2001) found that gender, age and previous convictions were good predictors of reconviction and these were also good predictors here (items 1, 3 and 11 in appendices 3-5).

3.5.1 Factor analysis

The next stage was to take the 95 items accepted as useful predictors and subject them to a factor analysis. This is a form of statistical analysis which seeks to identify the structure underlying a set of variables on the basis of how similarly the variables are distributed in the sample. Ideally the items included under a particular section heading (such as 'perception of self and others') will have a similar distribution and therefore be grouped under one factor. Ideally too, section headings will identify different aspects of offending related problems and so form distinct factors. Factor analysis can therefore be used to check the validity of section items with the possibility of then being able to redefine sections by omitting items which appear peripheral.

Given the large number of items, and the levels of missing data for some of them, it was not possible to run a single factor analysis for all 95 items. Instead, the sections in *ASSET* were grouped into 7 blocks for analysis. The results are shown in Appendix 4. The analysis identified 25 factors altogether and in most cases they corresponded to the existing *ASSET* sections. In other words, the current *ASSET*

sections identify coherent and distinguishable problem areas. However, in some cases the factor groupings begin to identify new 'concepts' such as 'school attachment'. The factor names (given in bold) are an attempt to describe what the constituent items have in common. The results of factor analysis could be used to reconsider some of the section headings in *ASSET* - for example the analysis shows a considerable degree of overlap between the 'living arrangements' and 'family/personal relationships' sections.

3.5.2 Logistic regression

The next step was to take the variables emerging from the factor analysis, and attempt to build a revised predictor. All of the 80 variables listed in Appendix 4 already meet a number of criteria:

- they have a minimum frequency of 10%;
- they are individually associated with reconviction;
- the factor analysis shows they are related to the main dimensions of *ASSET*.

Logistic regression was used to test how well the 80 remaining items could be combined to predict reconviction. There is usually a high degree of overlap between them, meaning that once the best predictors have been combined, the addition of further variables does not increase the predictive power. Logistic regression is the form of regression used when the outcome to be predicted only has two values (in this case, whether reconvicted or not). It builds a model by starting with the best individual predictor and then adding further variables until the prediction accuracy cannot be improved.

The starting point was to test the 12 section ratings which make up the current rating score. Appendix 5 model 1 shows how logistic regression constructs a score using just five of the risk ratings: lifestyle, living arrangements, substance use, education/employment & training and emotional health. With these, the regression model can predict reconviction correctly in 66.3% of cases. It can be seen that three of these items come from Factor 1 in 3.5.1 and one from Factor 2.

The level of missing data meant that it was not possible to use logistic regression to test all of the 80 eligible items at once. Instead they were tested in the same blocks as in the factor analysis. The first block was personal, current offence and criminal history (model 2). Previous custody was excluded because of missing data. Four variables were used: age at first conviction, number of previous convictions, offence type and age at first reprimand. Using only these variables, a very high level of predictive accuracy was achieved i.e. 71%.

Models 3-8 in Appendix 5 test the rest of the eligible items from the factor analysis. The lifestyle and substance use model is the most predictive, and health the least predictive. Altogether, 22 of the 80 eligible items were used by the regression models but some, which feature in other predictors, such as age and gender were not used. Six of the 12 section risk ratings were used, and five of the six correspond to those used in model 1.

3.5.3 Constructing a new rating scale

In considering how to improve the current rating scale, a decision needs to be made about how complicated the revised scoring system should be. Risk predictors which

require complex calculations that can only realistically be carried out by computer (for example, OGRS) have the disadvantage that practitioners may find it difficult to see how a score has been derived for a particular offender. The calculations are not 'transparent' to staff who are expected to use the results to inform their work. A virtue of the current *ASSET* design is that the total rating can be calculated just by adding twelve numbers. It is easy to comprehend how the total score is produced and it also reflects each of the different sections of *ASSET*.

Another important consideration is that the current rating score is already an accurate predictor of reconviction. The main omissions are the current offence and criminal history sections, which logistic regression model 2 (appendix 5) shows are highly predictive. The most straightforward way of improving the scale is therefore to incorporate an offending history section by adding the 4 items in model 2. This would produce a 16 item scale of which a quarter of the items are 'static', and three quarters 'dynamic'. This ratio is in fact similar to some adult scales (for example, LSI-R).

The scoring of the first 4 items in table 3.5.2 reflects the proportions reconvicted (for example, motoring offenders were most likely to be reconvicted) as follows:

Table 3.5.2: Components of Revised Score 1

Item	Scoring	Score range
1. Offence type	Motoring offences=4, Burglary=3, Other=0	0-4
2. Age at first reprimand	10 to 12=4, 13-17=2, No previous reprimand=0	0-4
3. Age at first conviction	10 to 13=4, 14 to 17=3, Not previously convicted=0	0-4
4. No. of previous convictions	4 or more=4, 1 to 3=3, No previous convictions=0	0-4
5. Living arrangements risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
6. Family and personal relationships risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
7. Statutory education or ETE risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
8. Neighbourhood risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
9. Lifestyle risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
10. Substance use risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
11. Physical health risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
12. Emotional and mental health risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
13. Perception of self and others risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
14. Thinking and behaviour risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
15. Attitudes to offending risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
16. Motivation to change problem	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
TOTAL		**0-64**

First an offending history score was calculated, using these four items. This predicted reconviction correctly in 68.1% of cases. (It should be noted that this is less than logistic regression model 2, which uses the same items. A simple additive score will always be less accurate than its logistic regression equivalent because the latter involves more sophisticated weighting.)

A new score was then created ("Revised score 1") by combining the current rating score and offending history score. With 16 items each scoring between zero and 4,

the score range was 0-64. Cases with less than 80% complete data were excluded, leaving a construction sample size of 1063. In this sample the mean score was 20.7 (standard deviation 13.1). As table 3.5.3 shows, Revised Score 1 was 68.9% accurate in predicting reconviction. This represents a small improvement on the current rating scale (compare with 3.4.2).

Table 3.5.3: Percent correctly predicted: Revised score 1 (N=1063)

	Reconvicted		Not reconvicted		Total	
Score 0-18 (low)	166	(15.6%)	357	(33.6%)	523	(49.2%)
Score 19-64 (high)	375	(35.3%)	165	(15.5%)	540	(50.8%)
Total	541	(50.9%)	522	(49.1%)	1063	(100%)

Significance of difference (chi-square) = .000

To test the accuracy of prediction across the score range, table 3.5.4 shows the proportions convicted if the scores are divided into five equal sized groups (quintiles). When compared to the current rating score (see 3.4.4), there is a slight improvement. The bottom quintile's reconviction rate is now 3% lower, and the top quintile's rate is 5% higher, giving better separation at the extremes.

Table 3.5.4: Percentage reconvicted within 12 months by Revised Score 1 bands (N=1063)

Score band		No. of cases	Percent reconvicted
0-8	(Low)	231	23.4%
9-14	(Low-Medium)	189	38.6%
15-23	(Medium)	225	47.6%
24-32	(Medium-high)	202	65.3%
33-64	(High)	216	81.0%
All cases		*1063*	*50.9%*

Significance of difference (chi-square) = .000

3.5.4 Introducing weighting

So far, all sixteen items in the revised scale have the same weight as they are all scored 0-4. There is an element of weighting only in the sense that 'static' factors count for 25% of the total, and 'dynamic' factors 75%. However, it would be possible to give a different weight to each of the 16 items according to their contribution to the overall prediction, as measured by logistic regression. Doing this would in fact mirror how logistic regression works. It remains to be seen how far this would improve prediction, and whether the added complication for scoring makes it worthwhile. From appendix 5, it can be seen that only 6 of the 12 section risk ratings were contributing to the prediction. It might be possible that some of these ratings could be omitted altogether, thus simplifying the scoring process.

In theory, the best way to assign weightings is to use the co-efficient B from the logistic regression of all 16 items. However, since some were negative this was problematic and instead a more pragmatic method was used. Three weighting levels were assigned, with maximum scores of 6, 4 and 2 respectively. The highest weight was assigned to the items contributing most significantly in the full 16-item regression. The middle weight was assigned to the items contributing to the sub-analyses only and the lowest weight was assigned to the remaining section ratings. Table 3.5.5 gives details.

Table 3.5.5: Item weighting in Revised score 2

Item	Scoring	Score range
1. Offence type	Motoring offences=6, Burglary=5, Other=0	0-6
2. Age at first reprimand	10 to 12=4, 13-17=2, No previous reprimand=0	0-4
3. Age at first conviction	10 to 13=6, 14 to 17=5, Not previously convicted=0	0-6
4. No. of previous convictions	4 or more=6, 1 to 3=5, No previous convictions=0	0-6
5. Living arrangements risk	0, 1, 3, 5, 6	0-6
6. Family and personal relationships risk	0, 0, 1, 2, 2	0-2
7. Statutory education or ETE risk	0, 1, 3, 5, 6	0-6
8. Neighbourhood risk	0, 0, 1, 2, 2	0-2
9. Lifestyle risk	0, 1, 3, 5, 6	0-6
10. Substance use risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
11. Physical health risk	0, 0, 1, 2, 2	0-2
12. Emotional and mental health risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
13. Perception of self and others risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
14. Thinking and behaviour risk	0, 0, 1, 2, 2	0-2
15. Attitudes to offending risk	0, 0, 1, 2, 2	0-2
16. Motivation to change problem	0, 0, 1, 2, 2	0-2
TOTAL		0-64

This produced a scale in which static factors accounted for 34% of the included items. The score range of Revised Score 2 remains 0-64 and the mean score was virtually unchanged at 20.9 (standard deviation 14.2). As table 3.5.6 shows, the prediction accuracy was also very similar at 68.5%.

Table 3.5.6: Percent correctly predicted: Revised score 2 (N=1063)

	Reconvicted		Not reconvicted		Total	
Score 0-18 (low)	167	(15.7%)	354	(33.3%)	521	(49.0%)
Score 19-64 (high)	374	(35.2%)	168	(15.8%)	542	(51.0%)
Total	541	(50.9%)	522	(49.1%)	1063	(100%)

Significance of difference (chi-square) = .000

Accuracy across the scoring range showed a slight improvement on Revised Score 1. As table 3.5.7 shows, there is no change at the bottom end but the top quintile's reconviction rate is about 2% higher, giving slightly better separation. There is now a 60% difference between the reconviction rates of the bottom and top quintiles of scores, compared to a 50% difference using the current rating score (shown in table 3.4.4).

Table 3.5.7: Percentage reconvicted within 12 months by Revised Score 2 bands (N=1063)

Score band	No. of cases	Percent reconvicted
0-7 (Low)	232	23.3%
8-14 (Low-Medium)	200	36.0%
15-24 (Medium)	214	48.6%
25-34 (Medium-high)	203	65.0%
35-64 (High)	214	83.6%
All cases	*1063*	*50.9%*

Significance of difference (chi-square) = .000

3.5.5 A shorter scale

Finally, a shorter, weighted scale was tested which removed altogether the low-weighted items in table 3.5.5. This left just 10 predictor items of which four were static and 6 dynamic.

Table 3.5.8: Item weighting in Revised Score 3

Item	Scoring	Score range
1. Offence type	Motoring offences=6, Burglary=5, Other=0	0-6
2. Age at first reprimand	10 to 12=4, 13-17=2, No previous reprimand=0	0-4
3. Age at first conviction	10 to 13=6, 14 to 17=5, Not previously convicted=0	0-6
4. No. of previous convictions	4 or more=6, 1 to 3=5, No previous convictions=0	0-6
5. Living arrangements risk	0, 1, 3, 5, 6	0-6
6. Statutory education or ETE risk	0, 1, 3, 5, 6	0-6
7. Lifestyle risk	0, 1, 3, 5, 6	0-6
8. Substance use risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
9. Emotional and mental health risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
10. Perception of self and others risk	0, 1, 2, 3, 4	0-4
TOTAL		**0-52**

This scale might be thought undesirable on the grounds that important offending related areas such as 'attitudes to offending' are now omitted. However, as table 3.5.9 shows, this appears to improve the predictive accuracy of the scale slightly to 69.7%. With only 10 items, the score range now drops to 0-52, with a mean score of 18.3 and a standard deviation of 11.7.

Table 3.5.9: Percent correctly predicted: Revised score 3 (N=985)

	Reconvicted		Not reconvicted		Total	
Score 0-15 (low)	144	(14.6%)	321	(32.6%)	465	(47.2%)
Score 16-52 (high)	365	(37.1%)	155	(15.7%)	520	(52.8%)
Total	509	(51.7%)	476	(48.3%)	985	(100%)

Significance of difference (chi-square) = .000

Accuracy across the scoring range was seemingly unaffected by the removal of 6 items. The reconviction rates for the top and bottom quintiles are almost identical to those for Revised Score 2, as table 3.5.10 shows.

Table 3.5.10: Percentage reconvicted within 12 months by Revised Score 3 bands (N=985)

Score band	No. of cases	Percent reconvicted
0-6 (Low)	188	22.9%
7-12 (Low-Medium)	192	34.9%
13-21 (Medium)	209	47.4%
22-28 (Medium-high)	190	67.9%
29-52 (High)	206	83.0%
All cases	*985*	*51.7%*

Significance of difference (chi-square) = .000

3.5.6 Review

Three revised rating scales were tested:

- Scale 1 was created by simply adding an offending history section to the current scale;
- Scale 2 used the same items but introduced weighting of items;
- Scale 3 reduced the number of items by removing altogether those with the lowest weighting.

Scale 3 was most accurate for predicting reconviction, but all three were an improvement on the current scale. The improvement was especially noticeable at the extremes, with better separation of reconviction rates for very high and low scores. This seems to be mainly due to the inclusion of an offending history section.

While it is tempting to select a version with few items for reasons of economy, too few may result in a lack of robustness at the validation stage. For this reason, it was decided to take forward scales 1 and 2 to the validation stage.

3.6 VALIDATION OF REVISED ASSET RATING SCORES

In the validation sample of 1347 cases, 53% were reconvicted at least once during the 12 month follow-up period. This was almost identical to the 52% figure for the construction sample, suggesting a similarity in the offending profile of both samples. Mean *ASSET* scores (current version) were also similar for both samples: 14.9 in the construction sample and 14.5 in the validation sample.

The method of checking the accuracy of the scales was similar to that used to test the current scale in section 3.4. The following tests were used:

- accuracy in predicting whether reconvicted or not;
- accuracy of prediction across the score range;
- ability to discriminate frequency and seriousness of offending;
- accuracy of prediction for population sub-groups.

