

INTEGRATED OFFENDER MANAGEMENT: ASSESSING THE IMPACT AND BENEFITS - HOLY GRAIL OR FOOL'S ERRAND?

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Abstract

The development of Integrated Offender Management (IOM) approaches have spread rapidly across England and Wales since 2009 when IOM was acknowledged by Government through the Home Office policy statement. The MoJ commissioned process evaluation of the five IOM pioneer sites (Senior *et al* 2011) found that assessing the impact and benefits of IOM was difficult given the definitional issues of IOM and problems in identifying additionality. To date, this remains a challenge for local agencies, despite attempts to facilitate this, such as the IOM efficiency toolkit (Home Office and MoJ 2011). This paper will examine the challenges and limitations of the methodologies employed and will identify what lessons can be learned for evaluating other criminal justice initiatives such as Payment by Results schemes where definitions of interventions and additionality may be difficult to determine.

Keywords

Integrated offender management; impact evaluation; cost benefit analysis; Transforming Rehabilitation; Justice Reinvestment; Payment by Results

Introduction

Evidencing the impact and financial benefits of Integrated Offender Management (IOM) has been a challenge for Government and local agencies ever since IOM was recognised by the Government through Home Office guidance in 2009. IOM came to prominence when reductions in public finance commenced due to the economic crisis a year earlier. Given its widespread adoption across England and Wales, evidencing the impact and cost effectiveness of IOM has become the holy grail for local agencies and Government. It is particularly pertinent at this moment in England and Wales. The continuation of IOM at a local level is potentially under threat from the Government's Transforming Rehabilitation strategy (Ministry of Justice 2013a). It is perhaps ironic that IOM approaches based on the principle of more effectively joining up provision (Senior *et al* 2011) may potentially be dismantled by the fragmentation of community based offender management services as envisaged by Transforming Rehabilitation. The MoJ strategy sets out a division between the management of high risk offenders by public probation services and the marketization of services to manage low to medium risk offenders by private, voluntary sector and mutual organisations commissioned by Payment by Results (PbR).

This article will commence with a brief history of IOM. It will then define IOM and consider: the challenges of assessing the additionality of IOM, i.e. what changes to process and interventions have occurred as a result of IOM; the methodologies used to evaluate the impact of IOM and their limitations; the implications of this for the evaluation of IOM and other criminal justice services following the implementation of Transforming Rehabilitation; and will consider the risks for IOM arising from the implementation of Transforming Rehabilitation.

A brief history of IOM

Senior *et al* (2011) noted that IOM was (at the time of writing the report) the most developed attempt to operationalize the concept of end to end offender management conceptualised in the ASPIRE model (Grapes *et al* 2006) produced by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).

“At its best an IOM approach aimed to co-ordinate all relevant agencies to deliver interventions for offenders identified as warranting intensive engagement, whatever their statutory status. It also sought to ensure, by support and disruption (of potential further offending), the continued commitment by offenders to engage in interventions offered with the express purpose of reducing further offending.” (Senior *et al* 2011: i)

IOM sought to replicate for targeted groups of adult offenders what had been mandated for youth justice, through the establishment of Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. YOTs comprised multi-agency teams drawn from: social services, police, probation, health and voluntary and community sector agencies (VCS). Teams were co-located and provided multi-agency case management of young offenders. The development of IOM at the pioneer sites (Senior *et al* 2011) was informed by: resettlement strategies to improve and co-ordinate provision for short term sentenced prisoners (under 12 months) released from custody; criticisms of the silo mentality

between probation and prison services identified by Carter (2003); the concept of 'Custody Plus' in the Criminal Justice Act 2003 which was intended to offer provision to short term sentenced prisoners; and the development of multi-agency planning and interventions based on seven reducing re-offending pathways.

During the IOM pioneer initiative which ran from 2008 to 2011 the Home Office acquired the lead responsibility within Government for IOM. This is something of an anomaly. Overall responsibility for offender management lies with the MoJ which now oversees prison, probation and youth justice services. IOM represents a good example of the tensions inherent in splitting the responsibility for criminal justice policy across these two competing Government departments. Fox *et al* (2013) commented that the operational and commissioning responsibilities for offender management in England and Wales are complicated by 112 public prisons, 35 probation trusts and 12 private prisons operating under the aegis of the National Offender Management service; the operational arm of the MoJ. This is further complicated by the Home Office having responsibility for the 43 police forces across England and Wales who have a significant role to play in IOM. Senior and colleagues (2011) reported that the involvement of the police in offender management was perhaps one of the most distinctive elements of IOM.

The strategic responsibility for IOM is shared locally between 322 community safety partnerships¹⁰ (CSPs) and 41 local criminal justice boards (LCJBs) in England and Wales. This reflects the parallel responsibilities of the Home Office for CSPs and the Ministry of Justice for LCJBs and the respective reach of these departments at a local and regional level. Arguably the reach of the Home Office has been strengthened through the appointment of Police and Crime Commissioners in November 2012. They are responsible to the Home Office at a Governmental level and ostensibly the electorate at a regional level¹¹. It is too early to say to what extent the PCC will impact on IOM or offender management more generally. Critically, the PCC will have no direct responsibility for the commissioning of offender management services within their areas, under Transforming Rehabilitation (2013a) this remains at a central level with NOMS.

