



SCOTTISH

CHILDREN'S REPORTER

ADMINISTRATION

*** Further Down the Track**

**Fast track children's hearings pilot:
Offending patterns one year on**

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Executive Summary

In 2002, the Scottish Executive published its 10-point Action Plan on Youth Crime in Scotlandⁱ. Three of these ten points were specifically directed at tackling persistent youth offending. One of these, the Fast Track Children's Hearings Pilot, was set up so that the Children's Hearings System could respond more quickly to persistent young offenders¹ and provide them with guaranteed access to servicesⁱⁱ.

The pilot began in February 2003 and finished in September 2005. Six Local Authority areas took part in the pilot – Dundee; East, North and South Ayrshire; East Lothian; and the Scottish Borders. For the purposes of evaluation, there were three 'comparison' areas - Fife, Perth & Kinross and Renfrewshire.

459 children and young people were identified as persistent young offenders in the pilot areas. 17% of these children and young people were female and 83% male. The majority (63%) were aged 14 and 15 years.

The Scottish Executive commissioned the Universities of Glasgow, Stirling and Strathclyde to carry out an evaluation of the pilotⁱⁱⁱ. The evaluation's final report, published in July 2005, noted that while offending by children and young people in the Fast Track areas did decrease in the 6 months after entry to Fast Track, offending by children and young people from the comparison areas decreased to a greater extent. The research also demonstrated that the pilot was successful in reducing timescales within the Children's Hearings System, and improved provision of services for dealing with persistent youth offending. However, the report concluded that 6 months was not a sufficiently long period to determine the full impact of the pilot on a child or young person's offending and gave: -

'the verdict that the effectiveness of Fast Track is definitely positive with regard to time-scales and other aspects such as assessment and action plans, but not proven with regard to impact on offending'.

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) carried out a follow-on research project to examine offending patterns by persistent young offenders involved in the Fast Track pilot over a longer period, to address the above conclusion. The aim of this project was to analyse the offending levels of a sample of children and young people identified as persistent young offenders, over the period of 14 months after entry to the pilot. The same sample of children and young people included in the Scottish Executive's evaluation was used for this research.

The sample from the pilot areas consisted of 163 children and young people, 135 males and 28 females. 24 were aged 9 to 12 years, 54 were aged 13 or 14 years and 85 were aged 15 years or over. In addition there were a total of 53 children and young people from the comparison areas, 46 males and 7 females. 4 were aged 9 to 12 years, 19 were aged 13 or 14 years and 30 were 15 years or over.

Many of the young people in the sample reached the age of 16 years during the 14 month research period. Most of these young people left the Children's Hearings System at this point and some were dealt with in the adult Criminal Justice System. Therefore, to get a complete picture of offending over the 14 month period, data for the research had to be obtained from three sources.

¹ For the purposes of the pilot, a persistent young offender was any child or young person who had been reported for 5 or more offending episodes in the previous 6 months. An offending 'episode' is equal to one offence referral to the Children's Reporter. That referral may contain more than one offence.

1. Children's Hearings System - Referrals to the Children's Reporter and Secure Authorisations made by a Children's Hearings, were obtained from SCRA's Referrals Administration Database [RAD].
2. Criminal Justice System - Data on offences referred only to the Procurator Fiscal were obtained from the six pilot and three comparison areas' police forces for those young people in the sample who were, or turned, 16 years during the 14 months after being identified as a persistent young offender.
3. Criminal Justice System - Data on prison sentences given to those young people who were, or turned, 16 years during the 14 months after entry to Fast Track was obtained from the Statistics Unit of the Scottish Executive Justice Department.

The data sets were merged together and analysed using the statistical package SPSS, to provide as complete a picture as possible of the offending patterns of the sample over the 14 months after they were identified as persistent young offenders.

Key Findings

Comparison with Scottish Executive's evaluation

This research supports the conclusion of the pilot evaluation that 6 months is not a long enough period over which to draw conclusions about the effect of interventions on the offending patterns of persistent young offenders. When this research is compared to the Scottish Executive's evaluation there is a downward trend in the number of children and young people from the pilot areas who increased the level of their offending and an upward trend in the number who reduced their offending. 17% of children and young people from the pilot areas committed no offences in the first 6 months after entering the pilot. This number increased to 29% in the second six months. 11% committed no offences over the entire 14 months after entering the Fast Track pilot.

Comparison between pilot and comparison areas

When the reduction in the number of offences allegedly committed was considered overall, and compared between the pilot and comparison areas, the comparison areas still appeared to be on par with, or exceed, the pilot areas. However, there were significant variations between each Local Authority area in the mean numbers of offences per child per month, as shown below:

| Local Authority area | Reduction in mean number of offences/month/child |
|-------------------------|--|
| Pilot areas | |
| East Lothian | 49% |
| South Ayrshire | 50% |
| Scottish Borders | 50% |
| East Ayrshire | -40%* |
| North Ayrshire | 30% |
| Dundee | 27% (41%) |
| Comparison areas | |
| Fife | 54% |
| Perth & Kinross | 49% |
| Renfrewshire | 42% |

*In other words, there was a 40% increase in the mean number of offences/month/child.

When the data were split by age and gender there were further differences in the changes in the numbers of offences allegedly committed after identification as persistent young offenders:

Females were particularly responsive in terms of reducing the number of offences they allegedly committed in the 14 months after they entered Fast Track, a trend that spanned all ages.

Children aged **9 to 12 years** were the least likely to reduce the number of offences allegedly committed. This is particularly significant for Dundee since 17 out of the 24 children aged 9 to 12 years came from this area. When this age group were excluded from the calculation of the mean number of offences per child per month for Dundee, the rate of reduction fell to 41%.

Young people aged **15 years and over** were most likely to stop or reduce their offending.

Types of offences

The types of offences allegedly committed by the children and young people changed little in the 14 months after they were identified as persistent young offenders. Breach of the peace, vandalism/malicious mischief and assault were consistently the most common offences in both the pilot and comparison areas. However, there were differences based on age and gender. While the overall most common offences remained the same, the types of offences allegedly committed by males and females and across the different age groups differed. Theft by shoplifting, attempting to pervert the course of justice and police assault/resisting arrest were prominent among females, while the most common offences for males were characterised by motor vehicle and theft crimes. Across the age groups the most prominent feature was the rise in motor vehicle crime with increasing age.