3.6.1 Accuracy in predicting whether reconvicted or not

Table 3.6.1 compares the accuracy of prediction for the validation sample of the current scale and revised scores 1 and 2. In each case these are compared with the accuracy already reported in predicting reconviction for the construction sample. Accuracy with a validation sample is usually slightly worse than with the sample from which a scale is constructed. The current scale performed less well with the validation sample. Since this scale predated the construction sample, and was not dependent on it, one would expect accuracy to be similar in both samples. In the validation sample, 'Revised Score 1' virtually maintained its initial high accuracy. 'Revised Score 2' appeared to perform even better at the validation stage.

Table 3.6.1: Percent correctly predicted: construction and validation samples

Current scale		Revised scale 1		Revised scale 2	
Construction (N=1081)	Validation (N=1208)	Construction (N=1063)	Validation (N=1157)	Construction (N=1063)	Validation (N=1157)
67.0%	66.4%	68.9%	68.6%	68.5%	69.8%

The remaining tests were performed on the two revised scales only as the current scale has already been tested in 3.4 above.

3.6.2 Accuracy across the score range

Table 3.6.2 gives details of the proportions reconvicted if scores are divided into five equal sized groups (quintiles) from lowest to highest. The results for the two revised scores can be directly compared with those reported in tables 3.5.4 and 3.5.7 for the construction sample. Both show a similar discrimination of reconviction rates between the top and bottom quintiles (about 60%), which is close to that achieved at the construction stage. This suggests both are likely to work well across the score range.

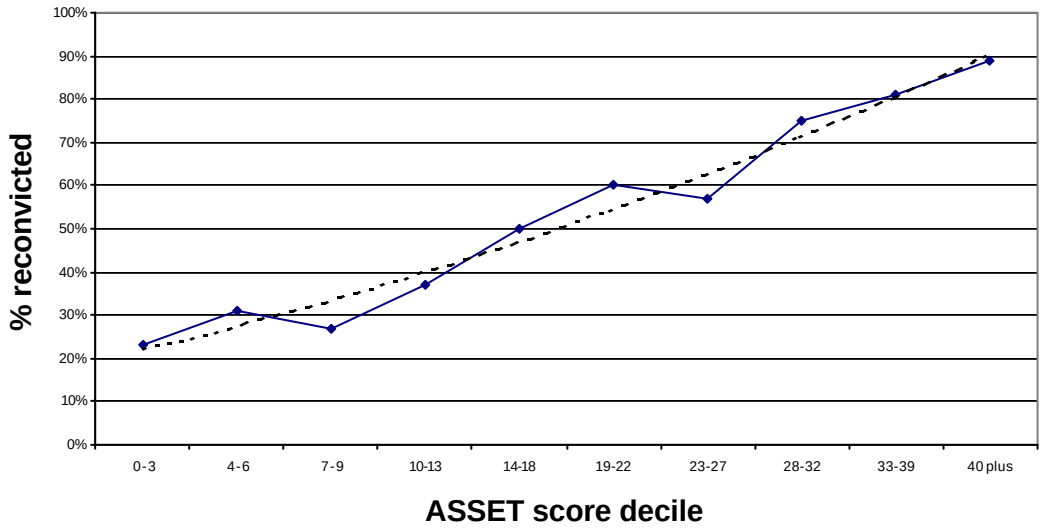
Table 3.6.2: Percent reconvicted within 12 months by revised score quintiles (N=1157)

		Revised Score 1	Revised Score 2
Low	(0-7; 0-6*)	25.0%	26.6%
Low-medium	(8-14; 7-13)	36.2%	31.8%
Medium	(15-22; 14-22)	51.3%	54.5%
Medium-high	(23-31; 23-32)	66.7%	65.0%
High	(32-64; 33-64)	84.4%	84.9%
All cases		*53.2%*	*53.2%*

* score ranges vary slightly between Scores 1 and 2

Figure 2 below shows the relationship between revised scale 2 scores and reconviction where the scores are split into deciles. As with figure 1 above, it shows that the occurrence of reconviction increases as *ASSET* scores increase. Although the graph gives a looser approximation to a straight line than figure 1, figure 2 has a steeper slope which demonstrates a greater discrimination between high and low scores.

Figure 2: Revised ASSET score 2 by % reconvicted



The Area Under Curve (AUC) summary measure[44] for revised score 2 was calculated at 0.754.

[44] See note 40 above.

3.6.3 Accuracy in predicting frequency of reconviction

As previously, frequency of re-offending was measured in two ways i.e. number of offences and number of sentencing occasions. Table 3.6.3 shows that both revised scales produced significantly higher scores for people reconvicted on more than one occasion. Score 2 discriminated slightly better.

Table 3.6.3: Difference in Revised Score 1 and 2 depending on number of sentencing occasions (N=615)

Mean score (and Std Devn) if:	Revised Score 1	Revised Score 2
- reconvicted once only	20.4 (12.0)	20.7 (13.0)
- reconvicted more than once	28.8 (12.0)	29.7 (12.7)
Significance of difference (t-test)	.000	.000

Table 3.6.4 shows once again that both scales produced significantly higher scores for those convicted of 4 or more offences. Score 2 differentiated slightly better.

Table 3.6.4: Difference in Revised Score 1 and 2 depending on number of reconviction offences (N=615)

Mean score (and Std Devn) if:	Revised Score 1	Revised Score 2
- reconvicted for 1-3 offences	20.5 (11.7)	20.6 (12.6)
- reconvicted for 4+ offences	30.3 (11.6)	31.5 (12.2)
Significance of difference (t-test)	.000	.000

3.6.4 Accuracy in predicting seriousness of reconviction

Firstly, this was tested by comparing the mean *ASSET* scores of those receiving custody, community interventions and fines/discharges on reconviction. Table 3.6.5 shows that the scores of people receiving custody on reconviction were significantly higher than those receiving a community intervention. Those receiving fines and discharges had lower scores.

Table 3.6.5: Difference in Revised Score 1 and 2 by disposal on reconviction (N=615)

Mean score (and Std Devn) if sentenced on reconviction to:	Revised Score 1	Revised Score 2
- custody (N=77)	32.9 (11.1)	34.1 (11.3)
- community intervention (N=272)	25.7 (12.4)	26.5 (13.2)
- fines, discharges etc (N=266)	22.6 (12.4)	22.9 (13.5)
Significance of difference (t-test)		
- custody v. community intervention	.000	.000
- fines v. community intervention	.004	.002

Secondly, the ability of revised scales 1 and 2 to distinguish offence seriousness scores on reconviction was tested. As will be recalled, the current *ASSET* scale was not able to do this (table 3.4.7). Table 3.6.6 shows however that both revised scales gave significantly different scores according to offence gravity, with revised scale 2 performing slightly better.

Table 3.6.6: Difference in revised scores 1 and 2 depending on offence gravity on reconviction (N=566)

	No. of cases	Mean score	Standard deviation of score	Significance of difference (t-test)
Revised score 1				
- gravity 1-4	480	24.9	12.7	.019
- gravity 5-8	86	28.4	12.8	
Revised score 2				
- gravity 1-4	480	25.5	13.6	.006
- gravity 5-8	86	29.8	13.4	

3.6.5 Prediction accuracy by population sub-groups

The current version of *ASSET* achieved 66.0% accuracy for the 200 females in the construction sample, which was considered acceptable (see table 3.4.9). The validation sample contained 202 females for whom Revised Scores 1 and 2 could be calculated. The reconviction rate for these was 37%, slightly lower than the 40% in the construction sample. As table 3.6.7 shows, both revised scores achieved a very high level of predictive accuracy with the validation sample (performing better for females than for males).

Table 3.6.7: Percent correctly predicted: Females in validation sample (N=200)

	Revised Scale 1	Revised Scale 2
Percent correctly predicted	70.3%	72.3%

Similar remarks apply for younger offenders aged 10-15. The current version of *ASSET* only achieved an accuracy level of 65.4% in the construction sample (see table 3.4.10). The validation sample contains 631 younger offenders with revised scores 1 and 2. Of these 50% were reconvicted, similar to the 48% figure for the construction sample. As table 3.6.8 shows, both revised scores achieved a very high level of accuracy with the validation sample (performing better for younger offenders than older ones).

Table 3.6.8: Percent correctly predicted: Younger offenders in validation sample (N=631)

	Revised Scale 1	Revised Scale 2
Percent correctly predicted	69.9%	70.5%

Table 3.6.9 shows that both revised scales were highly predictive with offenders from ethnic minorities. Although the sample size was small, the result appears to be an improvement on the accuracy level of 66.5% achieved by the current scale (see Table 3.4.11).

Table 3.6.9: Percent correctly predicted: Ethnic minorities in validation sample (N=98)

	Revised Scale 1	Revised Scale 2
Percent correctly predicted	73.5%	72.4%

Since the revised scales incorporate criminal history items, it is important to ask how well they predict for offenders with little criminal history. This was done by taking the sample of final warning cases in the validation sample (N=457) who were

likely to have had only a reprimand previously. Table 3.6.10 shows that, although the accuracy was less than for all offenders, it is still respectable.

3.6.10: Percent correctly predicted:
Final warning cases in validation sample (N=457)

	Revised scale 1	Revised scale 2
Percent correctly predicted	64.3%	66.1%

3.7 SUMMARY

While the current version of *ASSET* did not perform quite so well in the validation sample as it did in the construction sample, the two revised scales which incorporate offending history items did very well. They both maintained a very similar level of accuracy to that achieved in the construction sample and can be considered improvements on the current version.

They both performed well on all four types of tests: a simple measure of percent correctly predicted, accuracy of prediction across the score range, ability to discriminate frequency and seriousness of reconviction and accuracy with different population sub-groups.

Both revised versions of *ASSET*, the weighted and unweighted one, are therefore candidates for inclusion in an updated version of *ASSET*. There is little to choose between their accuracy, although the weighted version appears slightly more accurate in some tests.

CHAPTER 4 – RELIABILITY OF ASSET

One of the aims of *ASSET* was to provide a consistent framework for assessment within the multi-disciplinary context of Yots. It was therefore important to investigate the reliability of *ASSET* and to examine whether *ASSET* was being used consistently. To what extent, for example, were differences in the professional backgrounds of Yot staff influencing the way in which practitioners completed *ASSET*? For this study, reliability was tested in three ways:

- level of completion: this was examined for each of the *ASSET* sections, for specific groups of young people (e.g. final warning cases compared to PSR cases) and for assessors from different professional backgrounds;
- inter-rater reliability: the study investigated the consistency of *ASSET* scoring between Yots, between different teams within the same Yot and between the various professional groups within Yots;
- consistency of individual assessors: the study explored patterns of *ASSET* scoring by practitioners who had completed at least 10 assessments.

4.1 COMPLETION

One important aspect of reliability for an assessment tool is the level of completion. Table 4.1.1 shows, for each section of *ASSET*, the percentage of cases in which at least one item was completed and the proportion of cases with 50% or 100% of items completed[45].

Table 4.1.1 also shows that section ratings were given for the vast majority of cases, but that the evidence boxes were completed less frequently. This is a cause for concern given that *ASSET* should be used as an evidenced based assessment tool. The low completion rates for the care and criminal history sections are also problematic.

[45] Behind these overall figures there was also variation in the completion rates for questions within a section. In the criminal history section, for example, 'age at first conviction' was given in 68% of cases whereas 'number of previous convictions' was only completed in 51% of cases. The different 'N' values for particular questions reported in chapter 2 also highlights this variation within sections.

Table 4.1.1: Completion rates per section

Section (N=3395)	>=1 Entry	50% Entries	100% Entries	100% excluding evidence + ratings	Evidence provided[46]	Rating given
Personal details	100%	--	--	--	--	--
Victim details	63%	--	--	--	--	--
Information sources	88%	--	--	--	--	--
Care history	89%	81%	50%	50%	43%	--
Criminal history	95%	95%	31%	31%	-	--
Offending behaviour	90%	--	--	--	--	--
1. Living arrangements	99%	98%	53%	95%	61%	93%
2. Family and personal relationships	99%	94%	45%	67%	70%	93%
3. Statutory education	86%	76%	23%	30%	78%	74%
4. Employment, training etc.[47]	98%	90%	39%	56%	74%	90%
5. Neighbourhood	98%	95%	33%	63%	53%	92%
6. Lifestyle	99%	97%	51%	75%	73%	93%
7. Substance use	98%	98%	49%	82%	70%	91%
8. Physical health	98%	95%	26%	67%	46%	92%
9. Emotional/mental health	98%	97%	73%	85%	53%	91%
10. Perception of self and others	97%	95%	44%	90%	52%	91%
11. Thinking and behaviour	98%	97%	60%	88%	72%	92%
12. Attitudes to offending	98%	97%	50%	92%	59%	92%
13. Motivation to change	97%	95%	53%	90%	62%	91%
Positive factors	89%	89%	35%	89%	61%	--
Indicators of vulnerability	93%	93%	61%	73%	39%	--
Indicators of serious harm	89%	88%	83%	83%	--	--

[46] Not all sections have evidence boxes.

[47] This section was not applicable in 54% of cases due to the age of the young person and information was missing in 1%. The completion rates are based on the other 45% of cases.

Table 4.1.2 below shows the proportion of *ASSET*s completed at final warning (FW), pre-sentence report (PSR) and post sentence (PS) stages by the different professional groups in the sample. Police Officers completed the majority of final warning *ASSET*s whereas probation and social services staff focused on PSR and PS cases.

Table 4.1.2: Professional background by case stage

Profession	No. of ASSETs	FW	PSR	PS
Probation	336	5%	75%	20%
Social Services	1048	18%	61%	21%
Police	689	90%	5%	5%
Health	34	38%	32%	30%
Education	80	33%	47%	20%
Other	71	80%	17%	3%

To what extent was completion of *ASSET* influenced by the professional background of the assessor? Overall, the completion rates[48] remained fairly stable although there were some differences between professional groups at different case stages including[49]:

- victim details - FW: Social services 50%, police 62%;
- positive factors - FW: Social services 95%, police 90%;
- indicators of vulnerability - FW: Social services 86%, police 95%;
  - PSR: Probation 98%, social services 94%;
  - PS: Probation 99%, social services 86%;
- Indicators of Serious Harm - FW: Social services 84%, police 91%;
  - PSR: Probation 96%, social services 90%;
  - PS: Probation 97%, social services 85%.