What IOM seeks to achieve at an operational level is the joining up of services to address offending and re-offending, something which, arguably, Government fails to achieve at a national policy level. That the Home Office has the lead on IOM within Government may facilitate the continuation of IOM. Amid the shake-up of offender management services arising from the implementation of Transforming Rehabilitation (Ministry of Justice 2013a), the Home Office will be keen to retain its IOM foothold in offender management, nationally and locally. There are 67 IOM schemes across England and Wales, based on information provided by local areas to the IOM E-Learning Portal¹². While this is not comprehensive, it provides a measure of IOM proliferation. It should be noted that some

¹⁰ Community Safety Partnerships acquired a statutory responsibility to reduce re-offending through the Policing and Crime Act 2009

¹¹ The electoral mandate of PCCs was challenged by commentators given the low turnout

¹² The IOM E-Learning Portal was commissioned by the Home Office in 2011 and is hosted and managed by the Hallam Centre for Community Justice at Sheffield Hallam University. The portal can be accessed at: <http://www.cjp.org.uk/iom-elearning/>

of these schemes cover metropolitan and rural counties, while others operate over smaller geographical areas, unitary authorities and towns.

Defining IOM

In practice terms, IOM has developed from existing multi-agency case management practice (Senior *et al* 2011): Prolific and other Priority Offenders (PPO) Programme; Drug Intervention Programme (DIP); and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) for the most serious sexual and violent offenders. One of the strengths of IOM is that it has largely developed as a 'bottom up' innovation. In evaluation terms, this is one of its weaknesses. Attempting to identify the additionality of IOM, i.e. what local agencies were doing differently as a result of IOM was difficult across the IOM Pioneer sites as they had developed in different ways. It still remains difficult, given local variations between schemes. It has been further complicated by the Government guidance on IOM (Home Office 2009) summarised by Senior *et al* (2013) as:

“IOM was to be the strategic umbrella that brought together agencies across government to prioritise intervention with offenders causing crime in their locality; IOM was to build on and expand current offender-focused and public protection approaches, such as PPO, DIP and MAPPA; and IOM should relate to all agencies engaged in Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) with direction and support in bringing together the management of repeat offenders into a more coherent structure” (Senior *et al*, 2011: 2-3)

This suggests that IOM operates at different levels, which adds complexity to the evaluation process. Trying to identify what is to be evaluated is not straightforward. It prompts the following questions:

- Is IOM a strategic process for bringing together agencies to tackle offenders in their localities?
- Is it an extension of existing offender management processes?
- Is it a way of bringing more coherence to the management of repeat offenders through two different multi-agency structures CSPs and LCJBs?

What IOM is not, is a clearly defined criminal justice intervention such as the Intensive Alternatives to Custody (IAC) pilots (Wong *et al* 2012a). These were being implemented around the same time as IOM officially commenced. IAC was a much easier pilot to evaluate given that the aim of the programme was clear; to test out the use of intensive community orders to divert offenders from short term custodial sentences.

As IOM has developed in local areas, it has become easier to more tightly define IOM for evaluation purposes. This is illustrated by Wong and colleagues (2011), who undertook a process and impact evaluation in one county area in England. Based on a documentation review and interviews and workshops with local stakeholders, they were able to define IOM as having the following components:

- Selection and de-selection of IOM offenders;
- Case management of IOM offenders through: one to one case management by a dedicated offender manager; day to day offender management by co-located staff from different agencies; multi-agency case conferencing on a regular weekly or monthly basis;
- Reducing re-offending pathways interventions responding to the case management activities;
- Police enforcement/other activities such as intelligence gathering resulting from the case management activities.

Assessing Additionality

At the same time as being commissioned to undertake a process evaluation of the five IOM pioneer sites, Senior *et al* (2011) were commissioned to undertake an impact feasibility study and a break even analysis of IOM. Neither of these studies were published by the MoJ. One of the difficulties inherent in undertaking an impact evaluation and break even analysis of the IOM pioneer sites was that of identifying the additionality of IOM. While it is not possible to reference either of the MoJ commissioned reports, the difficulties in identifying additionality can be found in the process evaluation report (Senior *et al* 2011). Some of these are considered below.

Identifying a start point for IOM

"Sexual intercourse began in ninety sixty three (which was rather late for me) - At the end of the Chatterley ban and the Beatles' first LP." opined Philip Larkin in his poem *Annus Mirabilis* (1974). In a similar vein, the 2009 Home Office guidance marked the official commencement of Integrated Offender Management (IOM), although arguably it had started much earlier in some areas of England and Wales. As reported by Senior *et al* (2011), some of the five IOM 'Pioneer sites' had received funding in 2008/09 to develop their IOM approaches. It could be argued that IOM started then, however, some of the Pioneer sites viewed IOM as commencing as early as 2006, at the point when they adopted multi-agency case management processes (*ibid*). While this may appear to be giving too much attention to something relatively unimportant, identifying when IOM commenced in a local area is not merely an issue of historical accuracy but a critical issue for evaluating IOM.

During workshops undertaken at each of the IOM Pioneer sites, individuals involved in delivering and managing IOM were asked to identify when IOM started. Respondents at the individual sites came up with start dates that varied between each other, in some instances by several years. In part their difficulties in agreeing a start date seem to stem from IOM being "built on pre-existing schemes and approaches" (Senior *et al* 2011).

The intervention cohort

One of the distinctive features of IOM at the pioneer sites was the inclusion of non-statutory offenders (i.e. offenders sentenced to less than 12 months in custody) within the IOM cohort - something that could be identified as additionality. However, the proportion of non-statutory offenders within IOM varied across the sites. Senior *et al* (2011) noted that Lancashire had the lowest proportion, just over a third (34%) of cases under statutory

supervision. West Yorkshire had the highest proportion at around three quarters (74%). In relation to PPOs, Lancashire had the lowest proportion just over one in five (22%) in the scheme, and Nottinghamshire had the highest proportion at seven in ten IOM offenders. The additional prioritisation of the non-statutory adult offender group was clearly more pronounced as a proportion of the workload in Lancashire than the other sites. What these figures also demonstrate is the inclusion of PPO offenders within the IOM cohort, some of whom were statutory and non-statutory offenders. This arrangement further illustrates the difficulties of both identifying a starting point for IOM and a distinct intervention cohort that had not previously received some form of IOM, albeit as a PPO or a DIP offender.