Custody

The Scottish Executive's evaluation raised the possibility that reductions in offending could be due to the children and young people being in prison or secure accommodation. This research showed that 10% of the overall sample derived from the pilot areas received prison sentences during the 14 months after they entered the Fast Track pilot. This was 26% of young people who were, or turned, 16 years during the 14 months after entry. A further 12% had at least one Secure Authorisation during the same period. However, it was those children and young people whose offending has increased or stayed the same who were the most likely to have received prison sentences or Secure Authorisations. Of the 54% of children and young people who reduced the number of offences allegedly committed, 14% had received at least one prison sentence or Secure Authorisation during the year after entry to Fast Track. By way of contrast, of the 30% of children and young people whose offending remained at the same level, nearly one third received a prison sentence or Secure Authorisation. Similarly of the 17% of children who increased their levels of offending, 32% received at least one prison sentence or Secure Authorisation. Therefore for this sample of children and young people who entered the Fast Track pilot, prison sentences or Secure Authorisations cannot explain reductions in offending. A higher proportion of the young people from the comparison areas received prison sentences than from the pilot areas but more young people from the pilot areas received Secure Authorisations. This may indicate that the young people from the pilot areas were more likely to have remained in the Children's Hearings System than moved into the adult Criminal Justice System.

Conclusion

This research supports the Scottish Executive's evaluation, that 6 months is not a long enough period over which to draw firm conclusions on the impact of the Fast Track pilot on a child or young person's offending patterns. When this research is compared to the previous evaluation, there is a downward trend in the number of young people who have increased their offending in the pilot areas 14 months after entering the Fast Track pilot and an upward trend in those who's offending has decreased or remained the same over the same period. A significant number of children and young people from the pilot areas reduced their offending to zero 14 months after being identified as persistent young offenders. It has also been shown that, five of the six pilot areas had significant reductions in offending, three of these within the range of the comparison areas, with another only 1% outside of this range. This is in contrast to the position 6 months after entry in the Scottish Executive's evaluation where even though the offending levels in the pilot areas decreased, offending in the comparison areas decreased by a greater amount.

Further Research

This study has highlighted a number of areas where more research is necessary. The following two areas are the most important:

- Persistent young offenders aged 9 to 12 years and their response to different interventions. This research has shown that the children in this age group appeared to be resistant to reducing offending and were not responsive to the interventions aimed at addressing their offending behaviour. Further research is essential to determine if this trend is common to all young children who persistently offend and the reasons why this age group do not respond to or do not receive services to address their behaviour.
- To compile a complete picture of the offending patterns of the young people in this sample who reached their 16th birthday, it was necessary to contact individual police forces to ask for data on each young person. This illustrates the difficulties in tracking young people from Children's Hearings System to the Criminal Justice System, on a wider scale. Therefore research is needed to explore the data challenges in following young people from the Children's Hearings System into the adult Criminal Justice System.

Introduction

Children's Hearings System

The Children's Hearings System is the care and justice system for children and young people in Scotland. A child or young person may be referred to the Children's Reporter because he or she is in need of care and protection or because they are alleged to have committed an offence². The Reporter investigates each case to decide if compulsory measures may be necessary to protect the child and/or address their behaviour. If this is the case, the child is referred to a Children's Hearing.^{iv}

In 2004-05, 50, 529 children and young people were referred to the Reporter. 17, 494 of these children and young people were referred for offending. Only a minority of children and young people persistently offend³ - of the children and young people referred for offending, 1,260 were identified as persistent young offenders. This is 7% of children and young people referred for offending and 2% of the total referred to the Reporter.^v

Fast Track Children's Hearings pilot

In 2002, the Scottish Executive published its 10-point Action Plan on Youth Crime in Scotland^{vi}. Three of these ten points were specifically directed at tackling persistent youth offending. One of these was the Fast Track Children's Hearings Pilot which began in February 2003 and ended in September 2005. Six Scottish Local Authority areas were involved in the pilot namely Dundee; East, North and South Ayrshire; East Lothian and the Scottish Borders. The pilot was intended both to allow the Children's Hearings System to respond quicker to those children and young people identified as persistent young offenders and to provide guaranteed access to services, based on a thorough assessment. It had five key objectives.

1. Reduce re-offending by implementing effective interventions focussed on offending behaviour.
2. To speed up the process between the child or young person committing the offence and appropriate action being taken - up to one third quicker from charge to disposal.
3. To ensure effective operation of the Fast Track Hearings by making them better informed, with an agreed assessment and reporting process and better information for Panel Members on the range and availability of programmes.
4. To help prevent re-offending through effective monitoring of Supervision Requirements – specific, regular review times and the need for the young person to demonstrate a pattern of improvement.
5. To assess whether the Fast Track process is a more effective way of tackling persistent offenders and reducing re-offending than conventional Hearings, including an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the process.

459 children and young people entered the Fast Track pilot between February 2003 and September 2005. 246 of these children and young people left the pilot during this same

² 8 years is the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland.

³ For the purposes of the pilot, a persistent young offender was any child or young person who had been reported for 5 or more offending episodes in the previous 6 months. An offending 'episode' is equal to one offence referral to the Children's Reporter. That referral may contain more than one offence. In addition it was open to Reporters to exercise discretion to enter children and young people to the pilot when they had not yet met the entry criteria but were considered at risk of doing so.

period.⁴ 17% of these were female and 83% male and the majority (63%) were aged 14 and 15 years.^{vii}

Evaluation of the pilot

The Scottish Executive commissioned the Universities of Glasgow, Stirling and Strathclyde to carry out an evaluation of the pilot^{viii}. The final report of the evaluation, published in July 2005, noted that while offending by children and young people in the Fast Track areas did decrease in the 6 months after entry to Fast Track, offending by children and young people from the comparison areas decreased to a greater extent. The research also demonstrated that the pilot was successful in reducing timescales within the Children's Hearings System, and improved provision of services for dealing with persistent young offenders. However, the evaluation concluded that 6 months was not a sufficiently long enough period in which to determine the full impact of the pilot on a child or young person's offending and gave:

'the verdict that the effectiveness of Fast Track is definitely positive with regard to time-scales and other aspects such as assessment and action plans, but not proven with regard to impact on offending'.

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) carried out a follow-on research project to examine offending patterns by persistent young offenders involved in the Fast Track pilot over a longer period to that that covered by the Scottish Executive's evaluation to address the above. The aim of this research was to analyse the offending levels of a sample of children and young people identified as persistent young offenders, over the period of 14 months after entry to the pilot. The same sample of children and young people included in the Scottish Executive's evaluation was used for this research.

⁴ There were two main components which allowed a child or young person to 'exit' Fast Track. The first was based on completion of all identified programmes, and the second on the level of offending falling below the Fast Track entry criteria. This research did not take into account whether the child or young person exited Fast Track within one year after entry.

Aim

The aim of this project was to analyse the offending patterns of a sample of children and young people in the Fast Track Hearings pilot over the period of 14 months after entry, comparing this with the period 6 months before entry.

The focus of this report is statistical evidence on offending, as follows:

- data in relation to changes in the number and types of offences allegedly committed; and
- non-offence referrals to the Reporter.