Completion rates for teams completing their *ASSET* assessments on paper and those completing on one of the three available computerised versions of *ASSET* were also examined[50]. *ASSET*s completed on the paper version of the form tended to be better completed than the computer versions. Significant differences between the two included:

- care history - paper 92%, computer 55%;
- criminal history - paper 96%, computer 78%;
- offending behaviour - paper 93%, computer 82%;
- substance use - paper 99%, computer 89%;
- positive factors – paper 93%, computer 65%.

This analysis uses data from the very early days of IT versions of *ASSET*. More training and greater familiarity with the computerised packages may mean that, if a

[48] Completion here refers to a section of *ASSET* which has at least one item completed.

[49] Only probation, social services and police were compared due to small sample numbers for the other groups. The police were only compared at FW stage due to small numbers at PSR and PS stages.

[50] Based on three teams completing on paper and three completing *ASSET* on one of the computerised versions.

similar comparison were made today the results would be more encouraging for electronic *ASSET*.

4.2 Inter-rater reliability between professional groups, Yots and teams

The study adopted a similar technique to that used by Raynor et al (2000) to test the reliability of *ASSET* between professional groups, Yots and teams. An offending history static score (derived from the validation work described in chapter 3) was used to control for variations in the assessed population. The static score was calculated for each offender and then divided by his/her total *ASSET* rating to produce a scoring ratio. The mean ratios for different groups were then calculated to allow for comparisons between assessors.

4.2.1 Professional background

Table 4.2.1 shows that staff from probation and social services were dealing with more serious and persistent offenders than police officers (i.e. the higher mean static scores indicate offenders with more extensive criminal histories). This fits with table 4.1.2 which showed that police officers focused on final warning cases. Table 4.2.1 indicates that the *ASSET* mean rating reflected this pattern - police officers gave lower ratings than staff from probation or social services.

Table 4.2.1: Reliability by professional background[51]

Profession	No. of ASSETs	Static score		ASSET rating		Ratio of Static/ASSET	Significance
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Probation	251	8.3	3.8	17.8	9.7	0.47	0.001
Social Services	759	7.4	4.1	16.6	10.5	0.45	0.001
Police	414	3.5	3.2	11.6	8.4	0.30	0.001
Education	49	7.4	4.2	18.1	10.1	0.41	0.816
Health	23	5.5	4.4	16.5	8.5	0.33	0.191
Other	35	2.5	1.9	16.7	11.9	0.15	0.001
Total	**1531**	**6.4**	**4.3**	**15.5**	**10.1**	**0.41**	

The Mann-Whitney test was used to compare groups e.g. the probation group ratio in table 4.2.1 was compared with the ratio for all other staff. A significance value of <.05 was taken to mean that the particular group ratio in question was significantly different from the mean ratio of the other groups combined.

At first sight, table 4.2.1 appears to suggest that there was little reliability between *ASSET* ratings given by probation officers, social workers and police officers (as significance was <.001 for all three). However, these differences disappeared when split by case stage and were largely due to the concentration of police officers working on FW cases. Tables 4.2.2 – 4.2.4 below show that scoring within each case stage was consistent between professional groups.

[51] The relatively small number of completed *ASSET*s from education, health and other staff meant that these groups were excluded from the following analysis.

Table 4.2.2: Reliability between professional groups at final warning stage

Profession	No. of ASSETs	Static score		ASSET rating		Ratio of Static/ASSET	Significance
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Social Services	114	2.9	2.1	9.6	7.2	0.30	0.113
Police	370	3.1	2.8	10.8	7.7	0.29	0.847
Total	**484**	**3.1**	**2.7**	**10.5**	**7.6**	**0.29**	

Table 4.2.3: Reliability between professional groups at PSR stage

Profession	No. of ASSETs	Static score		ASSET rating		Ratio of Static/ASSET	Significance
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Probation	200	8.5	3.7	18.6	9.5	0.46	0.561
Social Services	488	8.3	3.8	18.3	10.6	0.45	0.475
Total	**688**	**8.3**	**3.8**	**18.4**	**10.3**	**0.45**	

Table 4.2.4: Reliability between professional groups at post sentence stage

Profession	No. of ASSETs	Static score		ASSET rating		Ratio of Static/ASSET	Significance
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Probation	42	8.3	3.5	15.7	10.0	0.53	0.398
Social Services	147	8.3	3.9	16.4	10.1	0.51	0.149
Total	**189**	**8.3**	**3.8**	**16.2**	**10.0**	**0.51**	

4.2.2 Comparing Yots

The information held within *ASSET* can be used both locally and nationally to inform policy and to provide information on the youth offending population. It is therefore important to know whether *ASSET* is being used consistently both across the country and within Yots. If ratings prove to be radically different from one Yot to another it becomes harder to justify the use of national data from *ASSET*. To test this aspect of reliability, the scoring ratios for 9 Yots across England and Wales were compared using the same technique as described above. These teams were chosen on the basis of the large number of *ASSET* forms they had provided for the study.

The results shown in table 4.2.5 suggest a mixed picture. In the 'all cases' column, there appears to be consistency between five of the teams but significant ratio differences for the remaining four teams. Further analysis by case stage indicated greater consistency between teams at the final warning stage (teams C and D were the only divergent ones here) than at PSR stage where there were four teams showing significant ratio differences.

Table 4.2.5: Reliability between Yots

Yot[52]	Static Score		ASSET rating		Ratio of Static/ASSET	Significance levels			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		All cases	FW	PSR	PS
A	6.8	3.5	14.0	9.1	0.48	0.005	0.080	0.876	0.011
B	6.7	3.9	16.3	10.1	0.41	0.899	0.845	0.546	0.510
C	6.7	4.2	11.4	9.0	0.59	0.001	0.001	0.003	0.191
D	6.6	4.4	21.0	11.0	0.31	0.001	0.001	0.355	0.157
E	7.1	3.8	15.4	10.1	0.46	0.382	0.645	0.419	0.299
F	6.0	3.3	16.8	10.6	0.36	0.070	0.609	0.009	0.106
G	6.1	3.7	14.2	8.8	0.43	0.753	0.065	0.030	0.662
H	7.1	3.8	16.2	10.1	0.44	0.429	0.421	0.231	0.031
I	5.6	3.4	16.1	10.9	0.35	0.004	0.948	0.004	0.007
Total	**6.4**	**3.8**	**15.7**	**10.2**	**0.42**	(Total No. of *ASSET*s = 1277)			

4.2.3 Comparing teams within a Yot

At a local level, Yots may consist of several teams. In these circumstances it is important to establish whether or not *ASSET* is used consistently by the different teams i.e. inter-team reliability. This will be especially important to Yots when deciding on policy and practice issues using information from the *ASSET* forms. Table 4.2.6 provides an example of this analysis for one multi-team Yot. It suggests that use of *ASSET* within this Yot is consistent between teams and that local information provided by *ASSET* ratings should be reliable. This consistency remains when the data is broken down by case-stage (the only divergence is with PSRs written in team 2).

Table 4.2.6: Reliability between teams within Yot I

Team	Static Score		ASSET rating		Ratio of Static/ASSET	Significance levels			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		All Cases	FW	PSR	PS
1	4.9	4.2	16.1	9.8	0.30	0.079	0.317	0.743	0.115
2	7.4	4.2	16.3	10.2	0.45	0.137	0.483	0.013	0.846
3	5.9	3.0	14.1	10	0.42	0.105	0.050	0.637	0.317
4	5.3	4.3	15.8	12.6	0.34	0.751	0.175	0.805	0.328
5	5.4	3	22.6	11.3	0.24	0.114	0.075	0.280	0.747
6	8.4	3.4	23.8	10.3	0.35	0.930	0.825	0.840	--
7	5.8	2.6	17.8	12.2	0.33	0.937	0.573	0.105	0.105
Total	**6.2**	**3.9**	**17.1**	**10.9**	**0.36**	(Total No. of *ASSET*s = 144)			

4.3 Consistency of Individual Practitioners

The consistency of *ASSET* use by individual practitioners was also tested by comparing ratings given by staff who had completed 10 or more *ASSET* assessments. The analysis was broken down according to professional group – table 4.3.1 shows the results for social services and probation staff whilst table 4.3.2 provides similar data for police officers.

[52] To maintain the confidentiality of the Yots involved, the number of *ASSET*s per Yot is not included.

Table 4.3.1: Reliability of individual social services and probation staff[53]

Yot worker	No. of ASSETs	Static Score		ASSET rating		Ratio of Static/ASSET	Significance
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1	11	8.1	2.3	26.3	10.1	0.31	0.223
2	14	4.2	2	20.4	10.1	0.21	0.003
3	11	9.4	2.7	12.7	9.9	0.74	0.020
4	11	6.4	4.9	17.5	9.4	0.37	0.442
5	13	6.8	4.7	12.0	8.4	0.57	0.480
6	14	6.7	4	16.9	11.5	0.40	0.551
7	13	6.1	4.4	13.1	98.9	0.47	0.917
8	10	8.6	3.5	22.3	11.5	0.39	0.820
9	13	7.8	4.5	10.8	7.6	0.72	0.070
10	10	3.8	2.4	6.6	5.3	0.58	0.239
11	13	3.3	2.1	4.8	2.9	0.69	0.061
12	15	6.5	4.7	11.1	8.4	0.59	0.263
13	12	3.1	3	12.7	7.4	0.24	0.001
Total	**160**	**6.3**	**4.0**	**14.6**	**10.2**	**0.43**	

Table 4.3.2: Reliability of individual police officers

Yot worker	No. of ASSETs	Static Score		ASSET rating		Ratio of Static/ASSET	Significance
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
14	29	4.2	5	13.9	8.7	0.30	0.296
15	13	2	2.5	11.7	9.8	0.17	0.038
16	12	6.5	2.4	8.8	4.8	0.74	0.001
17	39	3.3	1.9	6.6	3.7	0.50	0.001
18	23	3.1	1.6	12.8	6.1	0.24	0.813
19	20	3	1.3	7.5	6.6	0.40	0.102
20	22	2.4	2	10.6	6.1	0.22	0.182
21	19	1	1.9	10.8	5.8	0.09	0.001
22	28	3.5	2.7	11.7	6.7	0.30	0.545
23	13	0.9	1.7	12.8	3.8	0.07	0.001
24	12	2.8	1.3	8.5	6.4	0.33	0.219
25	15	1.6	1.5	6.7	6.7	0.24	0.878
26	32	4.1	4.5	7.6	5.3	0.54	0.984
Total	**277**	**3.1**	**3.1**	**10.1**	**6.6**	**0.31**	

Within the social worker and probation officer group (4.3.1) there were three members of staff with inconsistent ratings. It would appear that assessors 2 and 13 were rating higher than their static score would predict when compared to their colleagues. Conversely, assessor 3 was rating a lot lower than would be expected from the static score. Within the police group (4.3.2) assessors 15,16,17, 21 and 23 appeared to rate inconsistently.

This method of testing reliability provides a helpful starting point for analysis, but it does have limitations. The static score is a useful control but it would not be fair to argue that all cases with a similar static score should have a similar *ASSET* score. The assessment of dynamic factors within *ASSET* could mean that a young person

[53] There were insufficient numbers of probation officers who had completed more than 10 forms to provide a separate group for analysis.

with little previous criminal history (and therefore a low static score) scores highly on *ASSET* because of current risk factors. This may provide an explanation for some of the inconsistencies observed above.

Ideally, the analysis reported here should be supplemented with experiments involving 'blind-double assessment' i.e. a young person is assessed by two practitioners who independently complete *ASSET* so that a direct comparison can be made between the ratings which they give. It was not possible to use such an approach during this study but it is hoped that this can be incorporated into additional *ASSET* research currently being undertaken by the University of Oxford.

Some teams have also begun to carry out their own studies of reliability. For example, the Devon Youth Offending Service examined the consistency of scoring for a sample of *ASSET*s completed by different assessors at "…a similar stage in the child's case when circumstances remained the same or very similar" (Jose, 2001). It was found that in over 60% of cases the difference in scores was less than or equal to two *ASSET* rating points. It was also found that, where there were greater differences between scores, this could usually be explained by real changes in a young person's circumstances. Such detailed local information can usefully complement the broader picture emerging from national analysis.

4.4 Summary

Feedback from practitioners (see chapter 1) revealed a high level of concern about the perceived subjective nature of *ASSET* assessments and the potential for divergence in *ASSET* ratings between teams or between different professional groups. The results presented in this chapter should go some way to allaying these anxieties.

The data in sections 4.2 and 4.3 highlighted some inconsistencies in *ASSET* ratings between Yots but showed a greater level of consistency between the different professional groups, between teams within the same Yot and amongst individual practitioners. The results reported here were based on data collected from the very early stages of *ASSET* use (June – September 2000). Given that staff have now had more training and more experience of using *ASSET*, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that consistency and inter-rater reliability have since improved. This is an issue however where further research could usefully be undertaken, both at local and national level.

CHAPTER 5 – 'WHAT DO YOU THINK?'

'What do YOU think?' (WDYT) is a self-assessment form. Its intention is to give a clear and explicit opportunity for a young person to state his/her views and to help practitioners take account of this perspective in their assessments.

The form is divided into two main sections. The first is entitled 'about your life' and covers issues such as family life, school, work and training, friendships, substance use, health and emotions. The questions mirror many aspects of the core profile so that it is possible to compare a practitioner's views with those of a young person.

The second section ('about your offending') includes questions about attitudes to recent offences, the reasons for offending and issues around stopping offending.

Most of the questions are written in the third person ("some young people…") and the young person is asked to say how much the descriptions are like them. This format was chosen because, when dealing with sensitive personal issues, it was seen as being less threatening than asking the questions directly. Answers work on a four point scale:

- 'not like me';
- 'a bit like me';
- 'a lot like me';
- 'just like me'.

As well as these very specific questions, there are also some more 'open' questions where the young person can write in anything they choose. For this study, these answers were coded for analysis.

5.1 RESULTS FROM USE OF 'WHAT DO YOU THINK?'

This chapter presents results from 627 WDYT forms provided by the participating Yots. The young people completed section 1 in 99% of cases and section 2 in 95%. The following analysis contains a breakdown for each question based on the whole sample, together with some comparisons between sub-groups:

- **case stage** - 50% of the young people completing the form were at final warning (FW) stage, 38% at pre-sentence report (PSR) stage and 12% Post Sentence (PS)[54];
- **gender** - 79% of the young people were male, 21% female;
- **age** - 37% of the sample were between the ages of 10 and 14, 63% between 15 and 18 (mean age 15.5).