The diversity of approaches to IOM

Senior *et al* (2011) identified a "compendium of different approaches across the sites" which "limited the ability to closely compare each separate initiative." (Senior *et al* 2011:12) This was perhaps inevitable given that IOM was characterised by "bottom up development in local areas which achieved a collective description of IOM". (Senior *et al* 2011:3) These differences were illustrated by the different geographical areas covered by the scheme. As noted by Senior *et al* (2011):

"Bristol and Nottingham had a city focus, though the latter began to expand throughout the county during the evaluation. Although Lancashire had recently expanded the development of IOM beyond the Pennine police division, this evaluation focused on Burnley, Rossendale and Pendle local authorities (LAs). West Midlands IOM was the last to develop, located in two LAs, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Across West Yorkshire each of the hubs located in five LAs developed in unique ways." (Senior *et al* 2011: 12)

Case study in identifying the additionality for IOM

More recently focussing on a single county, with a shared county wide model of IOM with a specified in-scope cohort of offenders has made it easier to identify what constitutes additionality (Wong *et al* 2011). Table 1 reproduced from this study captures the additionality of IOM for PPO offenders across the county, identifying practices and processes before and after IOM across three local authority areas. While PPO offenders were not the sole group of offenders included in IOM, they were the cohort of offenders for whom the differences in practice were most easily identified by practitioners.

Table 1: Additionality of IOM for PPOs taken from a single county across three local authority areas (which illustrates variations between them)

	Before IOM	After IOM
Selection/De selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPO scoring matrix used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same scoring matrix used • PPO matrix; red, amber, green
One to one case management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPOs were seen 3 times a week • 1 police officer dealt with PPOs • Police and probation working on all cases • Statutory cases managed by probation • PPOs are seen 4 times a week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probation led with a police officer and a sergeant (in one site) • Probation led (in another site) • Broader access to pathways • PPOs are seen 4 times a week
Day to day offender management (due to co location)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police and probation co-located • Information sharing difficult • A PPO probation officer, PPO offender supervisor and a PPO police officer • Co-location started with PPOs • Less instant access to agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police and probation co-located • Existing PPO team joined by further probation officers and a new police officer • Accommodation worker within co-located team of police and probation • Access to police and more home visits; easier to refer. Prison officer also co-located.
Multi-agency case conferencing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previously all cases were considered • Regular PPO meeting each month • Weekly internal meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus is on those who are causing the most concern • All cases now considered at operational meetings on a traffic light basis • Weekly tasking meetings for IOM are held at probation • Monthly meeting which includes all agencies and partners
Pathways interventions from case management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each pathways strand separate from one another • Probation staff working with discrete groups of offenders • Links not as good for the key areas • Limited provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the pathways interventions have been pulled together and there is more multi-agency working and information sharing • Multi agency working widened to more offenders and staff working to a broader remit in terms of offender types • More intensive level of support • Job Centre Plus and Citizens Advice Bureau are being co-located with the IOM team
Police activity from case management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police worked solely with PPOs • Only one police officer (who had other responsibilities) • Due to PPO work there have always been links between probation and police 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in number of police officers in team working across IOM and getting intelligence on the offenders • Police able to widen the net to a multi agency staged approach including closer monitoring • Police actively targeting non-statutory cases • More police home visits are made and communication has improved

While the problem of additionality was resolved in this study, challenges in undertaking an impact evaluation (based on impact on re-offending) remained; the three areas commenced IOM at different times which straddled a seven month period.

The solution adopted for the reconviction study was to identify a point in time when a sufficient number of offenders commenced on IOM across all the three areas. This provided a large county wide intervention cohort and a sufficient number from each area to allow comparisons to be made between the areas.

Applying an Experimental Paradigm to Evaluating IOM

The requirement to undertake an impact feasibility study for IOM and an impact feasibility study for IAC, commissioned by the MoJ in 2009 as part of the evaluations for both initiatives provided an indicator of the MoJ's intent to pursue an experimental approach to testing new initiatives. However, in both cases an impact study was never commissioned. The experimental paradigm is best illustrated by Sherman and colleagues who developed the Scientific Methods Scale in which evaluation designs are ranked according to their level of internal validity (*ibid.*). Randomised Control Trials are identified as the most rigorous evaluation design and quasi-experiments in which a comparison group is used are established as the 'next best thing'. The full scale is as follows:

Level 1 Correlation between a crime prevention program and a measure of crime or crime risk factors at a single point in time.

Level 2 Temporal sequence between the program and the crime or risk outcome clearly observed, or the presence of a comparison group without demonstrated comparability to the treatment group.

Level 3 A comparison between two or more comparable units of analysis, one with and one without the program.

Level 4 Comparison between multiple units with and without the program, controlling for other factors, or using comparison units that evidence only minor differences.

Level 5 Random assignment and analysis of comparable units to program and comparison groups.

(Sherman *et al.* 1998: 5-6)

For Sherman *et al.*, a programme could only be classed as 'working' if it had at least two Level 3 evaluations and all the available evidence to demonstrate effectiveness.