It intended that this research be read in conjunction with the Scottish Executive's evaluation as it provides a longer-term picture of the offending patterns of a sample of children and young people involved in the Fast Track Hearings Pilot and its evaluation.

Methodology

Selection of the sample

As the project is intended to be a follow-on to the Scottish Executive's evaluation of the pilot, the same sample of children and young people used for the evaluation were used for this research. This allows comparisons to be drawn between the two studies.

The sample was originally selected on the basis of those children or young people and their relevant persons who provided informed consent for their data to be used.

Pilot areas

The sample from the pilot areas consisted of 163 children and young people, 135 males and 28 females. 24 of this group were aged 9 to 12 years at the date of entry to the pilot, 54 were aged 13 or 14 years and 85 were aged 15 years or over.

Comparison areas

In addition, the same three comparison areas chosen for the purposes of the evaluation were used in this research, namely Fife, Perth & Kinross and Renfrewshire. It is important to note that the three 'comparison' sites were not chosen by the original evaluation team to be identical to the Fast Track pilot areas; this was not possible since Local Authorities in Scotland tackle youth offending in different ways. The comparison areas were chosen on the basis of having a similar populations overall to the Fast Track areas, and collectively having a similar profile on the basis of a demographic and youth crime data review. SCRA operational considerations were also taken into account. Accordingly direct comparisons made between the pilot and comparison areas should be interpreted with some caution.

In the sample derived from the comparison areas, there were a total of 53 children and young people, 46 males and 7 females. Four of the group were aged 9 to 12 years at entry, 19 were aged 13 or 14 years and 30 were aged 15 years and over.

There were approximately three times as many young people in the sample from the pilot areas than from the comparison areas. While a higher number from the pilot areas would be expected given that there are twice as many areas, the Scottish Executive's evaluation placed particular significance on the fact that the process identifying children and young people as persistent young offenders began later in the comparison areas than the pilot areas.

Data Sources

When a child or young person is alleged to have committed an offence he or she may be referred to the Reporter or jointly to the Reporter and Procurator Fiscal. Where the young person has reached the age of 16 years and is no longer the subject of a Supervision Requirement a referral will be made only to the Procurator Fiscal.

Many of the children in the sample reached the age of 16 years during the 14 month period of the research. Most of these young people left the Children's Hearings System at this point and were dealt with in the Criminal Justice System. Therefore, to get a complete picture of offending over the 14 month period in Fast Track, data for the research had to be obtained from three sources.

1. Children's Hearings System - Referrals to the Children's Reporter and Secure Authorisations made by a Children's Hearings were obtained from SCRA's Referrals Administration Database [RAD]. This provided data on all offence and non-offence referrals to the Reporter or those jointly referred to the Reporter and the Procurator Fiscal, for the 6 months prior to being identified as a persistent young offender and entry to Fast Track pilot and 14 months after. In addition, information on Secure Authorisations made by Children's Hearings for the whole sample was also obtained from RAD for the period 14 months after the child or young person was identified as a persistent young offender.
2. Criminal Justice System - Data on offences referred only to the Procurator Fiscal was obtained from the police forces covering the pilot and comparison areas, for those young people in the sample who were, or turned, 16 during the 14 months after being identified as persistent young offenders. There were a total of 87 young people (40% of the total sample) in this group; 40% in the pilot areas and 42% from the comparison areas. Offences where the young person was found not guilty or which were not the subject of any proceedings were disregarded, however a significant number of the offences referred only to the Procurator Fiscal were either still pending at the date of data collection or the result was unavailable.
3. Criminal Justice System - Data on prison sentences given to those young people who were, or turned, 16 years during the 14 months after entry to Fast Track was obtained from the Statistics Unit of the Scottish Executive Justice Department.

Analysis

The datasets were merged to provide as complete a picture as possible of the numbers and types of offences committed during the 14 months after entry to Fast Track, the number of other referrals to the Reporter and whether the children and young people had received Secure Authorisations or prison sentences during the 14 month research period. This was then analysed using the statistical package, SPSS, to determine changes in the number of offences before and after identification as persistent young offenders. The types of offences allegedly committed were also analysed to assess if changes in the seriousness of the offences had occurred as well as the numbers. The data were analysed in several ways.

1. Overall.
2. The Local Authority area in which the child or young person was living at the time of identification as a persistent young offender.

3. The month in which the child or young person was identified as a persistent young offender.
4. The gender of the child or young person.
5. The age of the child or young person at the date of identification as a persistent young offender. For this part of the analysis the children and young people were grouped into three based on their age - 9 to 12 years, 13 and 14 years and 15 years and over at the date of being identified as a persistent young offender.

All percentages in the analysis were rounded to the nearest percent; therefore totals may not always add up to 100%.

The remainder of this report details the results of this analysis:

- Changes in the numbers of offences.
- Changes in the types of offences committed before and after entry to Fast Track, in terms of the level and seriousness of the offences.
- The number and types of non-offence grounds referred to the Reporter for these persistent young offenders.

Findings

Numbers of Offences

The change in the numbers of offences was examined in two ways.

- The number of offences allegedly committed by each young person in the 14 months after entry to Fast Track - the number of children and young people, who have reduced, increased or showed no change in their offending after entry to Fast Track; and changes in mean and median numbers of offences.
- Changes in offending categories over the same time period.

The sample at entry to Fast Track

The same offending categories from the Scottish Executive's evaluation were used. These covered the numbers of offences allegedly committed in 6 months prior to entry and 14 months after the children and young people were identified as persistent young offenders. For this purposes of this research, offending categories were classified as follows:

Classification of offending categories

| Offending category | No. of alleged offences 6 months prior to entry, in each category | No. of alleged offences in the 14 months after entry, in each category |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Low | 0-4 | 0-10 |
| Medium | 5-10 | 11-23 |
| High | 11-20 | 24-46 |
| Very High | 21+ | 47+ |

The numbers and percentages of young people in each offending category at the date of entry to Fast Track or being identified as a persistent young offender in the comparison areas are shown below. The pilot and comparison areas are broadly similar in that the highest percentage entered in the medium category. However, the proportion of children and young people in the comparison areas who entered in the high or very high categories is greater.

Offending category at entry to Fast Track or being identified as a persistent offender in comparison areas – all

| Offending category | Pilot Areas | | Comparison Areas | |
|--------------------|------------------|-----|------------------|-----|
| | No. young People | % | No. young People | % |
| Low | 4 | 2% | 1 | 2% |
| Medium | 115 | 70% | 29 | 55% |
| High | 38 | 23% | 19 | 36% |
| Very High | 6 | 4% | 4 | 8% |

A similar pattern was evident across each pilot and comparison area, with the exception of one pilot area in which all the young people entered in the medium category.