Only statistically significant differences are mentioned in the following analysis[55]. To simplify comparisons between groups, answers were split into 'no' and 'yes'

[54] There were more final warning cases in this sample than the core profile sample of chapter 2.

where 'not like me' was taken as no and 'a bit like me', 'a lot like me' and 'just like me' constituted a 'yes' answer.

As mentioned above, WDYT can facilitate comparison between a practitioner's assessment and the perspective of a young person. Some of the questions in WDYT can be matched with questions in *ASSET*[56] so, for the following analysis, a comparison was made between the WDYT answers and information in the core *ASSET* profiles that related to these 627 WDYT forms.[57] As practitioners and young people were not asked exactly the same questions, it is possible that some of their answers may reflect different perceptions of what constitutes a problem. Nevertheless the approach of comparing matched questions provides a useful way of starting to look at the different views of staff and offenders and illustrates the value of WDYT for raising issues that might otherwise have been missed in assessment.

5.1.1 Section 1 – About your life

The following analysis follows the current order of the questions on WDYT.

What is the best thing about your life at the moment? (n=534)

Family was highlighted as being the best thing for 17% of the sample whilst 10% mentioned doing well in school or training. Ten percent believed there was nothing 'best' in their lives. Girls were significantly more likely than males to consider friends as the best thing in their life (20% and 9% respectively). Younger offenders were more likely to consider friends (16% compared with 8%) and sports (12% compared with 4%) as the best thing in their lives. FW cases thought friends were more important than the PSR and PS groups (FW, 16%; PSR, 7%; PS, 5%).

What is the worst thing about your life at the moment? (n=521)

Getting into trouble was seen as the worst thing in 29% of cases, family circumstances in 8% and school/homework/work in 6% of cases. 'Nothing' was answered in 7% of cases. Girls were more likely to consider their family as the worst thing in their lives (17% compared with 8%). The FW sample were less likely to see getting into trouble as the worst thing in life (27% FW compared with 42% PSR and 47% PS) but more likely to see school/work as the worst thing compared with the PSR sample (11% compared with 4%).

'Family and personal relationships'

Questions 1-5 ask the young person to consider their family and personal relationships. It can be seen from table 5.1.1 below that 38% of young people admitted to staying away from home without asking and 41% saw people in their family having fights and arguments. Ninety four percent of the sample said they knew that people in their family cared for them.

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[55] Based on a chi square test where <.05

[56] A list of comparison questions can be found in Appendix 6.

[57] It should be noted, however, that the level of convergence may depend on the stage at which WDYT was completed. For example, more agreement may be achieved later in the supervision process when a practitioner knows a young person better. Unfortunately information about when young people completed WDYT was not available for this study.

Table 5.1.1: What do YOU think? (Family and personal relationships)

Some young people…	n	Not like me	A bit like me	A lot like me	Just like me
Q1. Move around and live with lots of different people	597	72%	16%	5%	7%
Q2. Stay away from home without asking	596	62%	23%	4%	11%
Q3. Know that people in their family care about them	615	6%	11%	27%	56%
Q4. Can get away with doing whatever they like at home	617	64%	28%	4%	4%
Q5. See people in their family having fights and arguments	618	59%	25%	7%	9%

Significant differences between groups (comparing answers taken as 'yes'):

- **Question 1** – FW 18%, PSR 39%, PS 40%;
- **Question 2** – FW 30%, PSR 46%, PS 45%;
- **Question 4** – FW 32%, PSR 39%, PS 53%;
- **Question 5** – Younger group 53%, older group 38%.

Table 5.1.2 shows the proportion of cases in which practitioners agreed with a 'yes' answer given on WDYT. It can be seen that there was a high level of agreement between WDYT and *ASSET* around the question 'know that people in their family care about them' but less agreement in relation to other questions about family relationships.

Table 5.1.2: WDYT and ASSET (family and personal relationships)

WDYT Some young people…	% of cases with yes in WDYT where ASSET agrees
Stay away from home without asking	24% (201)
Know that people in their family care about them	83% (526)
Can get away with doing whatever they like at home	36% (203)

Table 5.1.3 shows the percentage of cases with 'yes' answers in both WDYT and *ASSET* ('Yes Agree') and the level of agreement overall i.e. counting both yes/yes and no/no responses from WDYT/*ASSET* ('Yes & No Agree').

Table 5.1.3: Overall WDYT/ASSET agreement (family and personal relationships)

WDYT Some young people…	WDYT YES	ASSET YES	YES AGREE	YES & NO AGREE
Stay away from home without asking	38% (596)	12% (607)	9% (528)	85% (528)
Know that people in their family care about them	94% (615)	78% (573)	77% (560)	79% (560)
Can get away with doing whatever they like at home	36% (617)	24% (574)	13% (565)	68% (565)

Who is most important to you in your life at the moment? (n=551)

Sixty four percent mentioned their family or a specific family member in this context (answers included mother, father, parents and brother/sister). Twenty four percent favoured their mother while 3% mentioned their father. 'No-one' was answered in 1% of cases. Girls favoured their mother more than boys (35% compared with 25%). As would be expected, the older age group had a higher percentage of 'girl/boyfriend' as their most important person (6% compared with 2%). The FW sample was different from the PSR sample in a number of aspects: parents (FW 18%, PSR 8%); siblings (FW 3%, PSR 7%); girl/boyfriend (FW 2%, PSR 8%).

'Education and employment'

Table 5.1.4 shows the pattern of responses for WDYT questions concerning education and employment. It can be seen that 31% of the young people believed they needed help with reading and writing and 56% admitted to often staying away from school without permission. Eighty percent of the young people recognised that they would need to get more training or qualifications.

Table 5.1.4: What do YOU think? (education and employment)

Some young people…	n	Not like me	A bit like me	A lot like me	Just like me
Q6. Would like help with reading and writing	608	69%	16%	6%	9%
Q7. Are (or were) bullied at school	619	73%	15%	5%	7%
Q8. Often stay (or stayed) away from school without permission	615	44%	28%	11%	17%
Q9. Think they will need to get more training/qualifications	578	20%	31%	20%	29%
Q10. Think that getting a job is a waste of time	591	90%	6%	2%	2%

Significant differences between groups (comparing answers taken as 'yes'):

- **Question 6** – Males 31%, females 19%; younger group 41%, older group 26%; FW 32%, PSR 33%, PS 19%;
- **Question 7** – Younger group 37%, older group 22%; FW 32%, PSR 24%, PS 20%;
- **Question 8** – Younger group 48%, older group 62%; FW 42%, PSR 75%, PS 61%;
- **Question 9** – FW 77%, PSR 87%, PS 70%.

Table 5.1.5 shows the proportion of cases in which practitioners agreed with a 'yes' answer given on WDYT. It appears that practitioners were less likely to identify problems in this area than young people were. For example, there was no identification by practitioners of literacy difficulties in 39% of the cases in which a young person indicated that they would like help with reading and writing.

Table 5.1.5: WDYT and ASSET (education and employment)

WDYT Some young people…	% of cases with yes in WDYT where ASSET agrees
Would like help with reading and writing	61% (147)
Are (or were) bullied at school	70% (131)
Often stay (or stayed) away from school without permission	70% (247)
Think they will need to get more training/qualifications	74% (427)
Think that getting a job is a waste of time	20% (55)

Table 5.1.6 shows the percentage of cases with a 'yes' answer in both WDYT and *ASSET* ('Yes Agree') and the level of agreement overall i.e. counting both yes/yes and no/no responses from WDYT/*ASSET* ('Yes & No Agree').

Table 5.1.6: Overall WDYT/ASSET agreement (education and employment)

WDYT Some young people…	WDYT YES	ASSET YES	YES AGREE	YES & NO AGREE
Would like help with reading and writing	31% (608)	28% (492)	19% (473)	82% (473)
Are (or were) bullied at school	27% (619)	24% (494)	19% (486)	74% (486)
Often stay (or stayed) away from school without permission	56% (615)	44% (500)	39% (490)	69% (490)
Think they will need to get more training/qualifications	80% (578)	68% (585)	59% (534)	22% (534)
Think that getting a job is a waste of time	10% (591)	7% (587)	2% (549)	30% (549)

What do (did) you most enjoy about school or work? (n=543)

A specific school subject was mentioned in 27% of cases, with 12% specifically highlighting sports. Eighteen percent mentioned that being with their friends was the best thing about school/work while 9% of the sample answered 'nothing'. Females were more likely to mention being with their friends as the best thing about school/work (31% compared with 19%). The younger age group preferred both sports (19% compared with 11%) and a specific subject (45% compared with 23%) whilst the older age group liked being with their friends at school more than the younger group (24% compared with 14%). Differences between the case stages included: sports (FW 19%, PSR 8%); specific subject (FW 24%, PSR 35%, PS 43%); friends (FW 26%, PS 10%) and 'nothing' (FW 5%, PSR 14%).

'Lifestyle'

Table 5.1.7 shows the responses to the questions concerning lifestyle. Fifty two percent of the young people considered it easy to get drugs in their area and 14% believed that all their friends got into trouble.

Table 5.1.7: What do YOU think? (Lifestyle)

Some young people…	n	Not like me	A bit like me	A lot like me	Just like me
Q11. Live in places where there is lots of crime	621	41%	31%	14%	14%
Q12. Have lots of friends who get into trouble	621	32%	40%	12%	16%
Q13. Live in places where it is easy to get drugs	614	48%	21%	14%	17%
Q14. Don't have many friends of their own age	598	56%	23%	9%	12%
Q15. Have some friends who don't get into trouble	593	14%	34%	21%	31%

Significant differences between groups (comparing answers taken as 'yes'):

- **Question 11**- Males 60%, females 50%; FW 49%, PSR 69%, PS 67%;
- **Question 12** –Younger group 75%, older group 57%; FW 61%, PSR 73%, PS 77%;
- **Question 13** - Younger group 44%, older group 54%; FW 56%, PSR 37%;
- **Question 14** – Younger Group 50%, older group 41%; FW 39%, PSR 50%.

Table 5.1.8 shows the proportion of cases in which practitioners agreed with a 'yes' answer given on WDYT. It shows relatively low levels of agreement about the identification of problems in this section with, for example, practitioners identifying a problem with pro-criminal peers in only 51% of the cases in which young people indicated that they had many friends who got into trouble.

Table 5.1.8: WDYT and ASSET (lifestyle)

WDYT Some young people…	% of cases with yes in WDYT where ASSET agrees
Live in places where there is lots of crime	42% (283)
Have lots of friends who get into trouble	51% (397)
Live in places where it is easy to get drugs	33% (296)
Don't have many friends of their own age	34% (248)
Have some friends who don't get into trouble	79% (476)

Table 5.1.9 shows the percentage of cases with a 'yes' answer in both WDYT and *ASSET* ('Yes Agree') and the level of agreement overall i.e. counting both yes/yes and no/no responses from WDYT/*ASSET* ('Yes & No Agree').

Table 5.1.9: Overall WDYT/ASSET agreement (lifestyle)

WDYT Some young people…	WDYT YES	ASSET YES	YES AGREE	YES & NO AGREE
Live in places where there is lots of crime	59% (321)	32% (487)	25% (480)	54% (480)
Have lots of friends who get into trouble	68% (621)	38% (593)	35% (584)	72% (584)
Live in places where it is easy to get drugs	52% (614)	25% (583)	17% (569)	63% (569)
Don't have many friends of their own age	44% (598)	22% (594)	15% (563)	76% (563)
Have some friends who don't get into trouble	86% (593)	80% (588)	68% (553)	55% (553)

What do you like doing in your spare time? (n=585)

'Playing sports' was the most popular answer (39% of cases) whilst seeing friends was the answer given in 16% of cases. Watching television was favoured in 4% of cases and playing computer games or using the internet was mentioned by 6%. There were significant differences between the male and female samples: playing

sports (male 48%, female 18%); seeing friends (male 11%, females 42%); using computers (male 8%, female 3%). The FW sample preferred sports to the PSR sample (46% compared with 35%) while the PSR sample preferred watching television to the FW sample (7% compared with 3%).

What do you like to spend your money on? (n=555)

Clothes accounted for 23% of the answers given, food and sweets 15%, cigarettes 12%, hobbies 11% and music/watching films 7%. A higher proportion of females answered clothes (37% compared with 23%) and a higher proportion of males answered hobbies (14% compared with 5%). Significant differences between the age groups included: hobbies (younger 17%, older 9%); food/sweets (younger 29%, older 9%); alcohol (younger 1%, older 5%). Differences at case stage: soft drugs (FW 1%, PSR 5%); cigarettes (FW 11%, PSR 18%); hobbies (FW 15%, PSR 8%); music (PSR 6%, PS 13%) and food/sweets (PSR 12%, PS 23%).

'Substance use'

Responses to the WDYT questions concerning substance use are shown in table 5.1.10. Forty eight percent had friends who often used drugs but 78% disagreed with the idea that taking drugs was OK.

Table 5.1.10: What do YOU think? (Substance use)

Some young people…	n	Not like me	A bit like me	A lot like me	Just like me
Q16. Have friends who often use drugs	606	52%	23%	12%	13%
Q17. Think that taking drugs or glue is OK	587	78%	15%	2%	5%
Q18. Have problems because they drink, take drugs or use glue	576	84%	9%	3%	4%

Significant differences between groups (comparing answers taken as 'yes'):

- **Question 16** – Younger group 34%, older group 56%; FW 35%, PSR 66%, PS 50%;
- **Question 17** – Younger group 15%, older group 27%; FW 13%, PSR 36%, PS 22%;
- **Question 18** – Younger group 11%, older group 20%; FW 11%, PSR 25%.

Table 5.1.11 shows the proportion of cases in which practitioners agreed with a 'yes' answer given on WDYT.

Table 5.1.11: WDYT and ASSET (substance use)

WDYT Some young people…	% of cases with yes in WDYT where ASSET agrees
Have problems because they drink, take drugs or use glue	44% (83)

Table 5.1.12 shows the percentage of cases with a 'yes' answer in both WDYT and *ASSET* ('Yes Agree') and the level of agreement overall i.e. counting both yes/yes and no/no responses from WDYT/*ASSET* ('Yes & No Agree').