The challenges of adopting an experimental paradigm for IOM were examined in an options analysis undertaken by Wong *et al.* (2011) for the evaluation of the county based scheme mentioned above. After reviewing the options with the commissioners a 'combined Levels' option was adopted, comprising: a Level 2 analysis, comparing re-offending of IOM offenders before and after commencement on IOM using Police National Computer data on reconvictions; and (arguably) a Level 4 analysis¹³ comparing actual re-offending for 12 and 24 months following commencement on IOM with predicted rates of

¹³ The Maryland Scale devised by Sherman *et al.* in 1998 did not take into account the capability to use a rigorously tested methodology for predicting re-offending

re-offending for the IOM cohort using a rigorously tested MoJ methodology (Howard *et al* 2009).

To understand the difficulties of adopting an experimental approach, it is worth reviewing why the other options were discounted. The reasons from Wong *et al* (2011) are summarised below.

- Level 1 - This was the most limited analytical approach. It would not have been possible to attribute any differences to IOM
- Level 3 - The fundamental problem with identifying a *closely matched* comparator cohort was the need to obtain this cohort from a time pre-dating IOM. The re-offending of the comparator cohort would not be tracked over the same time period as the IOM cohort.
- Level 4 – It was not possible to undertake a matched pairs design as used for the Diamond Initiative evaluation (Dawson *et al* 2011) because it was not possible to identify matching individuals (based on re-offending history and needs) within the study area who were not going to receive IOM. If they fulfilled the selection criteria for IOM they were on IOM. It was also not possible to identify matching individuals from other comparable areas who did not receive IOM – given the proliferation of some form of IOM across the whole of England and Wales. By comparison with IOM schemes that were established before and after the Diamond Initiative (which commenced in 2009) the Diamond Initiative was a relatively tightly prescribed case management intervention for non-statutory offenders. In addition it operated in six London Boroughs; therefore it was possible to identify matched individuals from other London wards who did not receive Diamond (*ibid*).
- Level 5 – It was not possible to undertake a randomised control trial as this would have required re-designing the delivery of IOM in the study area.

The Challenge of Measuring Impact on Re-offending

Since the commissioning of the evaluation of the IOM Pioneer sites in 2009, the challenges of evidencing the impact of IOM have remained constant. These challenges could equally be applied to the evaluation of any criminal justice intervention; therefore they are illustrative and arguably have a wider application beyond IOM.

The primary directive for criminal justice services in England and Wales, particularly those targeted at offenders has (not unnaturally) been reducing re-offending. This is the stated goal of the MoJ confirmed in various policy documents (Ministry of Justice 2010, 2012, 2013a). The goal in itself is not problematic, however applying the MoJ 'standard' for measuring re-offending; reconvictions as recorded on the Police National Computer (PNC) database is challenging. The three main difficulties are examined below.

Accessing PNC data

Accessing anonymised individualised PNC data to assess the impact of IOM is a protracted process. In the recent past this has involved submitting a request to the Police National

Computer/Database Information Access Panel (PIAP) board which met once every three months. The author and colleagues experience is that while PIAP approved the request, fulfilling the request was held in abeyance due to the capacity of the MoJ which provides PNC data to meet the PIAP approved requests. In the past the MoJ was not involved in the PIAP decision process, which led to applications being approved which the MoJ had insufficient capacity to meet. In fairness to the MoJ, their principal problem has and continues to be that of capacity, they have had insufficient numbers of staff to deal with these 'external requests', while at the same time servicing the data demands of the MoJ staff, ministers and MPs. Requests for PNC data have grown, as statutory, private and voluntary and community sector agencies have realised that in order to maintain their services and/or funding for them, they need to evidence their impact on reducing re-offending. What this scenario illustrates is the mismatch between the policy aspiration of Government and the lack of capacity at a central level to adequately service it.

Timeframe for measuring impact

The MoJ 'standard' for measuring re-offending has become assessing reconvictions in the twelve months following commencement on an intervention, with a six month lag to allow convictions to be processed through the court system. It is therefore a minimum of eighteen months before any analysis is even undertaken. For most commissioners of services and/or those involved in delivering services this appears to be a long time to wait for results. This is particularly the case where public sector budgeting occurs on a twelve month cycle.

Capability to analyse PNC data

As noted by Fox *et al* 2013b, the analytical capability of public sector agencies has diminished over the last few years due to reductions in public finance. This has led to staffing reductions and maintaining front line delivery capability at the expense of back office functions. As to the voluntary and community sector, there is limited evidence that this capability exists or ever existed. As noted by Senior (2004), Mills (2010), and Wong *et al* (2012), VCS agencies struggle quantitatively to evidence the impact of their services using their own data, let alone data from another source. The creation of the MoJ Datalab¹⁴ is intended to address the problem of access and to some extent the capability to analyse PNC data by any agency. However, discussions between the author and MoJ staff suggest there are methodological limitations to this. Providing agencies are able to collate the relevant PNC identifiers for the cohort of offenders (a minimum of at least fifty) that the agency has worked with, the MoJ will be able to supply a binary measure of re-offending, i.e. whether reoffended or not. This will compare the re-offending rates of the cohort with a matched comparison cohort. However, the MoJ will not be able to identify whether or not this matched cohort will or will not have received an intervention the same as or similar to the intervention deployed by the agency. Therefore the observed difference between the two cohorts may be very small or non-existent.