Within the pilot areas there were differences in offending category at entry when broken down by **gender**. There were no females in the low or very high categories, 18 (64%) in the

medium categories and 10 (36%) in the high category. The majority of males (97 or 72%) entered in the medium category, with 28 (20%) in the high category, 6 (4%) very high and 4 (3%) low. There was a similar pattern in the comparison areas.

A breakdown of category of offender on entry by **age** is shown below. The percentage in each age group is shown in brackets. The medium category remains the most common at entry, although within the older age group in both the comparison and pilot areas the spread of categories at entry is greater.

Offending category at entry to Fast Track or being identified as a persistent young offender in comparison areas – by age

| Offending category | Age (years) | | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|----------|----------|------------------|---------|----------|
| | Pilot Areas | | | Comparison Areas | | |
| | 9-12 | 13-14 | 15+ | 9-12 | 13-14 | 15+ |
| Low | 0 | 0 | 4 (5%) | 0 | 1 (5%) | 0 |
| Medium | 19 (79%) | 41 (76%) | 55 (65%) | 3 (75%) | 9 (47%) | 17 (57%) |
| High | 5 (21%) | 10 (19%) | 23 (26%) | 1 (25%) | 7 (4%) | 11 (37%) |
| Very High | 0 | 3 (6%) | 3 (3%) | 0 | 2 (11%) | 2 (7%) |

Numbers of offences

To compare the numbers of offences allegedly committed by each child or young person over the 14 months after they entered Fast Track with the 6 months prior to entry, the period after entry was divided into two. Offences committed in the first 2 months immediately after entry were disregarded ('the implementation period'⁵) and the remaining offences were split into two 6 month periods according to the date on which the offence took place. Each of these 6 month periods was then compared separately to the 6 months prior to entry.

93 young people (58%) from the pilot areas reduced their offending in the **first 6 month period** after entry to Fast Track compared to the 6 months prior to entry. In addition 27 young people (17%) committed no offences during the period. Therefore 120 young people (74%) reduced their offending over the first 6 month period after entry to Fast Track. Four young people (2%) committed the same number of offences and 39 (24%) increased their offending.

In the comparison areas, 35 young people (66%) reduced their offending over the first 6 month period. A further 12 young people (23%) committed no offences during these 6 months. Therefore 89% of young people in the comparison areas reduced their offending over the first 6 month period. This is a higher percentage than the pilot areas. The remaining six young people (11%) increased their offending. This is lower than the pilot areas for the same period.

⁵ Implementation period – Following consultation with partner agencies during the initial stages of the pilot, it was recognized that the child or young person may not have access to the full range of services offered by the pilot for the first two months after they have entered the pilot as this time was used for assessments. This first two months was termed the 'implementation period'.

In the **second 6 month period** in the Fast Tack areas:

- 74 young people (45%) reduced their offending compared to the 6 months prior to entry. Although this figure is lower than the first 6 month period an additional 47 (29%) reduced their offending to zero in the second period when compared to the 6 months prior to entry. Therefore the total number of young people who reduced their offending in the second 6 month period is 121 or 74%. This is the same percentage as for the first 6 months but the number of young people who reduced their offending to zero is significantly higher in the second 6 month period.
- Four young people showed no change in the number of offences committed compared to the 6 months prior to entry, the same as the first 6 month period.
- 38 young people (23%) increased their offending. This is one person lower than the first 6 month period.

In the comparison areas, 26 young people (49%) reduced their offending, and a further 22 (42%) committed no offences. This means that during the second 6 month period 48 young people (91%) reduced their offending. The remaining five young people (9%) committed more offences in the second 6 month period compared with the 6 months before they were identified as persistent young offenders.

Taking both the **first and second six month period after entry together**, 11% of the sample from the pilot areas committed no offences in either period. In addition, nearly one third reduced the number of offences they allegedly committed in both periods. 13% increased their offending in both periods.

15% of those from the comparison areas committed no offences in either period after being identified as persistent young offenders. A further 38% reduced the number of offences they allegedly committed in both periods. Only 6% of those from the comparison areas increased the number of offences they allegedly committed in both periods.

There are significant differences in the changes in the number of offences committed in the pilot areas when broken down by **gender**. All females in the pilot areas except two girls reduced the number of offences they committed. These two females increased their offending in the first 6 month period but no girls increased offending in the second 6 month period. Although the numbers are considerably smaller (seven females) the trend is the same for females in the comparison areas. All of these females reduced their offending in both 6 month periods after entry compared to the 6 month period prior to being identified as persistent young offenders.

The tables below show the numbers of young people in each **age** group from the pilot areas and the changes they made to their offending behaviour for each of the 6 month periods after entry to Fast Track.

Pilot Areas during the first 6 month period after entry to Fast Track

| Offending | Aged 9 to 12 (n = 24) | Aged 13 to 14 (n = 54) | Aged 15+ (n = 85) |
|-----------|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Reduction | 46% | 63% | 56% |
| Stopped | 8% | 15% | 20% |
| Increased | 42% | 19% | 22% |
| No Change | 4% | 4% | 1% |

Pilot Areas during the second 6 month period after entry to Fast Track

| Offending | Aged 9 to 12 (n = 24) | Aged 13 to 14 (n = 54) | Aged 15+ (n = 85) |
|-----------|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Reduction | 25% | 54% | 46% |
| Stopped | 17% | 22% | 36% |
| Increased | 46% | 22% | 18% |
| No Change | 13% | 2% | 0 |

When the changes in the number of offences are broken down by age it is the youngest age group, those aged **9 to 12 years** at the date of entry, that were the most resistant to change their offending behaviour, and reduce offending. In the first 6 month period, 13 out of these 24 children (54%) reduced or stopped their offending. Ten children (42%) increased the number of offences they allegedly committed compared with the 6 months prior to entry. This trend continues in the second 6 month period with ten children (42%) reducing the number of offences they allegedly committed. 46% increased the number of offences and the remaining 13% children allegedly committed the same number of offences that they did in the 6 months prior to entry to Fast Track.

Older young people were more likely to reduce offending than those aged 9 to 12 years. In the pilot areas the two **older age groups** show an equal percentage of reduction in offences for the first 6 month period. By way of contrast in the second 6 month period the oldest age group (15 years and over) has a significantly higher percentage of those who reduced their offending.

In the comparison areas, the majority of the 13 to 14 years age group reduced their offending in the first 6 month period (18 out of 19 young people, five of these committed no offences). This decreased slightly in the second 6 month period where 16 young people reduced the number of offences they committed, but seven of these young people committed no offences. In the older age group (15+ years) the reverse was true. 25 out of 30 young people reduced their offending in the first 6 month period after the implementation date, with four committing no offences during the period. The number who reduced their offending increased to 28 in the second 6 month period, and of these young people, 14 committed no offences.