Table 5.1.12: Overall WDYT/ASSET agreement (substance use)

WDYT Some young people…	WDYT YES	ASSET YES	YES AGREE	YES & NO AGREE
Have problems because they drink, take drugs or use glue	16% (576)	14% (567)	7% (521)	81% (521)

How much do you spend each week on cigarettes, drink, glue or drugs? (n=505)

Only 28% stated they spent nothing on drugs or alcohol in a week whilst 15% spent up to £5, 10% up to £10, 9% up to £20 and 7% up to £50. There were differences between ages for all amounts, except up to £5 (see table 5.1.13). At case stage there were differences in the proportion of young people who spent nothing: FW 48%, PSR 18%, PS 33%. FW was also significantly lower in the 'up to £50' band (4% compared with 15% for PSR).

Table 5.1.13: Money spent on substances (by age group)

	Younger	Older
Nothing	55%	23%
Up to £10	5%	18%
Up to £20	5%	15%
Up to £50	5%	11%

'Physical health'

From table 5.1.14 it can be seen that 32% of the young people had a problem with or worried about their health and 52% said they were doing things they knew would be bad for them.

Table 5.1.14: What do YOU think? (Physical health)

Some young people…	n	Not like me	A bit like me	A lot like me	Just like me
Q19. Have a problem or worry about their health	601	68%	22%	5%	5%
Q20. Do things which they know will be bad for their health	604	48%	34%	8%	10%

Table 5.1.15 shows the proportion of cases in which practitioners agreed with a 'yes' answer given on WDYT. It can be seen that young people were more likely to acknowledge that they were damaging their health through their own behaviour.

Table 5.1.15: WDYT and ASSET (physical health)

WDYT Some young people…	% of cases with yes in WDYT where ASSET agrees
Do things which they know will be bad for their health	17% (292)

Table 5.1.16 shows the percentage of cases in with a 'yes' answer in both WDYT and *ASSET* ('Yes Agree') and the level of agreement overall i.e. counting both yes/yes and no/no responses from WDYT/*ASSET* ('Yes & No Agree').

Table 5.1.16: Overall WDYT/ASSET agreement (physical health)

WDYT Some young people…	WDYT YES	ASSET YES	YES AGREE	YES & NO AGREE
Do things which they know will be bad for their health	52% (604)	10% (585)	9% (561)	78% (561)

Is there anything about your health that you would like help with? (n=521)

Thirty one percent of the respondents stated that they would like some help on a health issue. There was a significant difference between the case stages: FW 29%, PSR 47%, PS 46%.

'Emotional and mental health'

Questions 21 to 27 of WDYT cover issues around emotional and mental health. Table 5.1.17 shows that 49% of young people worried about something that might happen in the future and 48% often felt miserable or sad. Eleven percent had sometimes thought about killing themselves. There were particularly large discrepancies between the male and female samples for questions 23 and 25.

Table 5.1.17: What do YOU think? (emotional and mental health)

Some young people…	n	Not like me	A bit like me	A lot like me	Just like me
Q21. Worry about something that might happen in the future	590	51%	29%	10%	10%
Q22. Often feel miserable or sad	600	52%	32%	7%	9%
Q23. Have problems eating or sleeping	580	76%	13%	4%	7%
Q24. Deliberately hurt themselves	596	90%	6%	1%	3%
Q25. Think about killing themselves	596	89%	7%	1%	3%
Q26. Feel good about themselves	601	18%	38%	22%	22%
Q27. Find it difficult to trust other people	601	43%	36%	11%	10%

Significant differences (comparing answers taken as 'yes'):

- **Question 22** – FW 43%, PSR 53%;
- **Question 23** – Male 20%, female 54%; FW 20%, PSR 29%;
- **Question 24** – FW 7%, PSR 16%, PS 4%;
- **Question 25** – Male 8%, female 24%; FW 9%, PSR 18%, PS 4%;
- **Question 26** – Male 84%, female 75%; younger group 77%, older group 84%;
- **Question 27** – PSR 63%, PS 43%.

Table 5.1.18 shows the proportion of cases in which practitioners agreed with a 'yes' answer given on WDYT. Practitioners appeared to identify fewer problems in the area of emotional and mental health than young people. This was particularly apparent in the question concerning difficulties in trusting other people.

Table 5.1.18: WDYT and ASSET (emotional and mental health)

WDYT Some young people…	% of cases with yes in WDYT where ASSET agrees
Worry about something that might happen in the future	49% (265)
Deliberately hurt themselves	60% (56)
Think about killing themselves	55% (60)
Find it difficult to trust other people	32% (321)

Table 5.1.19 shows the percentage of cases with a 'yes' answer in both WDYT and *ASSET* ('Yes Agree') and the level of agreement overall i.e. counting both yes/yes and no/no responses from WDYT/*ASSET* ('Yes & No Agree').

Table 5.1.19: Overall WDYT/ASSET agreement (emotional and mental health)

WDYT Some young people…	WDYT YES	ASSET YES	YES AGREE	YES & NO AGREE
Worry about something that might happen in the future	49% (590)	35% (573)	24% (540)	66% 540)
Deliberately hurt themselves	10% (596)	9% (586)	6% (556)	89% (556)
Think about killing themselves	11% (596)	11% (587)	6% (545)	87% (545)
Find it difficult to trust other people	57% (601)	24% (597)	18% (563)	69% (563)

Are you bothered by any other thoughts or feelings that you have? (n=501)
Twenty one percent answered yes, 79% answered no. There was a significant difference in 'yes' answers for the FW and the PSR sample (FW 13%, PSR 20%).

'Thinking and behaviour'

Table 5.1.20 covers questions about the thinking and behaviour of young people. Eighty three percent of the young people believed they rushed into things without thinking and over 70% often got angry/lost their temper.

Table 5.1.20: What do YOU think? (thinking and behaviour)

Some young people…	n	Not like me	A bit like me	A lot like me	Just like me
Q28. Rush into things without thinking	603	17%	40%	19%	24%
Q29. Usually give in to other people	578	46%	34%	10%	10%
Q30. Get very stressed or frustrated	588	29%	34%	16%	21%
Q31. Often get angry and lose their temper	601	28%	32%	17%	23%
Q32. Threaten or hurt other people	578	62%	24%	6%	8%

Significant differences between groups (comparing answers taken as 'yes'):

- **Question 30** – Male 68%, female 82%; FW 65%, PSR 78%;
- **Question 31** – Male 69%, female 78%; younger group 80%, older group 65%;
- **Question 32** – FW 31%, PSR 44%, PS 47%.

Table 5.1.21 shows the proportion of cases in which practitioners agreed with a 'yes' answer given on WDYT. It can be seen that practitioners and offenders were fairly similar in their recognition of problems associated with impulsivity but in

some other areas – particularly the issue of anger and temper control – young people were more likely to identify problems.

Table 5.1.21: WDYT and ASSET (thinking and behaviour)

WDYT Some young people…	% of cases with yes identified in WDYT where ASSET agrees
Rush into things without thinking	83% (476)
Usually give in to other people	61% (294)
Often get angry and lose their temper	58% (407)
Threaten or hurt other people	66% (206)

Table 5.1.22 shows the percentage of cases with a 'yes' answer in both WDYT and *ASSET* ('Yes Agree') and the level of agreement overall i.e. counting both yes/yes and no/no responses from WDYT/*ASSET* ('Yes & No Agree').

Table 5.1.22: Overall WDYT/ASSET agreement (thinking and behaviour)

WDYT Some young people…	WDYT YES	ASSET YES	YES AGREE	YES & NO AGREE
Rush into things without thinking	83% (603)	79% (597)	69% (574)	55% (574)
Usually give in to other people	54% (578))	48% (591)	33% (544)	63% (544)
Often get angry and lose their temper	72% (601)	45% (590)	42% (565)	70% (565)
Threaten or hurt other people	38% (578)	42% (587)	25% (543)	64% (543)

What would you like to be different about your life in six months time? (n=545)

Staying out of trouble (18%) and finding work (18%) were the two most popular answers. Twelve percent wanted to be more successful in education and work. A higher proportion of males than females wanted to stay out of trouble (23% compared with 13%) and a higher proportion of females wanted nothing in their life to change (12% compared with 6%). Significant differences between age groups included: staying out of trouble (younger 32%, older 15%); finding work (younger 6%, older 30%); having more success in work/education (younger 8%, older 6%) and 'nothing' (younger 11%, older 6%). Differences between the case stage samples included: staying out of trouble (FW 14%, PSR 22%, PS 45%) and 'nothing' (FW 11%, PSR 5%).

5.1.2 Section 2 – About your offending

This section of WDYT deals with a young person's attitudes to their offending behaviour and their reasons for committing the offence/s.

Why did you do it? (n=515)

The two most common responses were peer pressure/following friends (11%) and wanted money/goods (10%). Provocation/self-defence accounted for 9% of the answers, boredom 8%, alcohol/drugs 6% and spur of the moment 4%. 'Don't know' was the answer given in 5% of cases. A higher proportion of the older group gave alcohol/drugs as a reason (10% compared with 2%). Significant differences between case stages included: wanted money/goods (FW 7%, PSR 16%, PS 25%); peer pressure (FW 18%, PSR 10%) and alcohol/drug induced (FW 4%, PSR 10%).

'Attitudes to offending'

Table 5.1.23 deals with attitudes to offending. It can be seen that only 18% of the young people thought that what they did was OK and only 9% did not accept any responsibility at all for what happened.

Table 5.1.23: What do YOU think? (attitudes to offending)

Some young people…	n	Not like me	A bit like me	A lot like me	Just like me
Q1. Think that what they did was OK	590	82%	14%	2%	2%
Q2. Are sorry for the harm they have caused	586	10%	19%	26%	45%
Q3. Think that nobody else was really affected by what they did	581	63%	19%	9%	9%
Q4. Think that their family are upset by what happened	581	11%	13%	26%	50%
Q5. Blame somebody else for it	574	80%	12%	4%	4%
Q6. Accept that they were responsible for what happened	585	9%	13%	20%	58%

Significant differences (comparing answers taken as 'yes'):

- **Question 1** – FW 13%, PSR 22%;
- **Question 5** – Younger group 29%, older group 17%.

Table 5.1.24 shows the proportion of cases in which practitioners agreed with a 'yes' answer given on WDYT. It shows that practitioners gave slightly more 'yes' responses on the issue of whether the young person thought that their offending behaviour was OK. For the questions concerning remorse or a young person's views on what their family thought about their offending, practitioners were less likely to give a positive response.

Table 5.1.24: WDYT and ASSET (attitudes to offending)

WDYT Some young people…	% of cases with yes in WDYT where ASSET agrees
Think that what they did was OK	29% (95)
Are sorry for the harm they have caused	81% (498)
Think that nobody else was really affected by what they did	38% (203)
Think that their family are upset by what happened	82% (487)
Blame somebody else for it	19% (114)
Accept that they were responsible for what happened	88% (502)

Table 5.1.25 shows the percentage of cases with a 'yes' answer in both WDYT and *ASSET* ('Yes Agree') and the level of agreement overall i.e. counting both yes/yes and no/no responses from WDYT/*ASSET* ('Yes & No Agree').

Table 5.1.25: Overall WDYT/ASSET agreement (attitudes to offending)

WDYT Some young people…	WDYT YES	ASSET YES	YES AGREE	YES & NO AGREE
Think that what they did was OK	17% (590)	20% (593)	5% (556)	79% (556)
Are sorry for the harm they have caused	90% (586)	77% (593)	73% (553)	71% (553)
Think that nobody else was really affected by what they did	37% (581)	31% (592)	14% (548)	63% (548)
Think that their family are upset by what happened	89% (581)	78% (591)	73% (547)	69% (547)
Blame somebody else for it	21% (574)	13% (594)	4% (543)	83% (543)
Accept that they were responsible for what happened	91% (585)	87% (594)	80% (552)	72% (552)

Table 5.1.26 deals with reasons for offending. Forty three percent of the young people said they committed the offence because of their friends and 23% because they were drunk or on drugs.

Table 5.1.26: What do YOU think? (reasons for offending)

Some young people commit crime…	n	Not like me	A bit like me	A lot like me	Just like me
Q7. Because it's exciting	587	72%	18%	6%	4%
Q8. To get money	585	65%	15%	9%	11%
Q9. Because their friends do it	587	57%	28%	7%	8%
Q10. To get out of a difficult situation	580	68%	21%	5%	6%
Q11. Because they were drunk or on drugs	585	77%	12%	4%	7%

Significant differences (comparing answers taken as 'yes'):

- **Question 7** – FW 24%, PSR 35%;
- **Question 8** – Younger group 30%, older group 39%; FW 19%, PSR 53%, PS 41%;
- **Question 9** – Younger group 56%, older group 35%;
- **Question 10** – FW 23%, PSR 43%, PS 35%;
- **Question 11** – Younger group 13%, older group 29%; FW 13%, PSR 39%, PS 20%.

Table 5.1.27 shows the proportion of cases in which practitioners agreed with a 'yes' answer given on WDYT. It suggests that practitioners overestimated the number of young people who committed offences for excitement.

Table 5.1.27: WDYT and ASSET (reasons for offending)

WDYT Some young people…	% of cases with yes in WDYT where ASSET agrees
Commit crime because its exciting	70% (150)
Commit crime to get money	51% (187)

Table 5.1.28 shows the percentage of cases with a 'yes' answer in both WDYT and *ASSET* ('Yes Agree') and the level of agreement overall i.e. counting both yes/yes and no/no responses from WDYT/*ASSET* ('Yes & No Agree').

Table 5.1.28: Overall WDYT/ASSET agreement (reasons for offending)

WDYT Some young people…	WDYT YES	ASSET YES	YES AGREE	YES & NO AGREE
Commit crime because its exciting	27% (587)	49% (596)	19% (556)	54% (556)
Commit crime to get money	35% (585)	34% (576)	18% (535)	69% (535)

'Motivation to change'

Questions 12 to 15 focus on motivation to change. From table 5.1.29 it can be seen that 94% of the young people said they wanted to stop offending with 41% believing they needed help to do this. Only 26% believed they would offend again.

Table 5.1.29: What do YOU think? (motivation to change)

Some young people…	n	Not like me	A bit like me	A lot like me	Just like me
Q12. Want to stop offending	585	6%	7%	18%	69%
Q13. Think offending is the best way to get what they want in life	586	91%	6%	1%	2%
Q14. Need help to stop offending	584	59%	21%	6%	14%
Q15. Think they will offend again	579	74%	18%	18%	5%

Significant differences (comparing answers taken as 'yes'):

- **Question 13** – FW 6%, PSR 14%;
- **Question 14** – Male 44%, female 31%; younger group 47%, older group 37%; FW 31%, PSR 51%, PS 53%;
- **Question 15** – FW 16%, PSR 42%.