¹⁴ Details of the Justice Data Lab can be found at: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/justice-data-lab>

The relationship between researchers, the commissioners and other research stakeholders

At a Government level, evaluation evidence is just one component of the policy making process. Policy-makers also draw on their own experience, expertise and judgement (Davies 2004). Policy-making also takes place within the context of finite resources which influences decisions (*ibid.*). It is also influenced by the values, habits and traditions of institutions such as Parliament, civil servants and the judiciary (*ibid.*). Outside forces such as lobby groups, pressure groups and consultants are able to influence the policy-making process and the whole policy-making process is subject to pragmatics and contingencies such as parliamentary terms and timetables and the capacities of institutions (*ibid.*). Thus, many commentators prefer the phrase 'evidence-informed policy' (*e.g.* Treadwell, Shine and Bartley 2011).

As Senior (2013) notes similar issues arise outside Government commissioned evaluations:

“Contract research was often commissioned in response to an external need to validate the ongoing project work. This could be particularly the case in small voluntary and community sector (VCS) projects, where the uncertainty of project funding often required an independent piece of research to validate how successful the programme had been before further funding would be allocated. The pressure to produce a piece of work that was descriptive of the project but did not essentially challenge the aims was acute.” (Senior 2013: 365)

Asymmetric relationship

Advocates of the cultural cognition of risk¹⁵ such as Dan Kahan suggests there is an asymmetric relationship in relation to technical knowledge and understanding between scientists and the general public:

“...our argument is that cultural commitments operate as a kind of heuristic in the rational processing of information on public policy matters....citizens *aren't* in a position to figure out through personal investigation whether the death penalty deters, gun control undermines public safety, commerce threatens the environment, et cetera. They have to take the word of those whom they trust on issues of what sorts of empirical claims, and what sorts of data supporting such claims, are credible.” (Kahan and Braman 2006: 149)

Arguably, such an asymmetric relationship also exists between researchers, research commissioners and other stakeholders, such as those delivering the evaluated intervention.

This has a number of facets:

¹⁵ The “cultural cognition of risk” refers to the tendency of individuals to form risk perceptions that are congenial to their values.

- Commissioners and other stakeholders being able to fully understand the methodology employed, the level of rigour attached to it and therefore the reliability and validity of the results
- Commissioners and other stakeholders understanding the limitations of an impact evaluation. While an impact evaluation may be able to identify an effect arising from an intervention such as IOM, it will not (on its own) be able to explain why an effect occurred and how this could be replicated. This is explored later in the article in relation to the limitations of the experimental paradigm.

In practice, for most commissioners and other stakeholders, the appropriateness of the methodology and the results of an impact and economic evaluation then largely becomes an article of faith, determined by: the trust in the research team; and the results themselves. However, as Kahan and Braman (2006) note, in relation to the public and their trust in empirical evidence, they are more likely to give credence to evidence from scientists:

“...who share their values—and who as a result of this same dynamic and others are predisposed to a particular view.” (Kahan and Braman 2006: 149)

In a similar way, the level of trust placed in the research team, is in large part based on a combination of: the track record of the research team in relation to previous research assignments and who they have been commissioned by; the relationship that has been forged between the research team, commissioners and other research stakeholders during the evaluation process.

The results themselves, whether they are viewed as positive or negative will have a bearing on this asymmetric relationship. As Senior (2013) noted there is often a tension in contract research between validation and evaluation. The research work undertaken by the author and colleagues on IOM has been commissioned via the contract research route. As observed by Senior, contract research is generally commissioned “in response to a need to externally validate the ongoing project work” (Senior 2013: 365). At the point when the IOM evaluations were conducted, they were already ongoing with a general presumption by the local agencies involved in commissioning and delivering them that they should continue. The desire for validation rather than evaluation can be undermining. Senior (2013) recounts the tactics deployed by a site lead from a multi-site government funded project whose aim was to discredit the evaluation results. These tactics included:

“detailed questioning of evidence presented; questioning the researchers’ understanding of the local context; comparing ‘inappropriately compiled’ statistics from their site to the other two sites; delays in providing necessary data; cancelling of research interviews; refusing to allow certain workers to be interviewed without the project leader’s presence; and dismissing the views of the subordinate player, the service users, by claiming that they were an unrepresentative sample, despite providing the sample themselves.” (Senior 2013: 366)

Burden of communication

The asymmetry of the relationship between the research team, commissioners and research stakeholders in relation to technical know-how, is perhaps (rightly) replicated in relation to explaining the research process and the results – with the burden of responsibility lying with the research team. When agencies are commissioning research, in particular quantitative research such as impact and economic evaluations, they are arguably not only commissioning researchers to provide the technical expertise but also the expertise in communicating the process and results. The implications of this are that the research team have a considerable responsibility for:

- Being transparent in explaining the methodologies being employed and the limitations of these at every stage of the evaluation process
- Taking care when writing research reports to explain the results and methodology in plain language and perhaps as a key test, in a way which allows the commissioners and research stakeholders themselves to be able to confidently communicate the results to others who have had little or no exposure to the research process

Taking care in presenting positive results so that the limitations of the results are properly understood is important, however communicating 'negative results' and managing expectations is perhaps the greater challenge.

A striking example of this is illustrated by the following excerpt taken from the foreword to the Final Evaluation Report of the Diamond Initiative (Dawson *et al* 2011).