Changing categories of offender⁶

54% of the children and young people who entered the Fast Track pilot reduced their offending enough to move down at least one offending category in the 14 months after being identified as persistent young offenders. This is higher than reported in the Scottish Executive's evaluation where 45% of the sample moved to a lower category of offending within the first 6 months of being in the pilot. In addition, a further 2% stayed in the low category 14 months after entry. This is considerably lower than the Scottish Executive's evaluation which reported 15% remaining in the low category. However, this difference is likely to be due to differences in the calculation of the period prior to entry. The Scottish Executive evaluation calculated the offending category at entry to Fast Track based on the 4 months prior to the date at which the child or young person was identified as a persistent young offender added to the 2 months after identification. Consultation with partner agencies showed that the 2 month period immediately after identification as a persistent young offender was the period in which assessments were taking place and arrangements made; consequently the young person was not yet said to have access to the full range of required interventions. In contrast, for this study, the 6 month period immediately prior to identification as a persistent young offender was used as the period for calculating the

⁶ 'Categories of offender' was the phrase chosen to refer to groups of children and young people identified as persistent young offenders based on the number of offences they had allegedly committed within a specified time period.

category prior to entry to the Fast Track pilot. This meant that all the young people in the lower category were the small number of those who did not meet the entry criteria but nonetheless were entered into the pilot at the discretion of the Reporter.

A further 28% of children and young people in the pilot areas remained in the same offending category 14 months after entry to Fast Track, the majority of these in the medium category. This is not unexpected given that more young people entered in this category than the others. However, this figure is higher than the Scottish Executive's evaluation which reported 20% of young people had stayed in the same category. The remaining 17% moved up by at least one category 14 months after entry to Fast Track. This is lower than the figure 6 months after entry which was 20%, in the Scottish Executive's evaluation.

However, 70% of young people in the comparison areas moved down at least one offending category, a figure higher than 6 months after entry (55%). In addition 2% remained in the low category. The same differences in process for calculating the prior category apply for the comparison areas as for the pilot areas. Therefore 6 months after being identified as a persistent young offender, the percentage of the comparison areas' sample who had either moved to a lower offending category or remained in the low category was 78% whereas 14 months after it was 72%. This is still higher than the corresponding figure for the pilot areas of 56%.

17% remained in the same category 14 months after being identified as persistent young offenders, again the majority in the medium category and 12% moved to a higher offending category. The corresponding figures from the Scottish Executive's evaluation were 30% remaining in the same category and 17% moving to a higher one, higher in both respects. Therefore, the overall performance of the comparison areas in reducing the number of children and young people in the higher offending categories appears to exceed the performance of the pilot areas in the 14 months after the date of identification as persistent young offenders.

When the sample is broken down by **age** and sex similar trends to those in relation to the numbers of offences were observed in offending categories. Only one third of the 9 to 12 year olds reduced their offending to move to a lower category 14 months after entry to Fast Track. One third remained the same and one third moved to a higher offending category based on the number of offences they allegedly committed. The results of the 13 to 14 year olds and the 15 years and over age groups are similar. 60% of 13 to 14 year olds and 55% of those 15 years and over moved down by at least one category. 28% of 13 to 14 year olds stayed in the same category, while the remaining 13% in this age group moved up at least one category. 30% of the 15 years and over group stayed in the same category 14 months after entry to Fast Track while 14% moved up at least one category.

When broken down by **gender**, 78% of females who entered the Fast Track pilot moved down at least one category. The majority of these girls moved down one category. This is significantly higher than boys, 48% of whom moved down at least one category. 18% of females stayed in the same category, while that figure for males was 32%. Only 4% of females moved to a higher category, whereas 19% of males moved up at least one category.

This confirms the earlier assertions that it was the younger age group, those aged **9 to 12 years** at entry, responded least to the Fast Track pilot and that females reduced their offending to a greater extent than males. It is interesting to note that the positive changes in offending for females span the age groups. Although the numbers are low, all those females aged 9 to 12 years at entry in the pilot areas reduced their offending category. By contrast, 24% of males aged 9 to 12 years reduced their offending category. There may be two possible reasons why the 9 to 12 year olds have responded least to the Fast Track pilot. The first is that the services were not tailored specifically for the children in this age group, and were targeted at the majority of persistent young offenders who are boys aged 14 or 15

years. The second is that these children may have particularly chaotic backgrounds and it may even be the case that offending is an integral part of that background. Given their age these children may find it difficult to depart from their chaotic lives and challenge accepted family behaviour. In previous SCRA research, on a different sample of children and young people of all ages in the Fast Track pilot, it was found that one third of children who were persistent young offenders had parents/carers involved in offending behaviour^{ix}. While in the absence of further research it cannot be said that this is an issue that affects particularly the 9 to 12 age group, it should be considered a possible contributing factor.

Prison sentences and Secure Authorisations⁷

The Scottish Executive's evaluation raised the issue of the changes in offending being due to the child or young person being in prison or having a Secure Authorisation, thus having less opportunity to offend. Therefore changes in the numbers of offences were compared to data on whether the children and young people had received either prison sentences and/or Secure Authorisations during the 14 months after entry to Fast Track.⁸

17 young people (10% of the total sample) from the pilot areas received prison sentences during the 14 month period after entry to Fast Track. This is 26% of those who were or turned 16 years during the 14 month period. In addition, 20 young people (12%) had a least one Secure Authorisation during the 14 months after entry. Of the 54% of children and young people who moved down a category of offending, 14% had received a prison sentence or Secure Authorisation. For 5% this was for up to 28 days, 6% for 29 to 56 days and 3% for 57 days or more.⁹ Of the 30% of the sample who remained in the same category of offending nearly a third (32%) received prison sentences or Secure Authorisations. Of the 17% of children and young people who moved to a higher category, nearly one third (32%) had prison sentences or Secure Authorisations. Of those who moved up two categories of offending (4% of the total sample), one third had prison sentences or Secure Authorisations lasting from 29 to 56 days and another third prison sentences lasting for 57 days or more.

The proportion of young people who received prison sentences in the comparison areas was higher than the pilot areas. 13% (seven young people) of the total sample or 32% of those who were or turned 16 years during the 14 months after they were identified as persistent young offenders received prison sentences. However, the proportion of young people from the comparison areas who received Secure Authorisations was lower, at 6% (three young people). These figures indicate that a higher proportion of the young people from the comparison areas moved into the adult Criminal Justice System and left the Children's Hearings System. In addition, the proportion of young people who had prison sentences of 57 days or more during the 14 month period was significantly higher in the comparison areas than the pilot areas (10% in comparison areas as opposed to 4% in pilot areas). While the number of Secure Authorisations lasting for 57 days or more was slightly higher in the pilot areas (1% as opposed to none) this still meant that the proportion of young people with prison sentences or Secure Authorisations lasting 57 days or more was higher in the comparison areas than the pilot areas.