Table 5.1.30 shows the proportion of cases in which practitioners agreed with a 'yes' answer given on WDYT. It shows a strong similarity between practitioners and young people in identifying motivation to stop offending. However, young people seemed more likely to acknowledge the possibility that they would continue to offend.

Table 5.1.30: WDYT and ASSET (motivation to change)

WDYT Some young people…	% of cases with yes in WDYT where ASSET agrees
Want to stop offending	94% (507)
Think they will offend again	38% (140)

Table 5.1.31 shows the percentage of cases with a 'yes' answer in both WDYT and *ASSET* ('Yes Agree') and the level of agreement overall i.e. counting both yes/yes and no/no responses from WDYT/*ASSET* ('Yes & No Agree').

Table 5.1.31: Overall WDYT/ASSET agreement (motivation to change)

WDYT Some young people…	WDYT YES	ASSET YES	YES AGREE	YES & NO AGREE
Want to stop offending	94% (585)	93% (578)	88% (539)	82% (539)
Think they will offend again	26% (579)	14% (586)	10% (539)	81% (539)

What do you think would help you stop offending? (n=467)

Employment was the most popular answer (12%). More activities were mentioned in 8% of cases, 'myself' in 8% and new friends in 6%. Family and other help or support was mentioned in 5% of cases each. A higher proportion of males mentioned more activities (14% compared with 3%). Significant differences for the age bands included: new friends (younger 16%, older 4%); more activities (younger 17%, older 8%); employment (younger 3%, older 23%) and 'don't need help' (younger, 4%; older, 11%). Differences at case stage: employment (FW 9%, PSR 25%, PS 19%); more activities (FW 15%, PSR 6%); new friends (PSR 5%, PS 14%) and 'don't need help' (FW 10%, PS 2%).

5.2 'WHAT DO YOU THINK?' WITH A SAMPLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCHOOL

As part of the initial piloting of *ASSET*, the WDYT form was tested in three comprehensive schools in the West Midlands with children and young people between the ages of 11 and 18. The school sample included 52% males and 48% females (meaning that males and females were more evenly distributed than in the offender sample). Thirty two percent were between the age of 10 and 14, 68% between the age of 15 and 18 (mean age 14.9).

The data from this sample of nearly 400 school children were compared with the data from young people in contact with the Yots in this study. The results are shown in Appendix 8. Table 1 of this appendix includes information on the whole sample, table 2 compares results by gender and table 3 compares age groups.

As can be seen from table 1 of appendix 8, there were many significant differences between young people completing WDYT in a school environment and those completing in a Yot. Many of these were in areas highlighted by research as contributing to youth offending. For example, offenders were more likely to answer 'yes' in relation to questions such as 'live in places where there is lots of crime', 'often stay away from school' and 'have friends who often get into trouble'.

Responses to questions such as 'often feel miserable or sad', 'deliberately hurt themselves' and 'find it difficult to trust other people' suggested that young people from both samples experienced the same kind of problems in the general area of emotional health. Somewhat surprisingly, a higher proportion of the school sample answered 'yes' to 'think about killing themselves' and 'can get away with doing whatever they like at home'.

Further analysis revealed significant Yot/school differences according to gender (table 2 of appendix 8). Males in contact with Yots were more likely than males from the school sample to identify problems for questions relating to education (for example, 'often stay away from school', 'get bullied at school' and 'find it difficult to read and write'). Females followed this pattern, apart from the question relating to bullying at school. Higher proportions of both males and females in Yots said they rushed into things without thinking. A slightly higher proportion of females in Yots had friends who got into trouble. Males from the school sample were more likely to believe that they could get away with doing whatever they liked at home.

Table 3 of appendix 8 illustrates that the older sample from the Yots believed they had more problems in the three questions related to education (as above). The younger group from the Yot stayed away from school more often than the younger school sample. A higher proportion of the school sample in both age groups had problems with 'get upset or worried about a problem with their health' and the older school sample had more yes answers for 'often feel miserable or sad'.

5.3 SUMMARY

Feedback from Yot staff (summarised in chapter 1 of this report and section 9 of Roberts et al 2001) showed that practitioners generally liked the WDYT form but were often not using it to its full potential to inform assessments and decisions about young people. Some practitioners, however, were finding it a helpful tool for effective engagement with a young person by using it as a focus for discussion. Such approaches may be especially valuable in the light of the many differences between WDYTs and *ASSET*s illustrated in this chapter.

This chapter has also demonstrated the potential for WDYT to be used as an effective information gathering tool in that it can provide an indication of the views and perspectives of large numbers of young people. Comparison of WDYT data from known offenders with that from school populations can also assist in distinguishing between problems that are offending related and needs or difficulties that occur simply by virtue of age.

For the future, there is some scope for amendments to WDYT to make it fit more closely with the core *ASSET* profile and thus facilitate further comparison of the views of practitioners and young offenders. The use of WDYT should also be promoted through greater use of interactive computer and web-based questionnaires.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The introduction of *ASSET* has provided a common framework for structuring and recording assessments of young offenders. Inevitably, Yots have experienced some difficulties in incorporating this into their practice, particularly at a time when many other changes have been implemented within the youth justice system. There has, understandably, been some scepticism about the relevance of such a tool and, in particular, uncertainty about the significance of the rating scores. The generally positive results of this study should go some way towards addressing these concerns whilst also highlighting the potential benefits of *ASSET* for improving practice and developing services for young people who offend.

Work is currently in progress to make minor modifications to *ASSET* based on feedback received from staff e.g. clarifying the wording of some questions and removing double negatives. The results of the study suggest however that the core *ASSET* profile does not require major change. As described in chapter three, ninety five of the specific items within *ASSET* were predictive of reconviction and these were grouped into twenty five factors which largely correspond to the current *ASSET* structure. It may be desirable to remove some of the items that were not associated with reconviction but this will need to be balanced against the benefits of retaining information that may be of clinical value to practitioners.

The predictive accuracy of *ASSET* (67%) is already comparable to that achieved by assessment tools used with adult offenders in the UK. The study has shown that this can be further improved through the inclusion of static criminal history data and the weighting of items found to be most strongly associated with reconviction. In its present design, the total score is obtained by simply summing the twelve ratings given for the different sections of *ASSET*. The revised rating scale options presented in this report involve calculations which are similarly straightforward so that it will be easy for practitioners to see how the *ASSET* score has been derived for each young person.

The results of this (and future) research concerning *ASSET* should be made widely available to staff within the youth justice system. Given that the Youth Justice Board sees *ASSET* as an essential tool for assessing young offenders, and for planning and delivering interventions, it is important that staff have confidence in it. Until now, it has not been appropriate to give specific guidance to staff concerning the interpretation of *ASSET* scores but, on the basis of this empirical evidence, it is now possible to begin to suggest ways in which teams can use the scores to inform decisions about programme provision and resource allocation. It is therefore important for staff to have access to information on research outcomes and any subsequent practice guidance.

The 'What do YOU think? self-assessment form (WDYT) was popular with practitioners although the actual level of use appeared to be lower than expected. This report has illustrated both the potential for WDYT to provide interesting

insights into the views of young people and the value of comparing practitioners' judgements with self-assessment data. Greater use of WDYT could be encouraged through, for example, further development of interactive computer game formats of the questionnaire.

The report has demonstrated the potential of *ASSET* to provide detailed profile data on the assessed characteristics, problems, needs and positive factors of young offenders. Given that the testing of inter-rater reliability showed a reasonably good level of consistency in the completion of *ASSET*, the data it provides can be taken as a meaningful indicator of the problem areas requiring intervention from youth justice staff. The next stage is to consider how this type of data should be used, at both local and national level, to influence policy and practice.

The report presents encouraging findings on the validity and reliability of *ASSET* indicating that there is no need for major change to its content or design at the moment. However, some modifications should be made and steps taken to improve the use of *ASSET* in practice. The key recommendations of the report are therefore as follows:

1. amend the core profile by incorporating 'revised score 2' to improve the predictive accuracy of *ASSET*;
2. consider whether other changes are required for the core profile e.g. removing items not associated with reconviction or altering the current division of sections;
3. ensure that the results of research concerning *ASSET* are made available to managers and practitioners;
4. provide further guidance for Yots on how to interpret and use *ASSET* scores appropriately;
5. consider ways of increasing the use of 'What do YOU think?' and of enabling practitioners to use this more effectively in assessments.

At the present time, the results presented in this report provide good empirical evidence to support the use of *ASSET* as a valid and reliable assessment profile for youth justice. Further research, including a validation based on 2 year reconviction data and analysis of its accuracy in measuring change over time, is currently in progress. This on-going programme of research and development should enable the Youth Justice Board and Yots to build on the positive findings of this report and to further develop practice so as to obtain the most benefit from *ASSET*.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - STATIC AND DYNAMIC RISK FACTORS - COMPONENTS OF ASSET

APPENDIX 2 - SUMMARY OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE FINAL WARNING AND THE PRE-SENTENCE REPORT SAMPLES

All differences are significant at <.05.

Table 1: Offence Categories

	FW	PSR
Violence	17%	23%
Public Order	4%	7%
Burglary	11%	18%
Robbery	1%	5%
Vehicle Theft/TWOC	5%	11%
Other Motoring	5%	7%
Theft/Handling	30%	15%
Criminal Damage	18%	7%
Drugs Offences	4%	2%
Other Offences[58]	3%	1%

Table 2: Victim Section

	FW	PSR
Specific targeted victim	38%	30%
Vulnerable victim	3%	9%
Repeat victim	3%	5%
Victim not known to young person	59%	63%

Table 3: Information Sources

	FW	PSR
Interview	77%	83%
Case Record	4%	35%
Police	90%	35%
Victim	17%	14%
SSD	17%	30%
Mental Health Services	1%	4%
Drug agency	--	2%
School	14%	25%
LEA	4%	9%

Table 4: Care History

	FW	PSR
Accommodated by Voluntary agreement with parents	4%	8%
Subject to care order	4%	5%
Remand to LA accommodation	1%	4%
Name placed on the child protection register	2%	2%
Any other contact with social services	12%	16%
Social services involvement with siblings	6%	12%

[58] Other offences include crimes such as behaviour likely to cause breach of the peace, disorderly behaviour, drunkenness and perverting the course of justice.

Table 5: Living Arrangements (section a)

Living with …	FW	PSR
Mother	81%	66%
Father	45%	32%
Foster Carers	2%	4%
Siblings	59%	41%
Step-Parents	13%	10%
By-self	1%	4%
Home/Institution	3%	10%

Table 6: Living Arrangements (section b)

	FW	PSR
No fixed abode	2%	7%
Unsuitable for his/her needs	5%	10%
Deprived household	12%	27%
Living with known offenders	11%	18%
Absconding or staying away	7%	16%
Disorganised/chaotic	7%	16%
Other problem	7%	15%

Table 6: Family and Personal Relationships (section a)

Contact with …	FW	PSR
Father	66%	57%
Siblings	68%	71%
Grandparents	47%	31%
Step-Parents	16%	19%

Table 7: Family and personal relationships (section b)

	FW	PSR
Family/carers involved in criminal activity	16%	31%
Family/carers involved in heavy alcohol abuse	6%	15%
Family/carers involved in drug/solvent abuse	6%	16%
Significant adults failing to show care/interest	10%	25%
Inconsistent supervision/boundary setting	11%	33%
Experience of abuse	8%	22%
Witnessing violence in family context	8%	20%
Significant bereavement or loss	14%	25%
Difficulties with care of his/her own children	1%	3%

Table 8: Statutory Education (section a)

Educated in …	FW	PSR
Mainstream School	83%	38%
Special School	4%	9%
Pupil referral unit	4%	12%
Other Specialist Unit	1%	4%
Community home	1%	1%
Home tuition	1%	5%
None	3%	20%

Table 9: Statutory Education (section b)

	FW	PSR
Regular truanting	27%	51%
Regular absence for other reasons	11%	24%
Under-achievement	28%	55%
Difficulties with basic literacy	20%	32%
Bullied at school	15%	17%
Poor relationships with most teachers	24%	37%
Lack of attachment to school	22%	44%
Negative parental attitudes to school	7%	12%

Table 10: Employment, Training and Further Education (section a)

Currently in …	FW	PSR
Full-time employment	29%	16%
Unemployed	24%	36%
College/Further education	22%	11%

Table 11: Employment, training and further education

	FW	PSR
Lack of qualifications/skills/training	43%	73%
Negative attitudes to further training	13%	25%
Negative attitudes to employment	4%	15%

Table 12: Neighbourhood (section a)

Lives in …	FW	PSR
Rural area	11%	8%
Modern family housing	10%	6%
Older housing	15%	9%
Council estates	47%	57%
Metropolitan area	3%	9%
Affluent Sub-urban housing	3%	1%

Table 13: Neighbourhood (section b)

	FW	PSR
Obvious signs of drug dealing/usage	21%	25%
Racial/ethnic tensions	4%	7%

Table 14: Lifestyle

	FW	PSR
Lack of age appropriate friendships	15%	22%
Associating with predominantly pro-criminal peers	23%	52%
Absence of non-criminal friends	14%	32%
Non-constructive use of time	37%	64%
Participation in reckless activity	20%	48%
Inadequate legitimate personal income	16%	47%

Table 15: Substance use (section a)

	FW	PSR
Tobacco	68%	77%
Alcohol	67%	79%
Solvents	4%	18%
Poppers	1%	8%
Methadone	--	4%
Class A	4%	20%
Class B	28%	40%
Class C	1%	8%

Table 16: Substance use (section b)

	FW	PSR
Practices which puts him/her at particular risk	2%	7%
Sees substance misuse as essential to life	4%	15%
Noticeably detrimental effect on daily functioning	5%	20%
Offending to obtain money for substances	3%	18%

Table 17: Physical Health

	FW	PSR
Physical immaturity/delayed development	3%	5%
Not registered with a GP	3%	7%

Table 18: Emotional and mental health

	FW	PSR
Coming to terms with past events	23%	39%
Current circumstances	24%	43%
Concerns about the future	19%	37%
Formal diagnosis of mental illness	1%	2%
Young person has had contact with mental health services	7%	13%
Emotional or psychological difficulties	7%	10%
S/he has deliberately harmed themselves	6%	10%
S/he has previously attempted suicide	3%	7%

Table 19: Perception of self and others

	FW	PSR
Difficulties with self identity	5%	12%
Inappropriate self esteem	14%	34%
General mistrust of others	12%	30%
Lack of understanding for others	14%	33%
Discriminatory attitudes	4%	8%
Sees him/herself as an offender	9%	26%