"At the time of the Interim Report, no definite conclusions could be drawn about the results of the Diamond Initiative, but there were a number of reasons for cautious optimism. It was of course right, in the interests of accountability and transparency, to state these reasons in the Interim Report. But we live in a complex world where crime issues are of great political interest, and a 24-hour media culture is voracious in its search for stories. So publication of the Interim Report had the effect of increasing the already high political profile of the Diamond Initiative. Under pressure from the media and others to declare Diamond an unqualified success, SRAU researchers and members of the ARG found themselves having resolutely to insist that the research was not yet completed, and that it would be inappropriate to act prematurely on interim results. This Final Report on the results of the research justifies the earlier caution. After a very careful and thorough evaluation, SRAU researchers have concluded that the assessment of the crime reductive potential of the Diamond Initiative must be less encouraging than appeared to be the case from the data available at the time of the Interim Report."(Dawson *et al* 2011: Foreword, no page number)

Satisficing

As illustrated in the above excerpt, a wide range of individuals have a stake in the results of any evaluation. In the case of IOM, these have included: those commissioning the evaluation, who may be one of the agencies involved in delivering IOM or an agency with

a co-ordinating responsibility for criminal justice services in the local area; the plethora of agencies involved in delivering IOM from strategic manager through to front line practitioner; a commissioner of one of the services which contributes to IOM, for example, an NHS commissioner of mental health services; a local councillor with responsibility for the community safety portfolio or just a local councillor whose constituents have particular concerns about crime and/or offenders in their local area; and more recently the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Each of these stakeholders have their own interest in the results of any evaluation. Their response to any results (positive or negative) will inevitably be refracted through this and coloured by their understanding of the methodology and the extent to which they perceive this to be robust and legitimate.

This is illustrated by examples based on the author's experience of evaluating IOM in two different areas. In one area in England, the commissioners indicated that their preferred methodology for assessing the impact of IOM was a before and after comparison – a level 2 on the Maryland Scale in preference to a potential level 3 which would provide a more rigorous assessment. Their rationale was that a before and after comparison was something that elected members would more easily understand.

In a similar vein, in a different area of England, where both a level 3 and level 2 evaluation were undertaken, the commissioners chose to highlight the results from the level 2 (the before and after comparison) and not the more rigorous level 3.

Limitations of the experimental approach

Experimental criminology provides an approach to evaluation that, it is claimed, will provide policy-makers and practitioner with reliable evidence about what works. However, as noted by Pawson:

“Evaluation research is tortured by time constraints. The policy cycle revolves quicker than the research cycle, with the result that ‘real time’ evaluations often have little influence on policy making.”(Pawson 2002: 157)

In the case of IOM, despite the lack of robust quantitative evidence of effectiveness - to the standard advanced by Sherman *et al* (1998), this has not prevented its widespread implementation across England and Wales, encouraged and supported by Government. This is because at a local level, it is attractive to policy makers and practitioners. Firstly, the rationale behind IOM is plausible, in short, that better joined up working between agencies (in particular the police and probation) should improve the management of offenders, which should lead to a reduction in re-offending. Secondly, because IOM is based on existing multi-agency case management arrangements it has been a relatively easy innovation to implement. Applying the “engines of innovation” identified by Innes (2013) for policing practice to the development of IOM, locally, IOM has benefited from a “bottom up” form of innovation which Innes describes as follows:

"Practice entrepreneurship based innovation involves highly localised attempts to resolve a particular situation, being transferred and diffused more widely. As implied by the name, the defining quality of practice entrepreneurship is it is practically oriented, rather than being derived from abstract concepts and theories." (Innes 2013: 22)

IOM as innovation driven by practice entrepreneurship does not lend itself to the experimental paradigm for generating evidence of effectiveness. In fact, as Pawson and Tilley have argued, the experimental approach to assessing the effectiveness of criminal justice interventions:

"...constitutes a heroic failure, promising so much and yet ending up in ironic anticlimax. The underlying logic...seems meticulous, clear-headed and militarily precise, and yet findings seem to emerge in a typically non-cumulative, low impact, prone-to-equivocation sort of way."(Pawson and Tilley 1997: 8)

In the case of IOM, arguably, the context–mechanism–outcome approach advocated by Pawson and Tilley (1997) may be more appropriate than the experimental and quasi-experimental approach.

"Programs work (have successful outcomes) only in so far as they introduce the appropriate ideas and opportunities (mechanisms) to groups in the appropriate social and cultural conditions (contexts)."(Pawson and Tilley 1997: 57)

The recent evaluations of the MoJ PbR pilots appear to have adopted this context – mechanism – outcome approach as illustrated by the research questions which the Local Justice Reinvestment Pilot Evaluation is intended to answer:

- "1. What actions did local partners take to reduce crime, re-offending and demand on the criminal justice system, and why?
 2. (How) Did the actions of local partners contribute to better criminal justice system outcomes (including reduced first-time offending, re-offending and criminal justice system demand)?
 3. What were the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the project as implemented?
 4. Were there any unintended consequences/impacts on other parts of the criminal justice system and/or crime in the area (or neighbouring areas), and/or were any perverse incentives created?"
- (Wong *et al* 2013a: 8)

While this approach appears to have been understood and adopted at a Government level, the author's experience of evaluating IOM and other criminal justice interventions suggests that it has yet to happen for commissioners and consumers of evaluations outside Government, i.e. regional and local public sector commissioners, charitable trusts and public, private and voluntary sector service providers.

This is an important issue, given the Transforming Rehabilitation proposals and the black box approach which is the key feature of Payment by Results commissioning. In effect Government have devolved the responsibility for identifying what works to service providers, crucially, without testing whether service providers are up to the task. The experience of IOM suggests that they may not be. This is further confirmed by the interim evaluation report of the Local Justice Reinvestment Pilot where Wong and colleagues (2013a) found that (except in one site) there was limited use of evidence to determine which interventions to implement and limited evidence of monitoring performance against the outcome metrics. In part this appeared to be due to the financial climate and the design of the pilot: a reward payment structure with up front funding and limited incentives for local agencies to invest in doing anything substantially different.

What next for evaluating impact and cost effectiveness?

What are the implications of the above for the delivery of criminal justice interventions targeted at offenders?