A comparison between these data and the changes in offending categories was carried out and divided into the categories in which the sample entered the pilot. This was to allow

⁷ All Secure Authorisations for this sample were in the form of Warrants under s63(5), s66 or s69(7) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

⁸ Even though a Secure Authorisation has been made by a Children's Hearing, not all young people with a Secure Authorisation are placed in secure accommodation. Universities of Stirling, Glasgow and Strathclyde's 'Evaluation of Secure Accommodation: Second Interim Report' (Scottish Executive) (June 2004) at para 5.9.

⁹ In making calculations in relation to time, it was assumed that one warrant authorising secure accommodation lasted for 22 days. While this may not always be the case, data on the exact length of time spent in secure accommodation was not available.

assessment to be made as to whether the pilot was more successful in reducing offending categories of a particular group, and whether the changes in the number of offences allegedly committed may be due to prison sentences or Secure Authorisations.

Pilot Areas

| Children and Young People who Entered Fast Track in the Medium Category (n = 115) | |
|--|-------------------|
| Offending Category 14 Months after Entry to Fast Track | % of Young People |
| Low | 48% |
| Medium | 31% |
| High | 16% |
| Very High | 4% |

Nearly half of those who entered the pilot in the medium category reduced their offending such that they had changed their category to low 14 months after entry. Only two out of these 57 young people received Secure Authorisations during this period and none received prison sentences. A further 31% stayed in the medium category. Of this group of 37 young people, nine (24%) received prison sentences or Secure Authorisations during the 14 month period after entry to Fast Track. 20% of young people who entered the pilot in the medium category increased offending category to high or very high. Nine out of the total group of 24 young people (38%) received either Secure Authorisations or prison sentences during the period.

62% of young people from the comparison areas in the medium category, when identified as persistent young offenders, moved into the low category 14 months later. This is a higher proportion than in the pilot areas. None of the 18 young people in this group received prison sentences or Secure Authorisations during this time. A further 24% remained in the medium category, a figure lower than in the pilot areas, and of these 29% (two young people) received Secure Authorisations or prison sentences during the 14-month period. The proportion of this group having received prison sentences or Secure Authorisations is slightly higher than in the pilot areas. The remaining 14% saw their offending category increase to high or very high. Three quarters of this group received either prison sentences or Secure Authorisations during the 14-month period.

Pilot Areas

| Children and Young People who Entered Fast Track in the High Category (n = 38) | |
|---|-------------------|
| Offending category 14 months after entry to Fast Track | % of young people |
| Low | 29% |
| Medium | 42% |
| High | 21% |
| Very High | 8% |

Only 8% of young people who were categorised as high in terms of the level of their offending category prior to entry to Fast Track increased their offending category. None of these young people received prison sentences or Secure Authorisations. 71% decreased their offending category to either medium or low. Eight out of the 27 young people in this group (30%) received either Secure Authorisations or were in prison for a period during the 14 months after they entered Fast Track. 21% remained in the high offending category. 50% (four young people) had been in prison or had Secure Authorisations during the period in which they remained in the high offending category.

Two thirds of those who entered the pilot in the very high category reduced their offending. One third of these reduced to medium or low categories and the other third to high. Two of the four young people who moved from very high to high category received prison sentences. None of the young people, who entered Fast Track in the very high category and moved to a lower offending category over the 14 months, received Secure Authorisations. The remaining third remained at very high levels of offending after 14 months after entry to Fast Track. All of the young people who remained in the very high category received Secure Authorisations and/or prison sentences in the 14 months after they entered the Fast Track pilot.

All of the young people in the comparison areas in the very high offending category reduced their offending category. In half of these cases, this was to the high category but in the other half of these cases this was to the low category. In one of these cases the young person received a prison sentence(s) for 113 days or more.

It is clear from both the pilot and comparison areas that it is those who were in the highest offending category who were most likely to have had Secure Authorisations or prison sentences during the 14 months after they entered Fast Track or were identified as persistent young offenders. But having a prison sentence and/or Secure Authorisation appeared to have little impact on offending and does not explain the reductions in offending for the majority of these children and young people.

Mean and Median Number of Offences

The table below illustrates the mean and median number of offences allegedly committed by the sample from the pilot areas for the 6 months prior to entry, the first 6 month and the second 6 month period after entry to Fast Track. Once again offences committed during the first two months immediately after the child or young person was identified as a persistent young offender ('the implementation period') were not included in the analysis.

Pilot Areas

| | Months before and after entry to Fast Track | | |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------|----------------|
| | -6 to 0 | 2 to 8 | 9 to 14 |
| Mean Number of Offences | 9.59 | 6.91 | 6.07 |
| Median Number of Offences | 8 | 5 | 3 |

Both the mean and the median consistently decline. However, in the 9 to 14 month period the median is considerably lower than the mean which suggests that there was a core number of young people resistant to change.

The table below makes the same illustration for the comparison areas.

Comparison Areas

| | Months before and after entry to Fast Track | | |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------|----------------|
| | -6 to 0 | 2 to 8 | 9 to 14 |
| Mean Number of Offences | 11.02 | 5.89 | 4.25 |
| Median Number of Offences | 9 | 2 | 2 |

As before, the mean and median both decline but the most dramatic reduction occurs in the 2 to 8 month period after the date at which the young person was identified as a persistent young offender. Despite having both a higher mean and median for the 6 months prior to

entry to Fast Track, after being identified as persistent young offenders those from the comparison areas had lower mean and median number of offences than those from the pilot areas.

The table below illustrates the changes in the mean numbers of offences per child per month for the six **Fast Track pilot areas** and the three **comparison areas**.

| | 6 months prior to entry to Fast Track | | 14 months after entry to Fast Track | | % change in the mean number of offences/child/month |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| | No. offences | Mean no. offences/child/month | No. offences | Mean no. offences/child/month | |
| <u>Pilot areas</u> | | | | | |
| Dundee | 681 | 1.58 | 1159 | 1.15 | - 27% |
| East Ayrshire | 132 | 1.38 | 430 | 1.92 | + 40% |
| East Lothian | 25 | 1.04 | 30 | 0.54 | - 49% |
| North Ayrshire | 389 | 1.91 | 638 | 1.34 | - 30% |
| South Ayrshire | 214 | 1.32 | 248 | 0.66 | - 50% |
| Scottish Borders | 158 | 2.63 | 185 | 1.32 | - 50% |
| <u>Comparison areas</u> | | | | | |
| Fife | 249 | 1.89 | 270 | 0.88 | - 54% |
| Perth & Kinross | 185 | 1.62 | 218 | 0.82 | - 49% |
| Renfrewshire | 150 | 2.08 | 202 | 1.2 | - 42% |

There was a marked variation in the reductions of the mean number of offences/child/month across the pilot areas. There was a negative impact on the offending of the young people in the sample from **East Ayrshire**. The reasons for this increase are unclear. It is not the case that only a small number of the young people from this area did not reduced their offending, 50% of the young people increased their offending in both 6 month periods after entry to Fast Track. Of these eight young people in East Ayrshire, seven moved to a higher category of offending.