Table 20: Thinking and behaviour

	FW	PSR
Lack understanding of consequences	34%	54%
Impulsivenes s	66%	80%
Need for excitement	40%	46%
Giving in easily to pressure from others	39%	49%
Poor temper control	34%	45%
Inappropriate self presentation	5%	13%
Destruction of property	20%	30%
Aggression towards others	29%	51%
Sexually inappropriate behaviour	2%	6%
Manipulating others	5%	14%

Table 21: Attitudes to offending

	FW	PSR
Denial of the seriousness of his/her behaviour	14%	31%
Reluctance to accept responsibility for involvement in most recent offence/s	8%	21%
Lack of understanding of impact of behaviour on victims	24%	42%
Lack of remorse	17%	34%
Lack of understanding of effects of behaviour on family/carers	20%	32%
A belief that certain types of offences are acceptable	10%	23%
A belief that certain people/groups are acceptable 'targets'	4%	10%
S/he thinks further offending is inevitable	8%	17%

Table 22: Motivation to change

	FW	PSR
Has some understanding of problematic aspects of own behaviour	87%	84%
Show some evidence of wanting to deal with problems in his/her life	83%	78%
Has an understanding of the consequences of further offending for him/herself	90%	86%
Can identify reasons/incentives to avoid further offending	85%	77%
Shows some evidence of wanting to stop offending	86%	78%
Is likely to receive positive support from family/friends during any intervention	89%	77%
Is willing to cooperate with others (Yots, other agencies) to achieve change	87%	80%

Table 23: Positive Factors

	FW	PSR
Living arrangements etc.	84%	65%
Family/personal relationships	80%	70%
Education and employment	64%	40%
Professional help/support	25%	32%
Lifestyle	47%	24%
Resilience	38%	22%
Attitudes and thinking	65%	47%
Actions and behaviour	45%	29%
Motivation	62%	57%

Table 24: Indicators of Vulnerability

	FW	PSR
Vulnerable because of the behaviour of other people	13%	27%
Vulnerable because of events or circumstances	10%	29%
Vulnerable because of own behaviour	12%	35%
Young person at risk of self-harm or suicide?	4%	12%
Protective factors that reduce vulnerability?	17%	32%

APPENDIX 3 - ASSOCIATION OF INDIVIDUAL ASSET ITEMS WITH RECONVICTION (CONSTRUCTION SAMPLE)

(Max N=1210)

Topic	Item	Frequency	Association with reconviction[59]	Include?
Personal	1. Gender (male)	82% (N=1201)	.000***	Yes
	2. Ethnicity	(N=1171)	.184	No
	3. Age 16+	44% (N=1202)	.004*	Yes
Current Offence	4. Offence (burglary or motor)	28% (N=1146)	.000***	Yes
	5. Offence gravity 5+	21% (N=1155)	.000***	Yes
Care History	6. Accommodation by voluntary agreement with parents (current or previous)	19% (N=949)	.000***	Yes
	7. Other referrals to Social Services (current or previous)	42% (N=908)	.000***	Yes
	8. Social Services involvement with siblings (current or previous)	27% (N=808)	.000***	Yes
Criminal History	9. Age at first reprimand 10-12	30% (N=961)	.000***	Yes
	10. Age at 1st conviction 10-13	23% (N=825)	.000***	Yes
	11. Number of previous convictions (0, 1-3, 4+)	(N=883)	.000***	Yes
	12. Previous custody (1+)	10% (N=610)	.000***	Yes
	13. Time since last offence (under 6 months)	51% (N=921)	.000***	Yes
	14. Failure to comply with previous disposals	23% (N=865)	.000***	Yes
Living arrangements	15. Not living with mother	27% (N=1180)	.000***	Yes
	16. Not living with father	62% (N=1181)	.000***	Yes
	17. Not living with siblings	55% (N=1181)	.000***	Yes
	18. Deprived household (usual/current)	23% (N=1087)	.000***	Yes
	19. Living with known offenders	18% (N=1064)	.000***	Yes
	20. Absconding / staying away	14% (N=1066)	.000***	Yes
	21. Disorganised / chaotic	13% (N=1077)	.000***	Yes
	22.Risk of re-offending due to living arrangements	(N=1125)	.000***	Yes

[59] Chi-square significance level. Asterisks show level when adjusted for multiple tests: *=< 0.05, **=< 0.01, ***=< 0.001

Family and personal relationships	23. No contact with birth father	38% (N=1087)	.000***	Yes
	24. No contact with siblings	33% (N=1087)	.409	No
	25. No contact with grandparents	65% (N=1087)	.168	No
	26. No contact with boy/ girlfriend	87% (N=1087)	.671	No
	27. Family involved in criminal activity	29% (N=975)	.000***	Yes
	28. Family involved in alcohol abuse	13% (N=882)	.000***	Yes
	29. Family involved in drug abuse	13% (N=894)	.000***	Yes
	30. Family lack interest in young person	20% (N=1030)	.000***	Yes
	31. Inconsistent control / boundary setting	31% (N=957)	.000***	Yes
	32. Experience of abuse	20% (N=812)	.000***	Yes
	33. Witnessing other violence in the family	22% (N=774)	.008	No
	34. Significant bereavement or loss	24% (N=842)	.002*	Yes
	35. Risk of re-offending due to family and personal relationships	(N=1112)	.000***	Yes
Statutory education	36. Mainstream school not main source	42% (N=947)	.000***	Yes
	37. Special needs identified	29% (N=752)	.000***	Yes
	38. Statement of special education needs issued	33% (N=403)	.000***	Yes
	39. Currently excluded	19% (N=743)	.001**	Yes
	40. Previous permanent exclusion	30% (N=543)	.000***	Yes
	41. Fixed term exclusion in the last year	40% (N=614)	.000***	Yes
	42. Regular truanting	49% (N=824)	.000***	Yes
	43. Regularly absent for other reasons	21% (N=757)	.000***	Yes
	44. Underachievement at school	53% (N=731)	.000***	Yes
	45. Difficulties with literacy/numeracy	30% (N=777)	.000***	Yes
	46. Bullied at school	18% (N=724)	.405	No
	47. Poor relationships with most teachers	39% (N=748)	.000***	Yes
	48. Lack of attachment to school	42% (N=798)	.000***	Yes
	49. Risk of re-offending due to statutory education	(N=655)	.000***	Yes

Employment, training and further education	50. Not in full-time work	79% (N=394)	.000***	Yes
	51. Unemployed	36% (N=394)	.000***	Yes
	52. Lack of qualifications, skills, training	67% (N=415)	.000***	Yes
	53. Risk of re-offending due to employment, training and further education.	67% (N=452)	.000***	Yes
Neighbourhood	54. Older intermediate status housing	10% (N=1057)	.034	No
	55. Older terraced housing	18% (N=1057)	.555	No
	56. Council estates	53% (N=1057)	.000***	Yes
	57. Signs of drug dealing/use	28% (N=971)	.000***	Yes
	58. Lack of age-appropriate facilities	41% (N=1037)	.001**	Yes
	59. Risk of re-offending due to neighbourhood	(N=1111)	.000***	Yes
Lifestyle	60. Lack of age-appropriate friendships	20% (N=1096)	.001**	Yes
	61. Associates with pro-criminal peers	44% (N=1072)	.000***	Yes
	62. Absence of non-criminal friends	27% (N=1040)	.000***	Yes
	63. Non-constructive use of time	56% (N=1114)	.000***	Yes
	64. Participation in reckless activity	38% (N=1056)	.000***	Yes
	65. Inadequate legitimate personal income	38% (N=1035)	.000***	Yes
	66. Risk of re-offending due to lifestyle	(N=1122)	.000***	Yes
Substance use	67. Recently / ever used tobacco	72% (N=1084)	.000***	Yes
	68. Recently / ever used alcohol	75% (N=1026)	.000***	Yes
	69. Recently / ever used cannabis	47% (N=966)	.000***	Yes
	70. Detrimental effect on life	15% (N=932)	.000***	Yes
	71. Offending to get money for drugs	13% (N=914)	.000***	Yes
	72. Other link to offending	22% (N=872)	.000***	Yes
	73. Risk of re-offending due to substance use	(N=1099)	.000***	Yes
Physical health	74. Health put at risk through own behaviour	11% (N=1041)	.000***	Yes
	75. Risk of re-offending due to physical health	(N=1110)	.000***	Yes

Emotional / mental health	76. Problems with past events	34% (N=1008)	.002*	Yes
	77. Problems with current circumstances	37% (N=1016)	.010	No
	78. Concerns about the future	31% (N=981)	.000***	Yes
	79. Other contact with mental health services	10% (N=1005)	.024	No
	80. Risk of re-offending due to emotional / mental health	(N=1092)	.000***	Yes
Perception of self and others	81. Inappropriate self esteem	26% (N=1024)	.000***	Yes
	82. General mistrust of others	25% (N=1010)	.000***	Yes
	83. Lacks understanding of other people	28% (N=1047)	.000***	Yes
	84. Sees him / herself as an offender	23% (N=1029)	.000***	Yes
	85. Risk of re-offending due to perception of self and others	(N=1098)	.000***	Yes
Thinking and behaviour	86. Lacks understanding of consequences	48% (N=1137)	.000***	Yes
	87. Impulsive	77% (N=1128)	.000***	Yes
	88. Needs excitement	48% (N=1058)	.000***	Yes
	89. Gives in to pressure from others	48% (N=1073)	.000***	Yes
	90. Poor control of temper	45% (N=1053)	.000***	Yes
	91. Destroys property	30% (N=1076)	.000***	Yes
	92. Aggressive towards others	45% (N=1090)	.000***	Yes
	93. Risk of re-offending due to thinking and behaviour	(N=1108)	.000***	Yes
Attitudes to offending	94. Denies seriousness of offence	25% (N=1141)	.000***	Yes
	95. Doesn't accept responsibility for offence	15% (N=1153)	.000***	Yes
	96. Doesn't understand effect on victims	37% (N=1132)	.000***	Yes
	97. Lacks remorse	28% (N=1133)	.000***	Yes
	98. Doesn't understand effects on family	29% (N=1123)	.000***	Yes
	99. Believes some offences are acceptable	19% (N=1045)	.000***	Yes
	100. Thinks further offending inevitable	14% (N=1020)	.000***	Yes
	101. Risk of re-offending due to attitudes to offending	(N=1110)	.000***	Yes

Motivation to change	102. Some understanding of problems	90% (N=1096)	.041	No
	103. Some desire to deal with problems	85% (N=1079)	.000***	Yes
	104. Can see reasons to stop offending	86% (N=1082)	.000***	Yes
	105. Some desire to stop offending	88% (N=1085)	.000***	Yes
	106. Risk of re-offending due to motivation to change	(N=1098)	.000***	Yes

APPENDIX 4 - FACTOR ANALYSIS OF SELECTED ASSET ITEMS (CONSTRUCTION SAMPLE)

Factor analysis was done in seven topic blocks. Only items scoring 0.6+ are listed, but all *ASSET* section risk ratings are included (in brackets if scoring less than 0.6). Item numbers refer to Appendix 3.

Topic	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Personal, Current Offence, Care History, Criminal History	**Criminal history (1)** 13. Time since last offence (under 6 months 9. Age at first reprimand 10-12 10. Age at 1st conviction 10-13	**Care history** 8. Social Services involvement with siblings (current or previous 7. Other referrals to Social Services (current or previous) 6. Accommodation by voluntary agreement with parents (current or previous)	**Current offence** 5. Offence gravity 5+ 4. Offence (burglary or motor)	**Criminal history (2)** 3. Age 16+ 12. Previous custody (1+) 11. Number of previous convictions (0, 1-3, 4+)		
Living arrangements, Family and personal relationships	**Family stability** 19. Living with known offenders 21. Disorganised / chaotic 22. Risk of re-offending due to living arrangements 18. Deprived Household (usual/current) 31. Inconsistent control / boundary setting 35. Risk of re-offending due to family and personal relationships	**Family influence** 29. Family involved in drug abuse 28. Family involved in alcohol abuse 27. Family involved in criminal activity	**Mother relationship** 15. Not living with mother 30. Family lack interest in young person	**Father relationship** 16. Not living with father 23. No contact with birth father		

Topic	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Statutory education	**School attachment** 42. Regular truanting 48. Lack of attachment to school 43. Regularly absent for other reasons 49. Risk of re-offending due to statutory education 44.Underachievement at school 47. Poor relationship with most teachers	**Special needs** 38. Statement of special education needs issued 37. Special needs identified 36. Mainstream school not main source 45. Difficulties with literacy / numeracy	**Exclusion (1)** 39. Currently excluded 41. Fixed term exclusion in the last year	**Exclusion (2)** 40. Previous permanent exclusion		
Employment training and further education	**Employment training and further education** 53. Risk of re-offending due to employment, training and further education 52. Lack of qualifications, skills, training 51. Unemployed 50. Not in full-time work					

Topic	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Neighbourhood, Lifestyle, Substance use	**Lifestyle** 66. Risk of re-offending due to lifestyle 61. Associates with pro-criminal peers 62. Absence of non-criminal friends 63. Non-constructive use of time	**Substance use effects** 72. Other link to offending 70. Detrimental effect on life 73. Risk of offending due to substance use 71. Offending for drugs money	**Neighbourhood** 59. Risk of re-offending due to neighbourhood 57. Signs of drug dealing / use 58. Lack of age appropriate facilities	**Substance use** 68. Recently / ever used alcohol 67. Recently / ever used tobacco		
Physical health, Emotional/ mental health	**Emotional health** 76. Problems with past events 80. Risk of re-offending due to emotional / mental health 78. Concerns about the future	**Physical health** 75. Risk of re-offending due to physical health 74. Health put at risk through own behaviour				
Perception of self, Thinking/ Behaviour, Attitudes to offending, Motivation to change	**Attitude to offence** 94. Denies seriousness of offence 96. Doesn't understand effect on victims 101. Risk of re-offending due to attitudes to offending 98. Doesn't understand effects of family 97. Lacks remorse 86. Lacks understanding of consequences	**Motivation** 105. Some desire to stop offending 103. Some desire to deal with problems 104. Can see reasons to stop offending 106. Risk of re-offending due to motivation to change	**Perception of self** 81. Inappropriate self esteem 85. Risk of re-offending due to perception of self and others 82. General mistrust of others	**Self control (1)** 90. Poor control of temper 92. Aggressive towards others	**Attitudes to offending** 99. Believes some offences are acceptable 100. Thinks further offending inevitable 84. Sees him / herself as an offender	**Self control (2)** 89. Gives in to pressure from others 87. Impulsive 93. Risk of re-offending due to thinking and behaviour