The delivery of offender management services to low to medium risk offenders including non-statutory offenders will become day to day, bread and butter work for the private and voluntary sector agencies which win the Transforming Rehabilitation contracts.

There is an expectation that the reward payment (which forms part of the payment structure) will incentivise innovation by providers. As demonstrated by the Local Justice Reinvestment pilot this is not necessarily a given (Wong *et al* 2013a).

Assuming that Tier 1, 2 and 3 providers will experiment with different forms of offender management (although delivered primarily by the Tier 1 provider), there will be a need to monitor this closely.

As suggested by Tim Harford, Financial Times Journalist, broadcaster and author of “Adapt Why success starts with failure”, there are three essential steps to successful adaptations:

“...try new things, in the expectation that some will fail; make failure survivable because it will be common; and to make sure that you know when you’ve failed.”(Harford 2011: 36)

What this means for service providers whether they are the Tier 1, 2 or 3 provider, is the increased importance of encouraging a culture of openness and honesty in developing new services and/or changing services. Developing a culture that accepts that when services innovate, some things may work and others may not work. Embracing such a culture would have avoided the disruption tactics employed by the pilot site lead recounted by Senior (2013) in his review of the politics of contract research quoted above.

In order to know when you’ve failed, requires providers to be much more disciplined about defining their interventions and the additionality of the intervention, where they are aiming to do something different to what they were doing before. This means avoiding the fuzziness of IOM, i.e. being unclear about when it started, whether or not it

was an umbrella term, a strategic process; a new operational process, an adaptation of an existing process, a widening of the intervention cohort or all of them.

To make failure survivable, it would be prudent not to put all your eggs in one basket as one of the sites in the Youth Justice Custody Reinvestment Pathfinder did (Wong *et al* 2013b). This site focussed on setting up and implementing Multi-systemic therapy (MST) as their main delivery model for reducing custody bed nights over a two year period, in spite of research evidence which suggested that the impact of MST on re-offending was unlikely to occur within the pilot period.

As to what methodological approach to use in evaluating interventions which are part of the statutory offender management provision? There are arguments that support an experimental paradigm, to see whether different interventions perform better or worse than the 'standard' offender management provision. However, a limiting factor may be that the number of individuals in the intervention cohort may be insufficient to produce a statistically significant result and also that the time required to allow the experiment to play out may be too long to wait. In this instance the Pawson Tilley context–mechanism–outcome approach maybe more useful.

However, in both instances, if the outcome that the intervention is aiming to effect is re-offending as measured by PNC data, the problem of access arises.

The establishment of the Justice Data Lab, as operated in the manner described above, would provide insufficient level of granularity to enable adequate learning to take place, aggregated results are of limited use, anonymised individualised data is required. However, accessing this, is perhaps more akin to trying to locate the holy grail than undertaking an impact evaluation itself – without the data it is not possible. In addition, the Justice Data Lab is intended in the first instance to run as a one year pilot. There is no guarantee that even access to this limited data will be available after April 2014.

Until the MoJ is better resourced to provide ready access to this kind of data, the ability of providers to innovate and test out the effectiveness of their interventions on reducing reconvictions will be limited.

An alternative approach may be for providers to adopt other measures of re-offending such as re-arrest rates, or re-imprisonment. After all reconvictions are but one measure of re-offending.

What next for IOM?

While this article has primarily focussed on the technical aspects of evaluating IOM it is perhaps appropriate (given its currency) to consider the future of IOM arrangements as a result of the implementation of the Transforming Rehabilitation strategy. The paragraph from the Target Operating Model for Transforming Rehabilitation (Ministry of Justice 2013b) which references IOM (as part of a section which also references partnership working Police and Crime Commissioners) is reproduced below:

“To reduce re-offending, CRCs [Community Rehabilitation Companies] will need to work closely with other local partners, and in particular Police and Crime Commissioners. Bidders will need to evidence how they will engage with local partnerships, for example existing IOM arrangements. CRCs will be expected to work collaboratively with PCCs, with whom they are likely to engage through local Community Safety Partnership forums. As part of account management NOMS will require CRCs to provide assurance of their engagement in local partnerships where these are purposeful in maintaining performance, and will take into consideration feedback from stakeholders such as PCCs.” (Ministry of Justice 2013)

The assumptions which underpin this and the risks are considered below.

Investment in IOM

There is a financial incentive to reduce re-offending built into the payment structure for the CRCs (Ministry of Justice 2013c). IOM arrangements have generally focussed on offenders at high risk of re-offending whether they are statutory or non-statutory offenders (as stated above) Therefore there is a presumption that the CRC contract holders will want to maintain IOM in some form, in particular given the steer to do so within the Target Operating Model documentation. However, there are risks associated with this.

The first risk is the likelihood of reduced investment in IOM from the CRC. On the 26th June 2013, George Osborne, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced further Government spending cuts. These are in addition to those already implemented between 2010 and 2014. The new reduction will be to be undertaken by 2015/16. This will represent a further 10 percent reduction (compared to the 2014/15 baseline) in funding for the Ministry of Justice (Her Majesty’s Treasury 2013). This suggests that the cost envelope for CRCs to deliver the same services that the Probation Trusts are currently delivering and commissioning will reduce. Probation are key players in IOM (Senior *et al* 2011, Wong *et al* 2012) occupying a number of roles which include: managing IOM offenders directly; servicing IOM multi-agency arrangements; commissioning housing advice, ETE, gender specific services for women offenders and other provision which provide wrap around support for IOM offenders. A reduced cost envelope has the potential to lead to a reduction in CRC investment in IOM, ironically one of the key policy areas championed in the Ministry of Justice 2010 vision for criminal justice delivery, “Breaking the Cycle: Effective punishment, rehabilitation and sentencing of offenders”.