Dundee and North Ayrshire showed a lower reduction in the mean number of offences/child/month. Dundee contains the highest proportion of the 9 to 12 years age group (17 out of 24 of the sample in this age group) who did not respond to the pilot. Taking out this age group in the Dundee sample, the reduction in the mean number of offences/child/month is 41%. This brings Dundee within the range of the other pilot and comparison areas, shown in the table below.

Dundee without 9 to 12 year olds included in the analysis

| | 6 months prior to entry to Fast Track | | 14 months after entry to Fast Track | | % Change in the mean number of offences/child/month |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| | No. Offences | Mean no. offences/child/month | No. offences | Mean no. offences/child/month | |
| Dundee | 547 | 1.66 | 754 | 0.98 | -41% |

Month of entry to Fast Track – comparison in levels of offending between 6 months before and 14 months after.

| Month of Entry to Fast Track (2003) | No. persistent offenders who entered Fast Track | 6 months before entry to Fast Track | | 14 months after entry to Fast Track | | % Change in mean no. offences/child/month |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| | | No. offences | Mean no. offences/child/month | No. offences | Mean no. offences/child/month | |
| February | 47 | 596 | 2.11 | 979 | 1.49 | -29% |
| March | 21 | 198 | 1.57 | 353 | 1.2 | -24% |
| April | 17 | 149 | 1.46 | 207 | 0.87 | -40% |
| May | 9 | 71 | 1.31 | 154 | 1.22 | -7% |
| June | 11 | 101 | 1.53 | 213 | 1.38 | -10% |
| July | 12 | 92 | 1.28 | 139 | 0.83 | -35% |
| August | 7 | 49 | 0.86 | 123 | 1.26** | +47%** |
| September | 14 | 124 | 1.48 | 189 | 0.96 | -35% |
| October | 20 | 181 | 1.51 | 286 | 1.02 | -32% |
| November | 5 | 38 | 1.27 | 47 | 0.67 | -47% |

**One young person is responsible for 70 offences and another for 31. The mean excluding these young people is 0.87 and the % change is +1%.

There was anecdotal evidence to suggest that the services to which young people had access to after entry to Fast Track may not have been fully established in the initial months of the pilot. This may therefore have had an effect on the level of reduction in offending for those young people who entered the pilot in the early months (February and March 2003). An analysis was carried out to see if this was the case. The results, shown in the table above, show that the anecdotal evidence is not substantiated, as there is no clear pattern in reduction in levels of offending by month of entry to Fast Track.

Analysis was conducted excluding young people who came from East Ayrshire, which differed from the other areas in having an increase in offending. The table below illustrates the results.

Pilot Areas excluding East Ayrshire

| Month of entry to Fast Track (2003) | No. Persistent Offenders who entered Fast Track | 6 months before entry to Fast Track | | 14 months after entry to Fast Track | | % Change in mean no. offences/child/month |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| | | No. offences | Mean no. offences/child/month | No. offences | Mean no. offences/child/month | |
| February | 43 | 559 | 2.17 | 863 | 1.43 | -34% |
| March | 17 | 150 | 1.47 | 175 | 0.74 | -50% |
| April | 16 | 144 | 1.5 | 206 | 0.92 | -39% |
| May | 9 | 71 | 1.31 | 154 | 1.22 | -7% |
| June | 11 | 101 | 1.53 | 213 | 1.38 | -10% |
| July | 10 | 78 | 1.3 | 120 | 0.86 | -34% |
| August | 5 | 34 | 1.13 | 65 | 0.93 | -18% |
| September | 15 | 124 | 1.38 | 189 | 0.9 | -35% |
| October | 19 | 167 | 1.46 | 228 | 0.86 | -41% |
| November | 5 | 38 | 1.27 | 47 | 0.67 | -47% |

While significantly increased rates of reduction are seen when East Ayrshire is excluded, there is still little to substantiate the anecdotal evidence as once again no clear pattern emerges. The highest reduction is seen in those within this sample who entered the pilot in March and the lowest in May and June.

Types of Offences

It is important to assess not only whether the numbers of offences allegedly committed by the children and young people changed, but also whether the types of offences they allegedly committed before and after entry to Fast Track changed. While broad categorisation of offences does not allow for a straightforward comparison of seriousness due to the different behaviours that can be categorised as the same offence (e.g. assault and breach of the peace cover a range of actions), it does allow analysis of general trends in offence types.

The table below lists the 'top 10' offences allegedly committed in the **pilot areas** before and after entry to Fast Track.

| | Offences 6 months prior to entry | No. offences | %of total offences | Offences 14 months after entry | No. offences | %of total offences |
|--------------|---|--------------|-----------------------|---|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Breach of the Peace | 356 | 22% | Breach of the Peace | 566 | 21% |
| 2 | Other | 245 | 15% | Assault | 400 | 15% |
| 3 | Assault | 243 | 15% | Vandalism/Malicious Mischief | 367 | 14% |
| 4 | Vandalism/ Malicious Mischief | 200 | 13% | Other | 201 | 7% |
| 5 | Theft – other | 109 | 7% | Theft – other | 176 | 7% |
| 6 | Theft by Shoplifting | 80 | 5% | Theft by Shoplifting | 168 | 6% |
| 7 | Theft by OLP (motor vehicle) | 59 | 4% | Theft by OLP (motor vehicle) | 149 | 6% |
| 8 | Theft by Housebreaking | 47 | 3% | Road Traffic Offence | 136 | 5% |
| 9 | Road Traffic Offence | 42 | 3% | Theft by Housebreaking | 75 | 3% |
| 10 | Carrying an Offensive Weapon | 37 | 2% | Carrying an Offensive Weapon | 63 | 2% |
| TOTAL | | 1418 | 89% | | 2301 | 86% |

There was a strong similarity in the types of offences allegedly committed before and after entry to Fast Track. However, the spread of the numbers of offences changed. For example, while the most common offences remain the same, the percentage of the total offences that they account for altered. In the 6 months prior to entry, breach of the peace, 'other'¹⁰, assault and vandalism/malicious mischief were the most common offences and together account for 65% of all offences allegedly committed. While these remain the most common offences in the 14 month period after entry, together they accounted for 57% of the total offences.

¹⁰ 'Other' is used to classify offences not within the 42 recorded on RAD.