APPENDIX 5 - RESULTS OF LOGISTIC REGRESSION TO PREDICT RECONVICTION (CONSTRUCTION SAMPLE)

Model	Variables Included	Accuracy
1. Current rating scale (12 section ratings)	66. Risk of re-offending due to lifestyle 22. Risk of re-offending due to living arrangements 73. Risk of re-offending due to substance use 49/53. Risk of re-offending due to statutory education/ Risk of re-offending due to employment, training and further education. 80. Risk of re-offending due to emotional / mental health	66.3% correct (N=977)
2. Personal, current offence, care history (less previous custody)	10. Age at 1st conviction 10-13 11. Number of previous convictions (0, 1-3, 4+) 4. Offence type (motoring, burglary, other) 9. Age at first reprimand 10-12	71.0% Correct (N=376)
3. Living arrangements and family/personal relationships	22.Risk of re-offending due to living arrangements 31. Inconsistent control / boundary setting 18. Deprived household (usual/current)	67.3% correct (N=548)
4. Statutory education	44. Underachievement at school 38. Statement of special education needs issued	69.2% correct (N=120)
5. Employment, training and further education	53. Risk of re-offending due to employment, training and further education. 51. Unemployed	67.6% correct (N=333)
6. Neighbourhood, lifestyle and substance use	66. Risk of re-offending due to lifestyle 57. Signs of drug dealing / use 73. Risk of re-offending due to substance use 61. Associates with pro-criminal peers	71.2% correct (N=566)
7. Physical and emotional health	74. Health put at risk through own behaviour 80. Risk of re-offending due to emotional / mental health	59.4% correct (N=805)
8. Perception of self, thinking/behaviour, attitudes, motivation	85 Risk of re-offending due to perception of self and others 87. Impulsive 84. Sees him / herself as an offender 104. Can see reasons to stop offending 82. General mistrust of others	68.8% correct (N=637)

APPENDIX 6 - COMPARISON QUESTIONS FOR ASSET AND 'WHAT DO YOU THINK?'

WDYT questions	ASSET question
Stay away from home without asking	Absconding or staying away
Know that people in their family care for them	Family/personal relationships (as a positive factor)
Can get away with doing whatever they like at home	Inconsistent supervision and boundary setting
Would like help with reading and writing	Difficulties with basic literacy/numeracy
Are (or were) bullied at school	Bullied at school
Often stay (stayed) away from school without permission	Regular truanting
Think they will need to get more training or qualifications	Lack of qualification, skills or training
Think that getting a job is a waste of time	Negative attitudes towards employment
Live in places where there's lots of crime	Neighbourhood a 'crime hotspot'[60]
Have lots of friends who get into trouble	Associating with predominantly pro-criminal peers
Live in places where it's easy to get drugs	Obvious signs of drug dealing and/or usage
Don't have many friends of their own age	Lack of age-appropriate friendships
Have some friend's who don't get into trouble	Absence of non-criminal friends*
Have problems because they drink, take drugs or use glue	Noticeably detrimental effect on education, relationships, daily functioning
Do things which they know will be bad for their health	Health put at risk through his/her own behaviour
Worry about something that might happen in the future	Concerns about the future
Deliberately hurt themselves	S/he has deliberately harmed themselves
Think about killing themselves	Indications that the young person is at risk of self-harm or suicide
Find it difficult to trust other people	S/he has a general mistrust of others
Rush into things without thinking	Impulsive – acting without thinking
Usually give in to other people	Giving in easily to pressure from others (lack of assertiveness)
Often get angry and lose their temper	Poor control of temper
Threaten or hurt other people	Aggression towards others
Think that what they did was OK	Denial of the seriousness of his/her behaviour
Are sorry for the harm they have caused	Lack of remorse*
Think that nobody else was really affected by what they did	Lack of understanding of the effect of his/her behaviour on victims
Think that their family are upset about what happened	Lack of understanding about the effects of his/her behaviour on family/carers*
Blame somebody else for it	Reluctance to accept responsibility for involvement in most recent offence/s
Accept they were responsible for what happened	Reluctance to accept responsibility for involvement in most recent offence/s*
Commit crime because it's exciting	Need for excitement (easily bored)
Commit crime to get money	Inadequate legitimate personal income
want to stop offending	Shows some evidence of wanting to stop offending
Think they will offend again	S/he thinks that further offending is inevitable

* indicates a no answer in *ASSET* was taken as the comparison answer

[60] See Chapter 2 for a note on this question.

APPENDIX 7 - COMPARISON OF SELF ASSESSMENT DATA FROM YOTS AND A SCHOOL POPULATION

Table 1: Comparing Yot and school samples of young people completing WDYT[61]

Some young people…		'Not like me'	'A bit like me'	'A lot like me'	'Just like me'
Live in places where there is lots of crime***	Yot	41%	31%	14%	14%
	School	65%	33%	1%	1%
Live in places where it is easy to get drugs	Yot	48%	21%	14%	17%
	School	50%	30%	12%	8%
Know that people in their family care about them	Yot	6%	11%	27%	56%
	School	4%	9%	28%	59%
Can get away with doing whatever they like at home***	Yot	64%	28%	4%	4%
	School	49%	40%	7%	4%
See people in their family having fights and arguments***	Yot	59%	25%	7%	9%
	School	48%	35%	11%	6%
Often stay away from school***	Yot	44%	28%	11%	17%
	School	82%	15%	2%	1%
Get bullied at school***	Yot	73%	15%	5%	7%
	School	85%	12%	2%	1%
Find it difficult to read and write***	Yot	69%	16%	6%	9%
	School	89%	9%	1%	1%
Have friends who often get in trouble*	Yot	32%	40%	12%	16%
	School	45%	40%	10%	5%
Have friends who regularly use drugs*	Yot	52%	23%	12%	13%
	School	61%	26%	7%	6%
Think that taking drugs is normal*	Yot	78%	15%	2%	5%
	School	84%	12%	2%	2%
Get upset or worried about a problem with their health***	Yot	68%	22%	5%	5%
	School	52%	40%	5%	3%
Do things which they know will be bad for their health*	Yot	48%	34%	8%	10%
	School	56%	30%	10%	4%
Often feel miserable or sad	Yot	52%	32%	7%	9%
	School	47%	42%	6%	5%
Deliberately hurt themselves	Yot	90%	6%	1%	3%
	School	88%	8%	2%	2%
Think about killing themselves*	Yot	89%	7%	1%	3%
	School	84%	12%	2%	2%
Get very stressed or frustrated*	Yot	29%	34%	16%	21%
	School	37%	36%	16%	11%
Rush into things without thinking***	Yot	17%	40%	19%	24%
	School	31%	51%	11%	7%
Find it difficult to trust other people	Yot	43%	36%	11%	10%
	School	42%	42%	10%	6%
Often get angry / lose their temper***	Yot	28%	32%	17%	23%
	School	39%	38%	13%	10%

[61] Approximate n values: Yot (600); School (380).

* <.05 ** <.01 *** <.001

Table 2: Comparing gender in schools and Yots[62]

Some young people…		'Not like me'		'A bit like me'		'A lot like me'		'Just like me'	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Live in places where there is lots of crime M***F*	Yot	39%	50%	33%	27%	14%	11%	14%	12%
	School	68%	62%	29%	37%	1%	1%	1%	---
Live in places where it is easy to get drugs	Yot	47%	52%	23%	17%	13%	14%	17%	16%
	School	54%	46%	26%	34%	10%	14%	10%	6%
Know that people in their family care about them F**	YOT	5%	10%	11%	11%	27%	29%	57%	51%
	School	4%	3%	5%	14%	32%	24%	59%	60%
Can get away with doing whatever they like at home M***	Yot	63%	63%	29%	25%	4%	5%	4%	6%
	School	42%	57%	45%	35%	9%	4%	4%	3%
See people in family having fights/arguments F**	Yot	59%	58%	26%	19%	7%	6%	8%	15%
	School	51%	44%	35%	36%	10%	12%	4%	8%
Often stay away from school M***F***	Yot	44%	42%	27%	29%	12%	11%	17%	18%
	School	84%	81%	12%	18%	2%	1%	1%	---
Get bullied at school M***F**	Yot	74%	69%	16%	13%	5%	8%	5%	10%
	School	87%	83%	9%	15%	2%	2%	2%	---
Find it difficult to read and write M***F***	Yot	66%	78%	16%	16%	7%	1%	10%	6%
	School	87%	91%	11%	7%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Have friends who often get into trouble F***	Yot	32%	34%	40%	37%	12%	11%	16%	18%
	School	36%	55%	47%	33%	10%	9%	6%	4%
Have friends who regularly use drugs M**	Yot	51%	56%	24%	20%	12%	10%	12%	14%
	School	63%	58%	24%	28%	5%	10%	8%	4%
Think that taking drugs is normal M*	Yot	77%	81%	15%	14%	3%	1%	5%	4%
	School	84%	86%	13%	12%	1%	2%	2%	1%
Get upset/worried about a problem with their health M**F**	Yot	70%	61%	21%	26%	4%	6%	5%	7%
	School	59%	44%	33%	47%	6%	4%	2%	4%
Do things which they know will be bad for their health	Yot	48%	47%	34%	35%	8%	6%	9%	12%
	School	55%	56%	33%	28%	8%	12%	4%	4%
Often feel miserable or sad	Yot	54%	45%	32%	28%	7%	10%	7%	16%
	School	56%	37%	39%	46%	1%	10%	4%	7%
Deliberately hurt themselves	Yot	91%	87%	6%	7%	1%	2%	2%	5%
	School	89%	88%	8%	8%	1%	2%	2%	3%
Think about killing themselves	Yot	92%	76%	4%	16%	1%	2%	3%	7%
	School	88%	78%	9%	15%	1%	3%	1%	3%
Get very stressed or Frustrated M**F*	Yot	32%	17%	35%	27%	15%	20%	18%	35%
	School	44%	29%	36%	36%	12%	20%	8%	15%
Rush into things without Thinking M***F***	Yot	17%	16%	41%	36%	18%	22%	24%	26%
	School	29%	33%	50%	51%	13%	9%	8%	7%
Find it difficult to trust other people M*F*	Yot	45%	37%	36%	40%	11%	12%	9%	11%
	School	35%	48%	49%	34%	9%	12%	7%	6%
Often get angry and lose their temper M**F**	Yot	31%	21%	32%	27%	16%	22%	21%	29%
	School	41%	36%	36%	42%	13%	13%	10%	9%

(M = Male; F = Female)

[62] Approximate n values: Yot – male (470), female (120); School – male (200), female (180).

* <.05 **<.01 ***<.001

Table 3: Comparing age bands in schools and Yots[63]

Some young people…		'Not like me'		'A bit like me'		'A lot like me'		'Just like me'	
		Y	O	Y	O	Y	O	Y	O
Live in places where there is lots of crime Y***O***	Yot	43%	40%	31%	32%	11%	16%	15%	12%
	School	68%	63%	30%	35%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Live in places where it is easy to get drugs Y*	Yot	56%	44%	18%	24%	10%	15%	16%	17%
	School	70%	41%	17%	35%	6%	15%	7%	9%
Know that people in their family care about them O*	Yot	5%	7%	10%	11%	26%	29%	59%	53%
	School	5%	2%	16%	6%	28%	28%	51%	64%
Can get away with doing whatever they like at home Y*O***	Yot	63%	62%	27%	31%	6%	3%	4%	4%
	School	51%	48%	34%	43%	10%	5%	5%	4%
See people in family having fights/arguments O***	Yot	54%	62%	26%	25%	8%	6%	12%	7%
	School	60%	41%	24%	42%	12%	10%	4%	7%
Often stay away from School Y***O***	Yot	52%	39%	23%	30%	12%	11%	13%	20%
	School	83%	82%	15%	15%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Get bullied at school Y*O***	Yot	64%	78%	20%	12%	6%	6%	10%	4%
	School	77%	88%	19%	9%	4%	1%	---	2%
Find it difficult to read and write O***	Yot	54%	75%	26%	15%	8%	4%	12%	6%
	School	60%	93%	24%	5%	12%	1%	4%	1%
Have friends who often get into trouble Y*O**	Yot	26%	35%	46%	36%	10%	13%	18%	16%
	School	38%	48%	41%	40%	13%	8%	8%	4%
Have friends who regularly use drugs Y*	Yot	65%	44%	18%	26%	7%	16%	10%	14%
	School	78%	52%	14%	32%	4%	9%	4%	7%
Think that taking drugs is normal	Yot	86%	74%	8%	18%	2%	3%	4%	5%
	School	89%	81%	8%	15%	---	3%	3%	1%
Get upset/worried about a problem with their health Y***O***	Yot	70%	67%	21%	23%	3%	5%	6%	5%
	School	48%	53%	46%	38%	3%	6%	3%	3%
Do things which they know will be bad for their health O*	Yot	58%	41%	26%	40%	7%	8%	9%	11%
	School	66%	50%	25%	34%	7%	11%	2%	5%
Often feel miserable or sad O***	Yot	49%	54%	33%	29%	6%	9%	12%	8%
	School	58%	41%	30%	48%	6%	6%	6%	5%
Deliberately hurt themselves	Yot	90%	90%	5%	7%	1%	1%	4%	2%
	School	85%	89%	8%	8%	3%	1%	4%	2%
Think about killing themselves Y*	Yot	89%	88%	7%	7%	---	2%	4%	3%
	School	81%	85%	16%	11%	1%	2%	2%	2%
Get very stressed or frustrated Y**	Yot	30%	29%	29%	36%	15%	18%	26%	17%
	School	44%	34%	32%	38%	11%	18%	13%	10%
Rush into things without thinking Y***O***	Yot	16%	15%	39%	42%	15%	22%	30%	21%
	School	33%	30%	46%	53%	10%	12%	11%	5%
Find it difficult to trust other people	Yot	45%	41%	36%	35%	8%	14%	8%	10%
	School	39%	42%	44%	41%	12%	10%	5%	7%
Often get angry and lose their temper Y**	Yot	20%	34%	30%	32%	21%	15%	29%	19%
	School	34%	40%	33%	41%	23%	9%	10%	10%

(Y = Younger group; O = Older group)

[63] Approx n values: Yot – younger (220), older (345); School – younger (120), older (260).

* <.05 **<.01 ***<.001

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