The second is reduced investment in IOM from other agencies. Existing funding for IOM schemes, to work with under 12 month sentenced prisoners released into the community may be discontinued. This funding has been provided by community safety partnerships through Drugs Intervention Programme funding and/or other sources as noted by Senior *et al* (2011) and Wong *et al* (2013a). The Target Operating Model (Ministry of Justice 2013b) specifies that the contracted providers will be required to deliver a service to under 12 month sentenced prisoners – something that current probation staff are not statutorily required to do. Community safety partnerships, managing reduced budgets may presume that their funding is no longer required. Given that the cost envelope under which the contracted providers are likely to be operating will be lower than the existing

probation arrangements (due to further budget cuts at the Ministry of Justice), this community safety funding is more likely (rather than less likely) to be needed in order to maintain existing IOM provision.

Reduced investment in IOM could also be compounded by political considerations. Depending on the configuration of successful Tier 1, 2 and 3 bidders for the CRC contracts, Police and Crime Commissioners and elected members (within local councils) with responsibility for community safety partnerships may be reluctant to invest in IOM arrangements where this means transferring funding away from local providers with perceived local expertise to non-incumbent providers from outside the local area but who are within the winning consortium.

Culture of co-operation

As noted by Senior and colleagues (2011):

“The joining up of the key agencies was an essential feature of all IOM sites. Balanced centres of power between agencies were not always achieved within sites but respondents recognised the key roles played by all agencies and the central task of making this happen. At project level key individuals, experienced and committed to multi-agency working, were often significant drivers of good working practices on the ground. There was evidence too, where strategic individuals did not share a common view, relationships could become tense and counter-productive. At the root getting a good balance demanded core staffs were willing to think and work beyond agency boundaries.” (Senior *et al* 2011: 18)

As this suggests, cooperativeness between agencies and individuals is a defining element of IOM. Co-operation between local agencies following the bidding process for the CRC contracts, during and after the implementation of Transforming Rehabilitation has to some extent been presumed. Arguably, this should not be taken for granted. This cooperativeness may be disrupted by Transforming Rehabilitation.

Unsuccessful bidders for the CRC contracts may choose not to co-operate with the successful bidders. This has occurred in other social policy areas where the marketization of services has taken place. For example, in the establishment of Community Legal Advice Centres, undertaken by the Legal Services Commission (Fox *et al* 2010). These were intended to improve the co-ordination of legal advice services across housing, debt, welfare benefits and employment law. In two sites¹⁶ where the contracts to deliver Community Legal Advice Centres (CLACs) were won by non-incumbent local providers, there was a culture of non-cooperation from unsuccessful bidders. Some of the unsuccessful bidders managed to secure funding to continue their services alongside the Legal Services Commission and local authority contracted provider. These services ran in parallel and arguably in competition (for the same clients) with the CLACs.

¹⁶ Four community legal advice centres or CLACs were set up by the LSC and local authorities. Two contracts were won by local incumbent providers, two by non-incumbent providers.

The element of competition inherent in the Transforming Rehabilitation commissioning processes and the increasingly limited resources available to VCS agencies to work with offenders may exacerbate the competition which currently exists between them (Wong 2013c). This may manifest itself in less engagement in IOM processes and being less willing to share effective practice, in case this enables them to retain with a competitive edge in securing future funding.

Disruption due to change and increased complexity

The implementation of Transforming Rehabilitation itself is likely to be disruptive on IOM arrangements, irrespective of any of the above issues of reduced investment and cooperativeness. Disruption to IOM is also likely due to the added complexity of the information sharing arrangements for offenders arising from the separation between the CRC and National Probation Service. The risks of this fragmentation are captured by the response to the Transforming Rehabilitation proposals from the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire.

“Fragmentation of the supervision of offenders, with the public provider responsible for high risk and MAPPA cases and the contracted provider responsible for low and medium risk offenders, would increase the complexity of information exchange and fracture the continuity of offender supervision, adding substantially to the risk of public protection failures.”
(Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Gloucestershire 2013: 7)

Conclusion

The experience of evaluating IOM has highlighted the challenges of generating robust evaluation evidence of its effectiveness. There are numerous reasons for this, which include tightly defining the intervention/process in such a way that the additionality of IOM can be measured in terms of impact on reconvictions and cost effectiveness. Other reasons are the contract research context in which such evaluations have been undertaken, where satisficing research stakeholders may involve choosing less rigorous methods of measurement and/or highlighting measures that are less rigorous but are easier to understand. There are clearly limitations to the use of experimental and quasi experimental approaches to evaluating criminal justice interventions such as IOM, it is important that the results of any quantitative analysis are understood in relation the context in which the intervention was delivered and a thorough understanding of the mechanisms underpinning the intervention.

The impending implementation of the Transforming Rehabilitation strategy and the black box approach which the PbR commissioning of offender management services for low to medium risk offender represents, the onus will be on tier 1, 2 and 3 providers to generate their own evidence of effectiveness to enable them deliver the outcome target – reducing re-offending.

Where providers choose to do this and there is no guarantee that all providers will, their efforts to assess impact will be hampered by their access to PNC data unless a dedicated capacity is made available by the MoJ to provide the anonymised individualised data.

As to the impact of the implementation of the Transforming Rehabilitation strategy on IOM, there are potential risks to the continued delivery of IOM due to reduced investment, non-co-operation by agencies, the disruptive nature of the changes themselves and the impact on information sharing due to the fragmentation of offender management provision.

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