There was a greater range of offences in the **comparison areas**, as shown below.

| | Offences 6 months prior to identification as a PO | No. offences | % of offences | Offences 14 months after identification as a PO | No. offences | % of offences |
|--------------|---|-----------------|------------------|---|-----------------|------------------|
| 1 | Breach of the Peace | 101 | 17% | Breach of thePeace | 121 | 18% |
| 2 | Vandalism/ Malicious Mischief | 88 | 15% | Vandalism/ Malicious Mischief | 78 | 11% |
| 3 | Assault | 71 | 12% | Road Traffic Offence | 48 | 7% |
| 4 | Other | 65 | 11% | Theft - other | 47 | 7% |
| 5 | Theft – other | 38 | 7% | Theft by OLP (motor vehicle) | 44 | 6% |
| 6 | Theft by Housebreaking | 36 | 6% | Theft by Housebreaking | 42 | 6% |
| 7 | Theft by Shoplifting | 33 | 6% | Police Assault/Resisting Arrest | 35 | 5% |
| 8 | Road Traffic Offence | 19 | 3% | Other | 32 | 5% |
| 9 | Housebreaking with Intent | 18 | 3% | Housebreaking with Intent | 28 | 4% |
| 10 | Attempted OLP (motor vehicle) | 17 | 3% | Drugs – Possession | 23 | 3% |
| TOTAL | | 486 | 83% | | 498 | 72% |

There was a greater range of offences in the comparison areas in the 14 month period after identification as a persistent young offender. The ten most common offences in the 6 months prior to identification as persistent young offenders account for 83% of the total number of offences, whereas in the period after identification they only account for 72%. While the two most common offences remain the same after identification, there were variations. Road traffic offences showed an increase from 3% of the total offences before to 7% after being identified as persistent young offenders. Theft by opening a lockfast place (motor vehicle) also increased from being outwith the most common offences prior to 5th most common after identification as persistent young offenders, 6% of the total offences. Police assault/resisting arrest and possession of drugs also moved into the ten most common offences after identification as persistent young offenders.

Overall, there was little change in the types of offences before and after entry to Fast Track or being identified as a persistent young offender in the comparison areas. There is no evidence that the numbers of serious offences increase and no evidence of a correlation between 'persistence' and seriousness of offences.

There were differences in the types of offences allegedly committed in the pilot areas when broken down by **gender**, as shown below.

Pilot areas - males

| Male (n = 135) | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| | Offences 6 months prior to entry | No. offences | % offences by males | Offences 14 months after entry | No. offences | % offences by males |
| 1 | Breach of the Peace | 285 | 21% | Breach of the Peace | 482 | 20% |
| 2 | Other | 194 | 15% | Assault | 335 | 14% |
| 3 | Assault | 182 | 14% | Vandalism/ Malicious Mischief | 328 | 14% |
| 4 | Vandalism/ Malicious Mischief | 172 | 13% | Other | 187 | 8% |
| 5 | Theft – other | 105 | 8% | Theft - other | 168 | 7% |
| 6 | Theft by Shoplifting | 59 | 4% | Theft by OLP (motor vehicle) | 149 | 6% |
| 7 | Theft by OLP (motor vehicle) | 57 | 4% | Road Traffic Offence | 135 | 6% |
| 8 | Theft by Housebreaking | 43 | 3% | Theft by Shoplifting | 134 | 6% |
| 9 | Road Traffic Offence | 42 | 3% | Theft by Housebreaking | 73 | 3% |
| 10 | Carrying an Offensive Weapon | 35 | 3% | Carrying an Offensive Weapon | 62 | 3% |
| TOTAL | | 1174 | 88% | | 2053 | 87% |

Pilot areas - females

| Female (n = 28) | | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---------------------|------------------------------|---|---------------------|------------------------------|
| | Offences 6 months prior to entry | No. offences | % offences by females | Offences 14 months after entry | No. offences | % offences by females |
| 1 | Breach of the Peace | 71 | 26% | Breach of the Peace | 84 | 32% |
| 2 | Assault | 61 | 22% | Assault | 65 | 24% |
| 3 | Other | 51 | 19% | Vandalism/ Malicious Mischief | 39 | 15% |
| 4 | Vandalism/ Malicious Mischief | 28 | 10% | Theft by Shoplifting | 34 | 13% |
| 5 | Theft by Shoplifting | 21 | 8% | Other | 14 | 5% |
| 6 | Police Assault/Resisting Arrest | 10 | 4% | Theft – other | 8 | 3% |
| 7 | Theft – other | 4 | 1% | Police Assault/Resisting Arrest | 6 | 2% |
| 8 | Theft by Housebreaking | 4 | 1% | Wilful and Malicious Fireraising | 3 | 1% |
| 9 | Drugs – possession | 3 | 1% | Theft by Housebreaking | 2 | 1% |
| 10 | Attempting to OLP (motor vehicle) | 3 | 1% | Attempting to Pervert the Course of Justice | 2 | 1% |
| TOTAL | | 256 | 93% | | 257 | 97% |

The four most common offences overall (i.e. assault, breach of the peace, vandalism/malicious mischief and 'other') feature in the five most common offences for both males and females. This was also true for the comparison areas. However, there were also some differences between males and females:

- **Theft by shoplifting for females** from the pilot areas featured both before and after entry to Fast Track, but did not feature as one of the ten most common offences for males.
- **Attempting to pervert the course of justice and police assault/ resisting arrest** were in the ten most common offences for females but not for males in the pilot areas.
- For **males** the ten most common offences were characterised by **motor vehicle crime** and other **theft** crimes. **Carrying an offensive weapon** accounted for 3% of the total offences allegedly committed by the male population both before and after entry to Fast Track, but did not feature for females.

These findings on differences in offence types between males and females are supported by previous SCRA research which found that theft by shoplifting, possession of drugs and attempting to pervert the course of justice were prominent for females but not males. Conversely, road traffic offences, housebreaking with intent, carrying an offensive weapon, theft of a motor vehicle and fraud were common for males but not for females^{ix}.

When the most common offences were broken down into the **age group** at which the young person entered the pilot there were no significant changes in the type of offences allegedly committed before and after entry to Fast Track.

Pilot Areas – 9 to 12 years

| Aged 9-12 years at entry to Fast Track | | | | | | |
|--|--|-----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| | Offences 6 months prior to entry | No. offences | % Offences by age group | Offences 14 months after entry | No. offences | % Offences by age group |
| 1 | Assault | 40 | 20% | Assault | 126 | 22% |
| 2 | Vandalism/ Malicious Mischief | 39 | 19% | Vandalism/ Malicious Mischief | 121 | 21% |
| 3 | Breach of the Peace | 36 | 18% | Breach of the Peace | 100 | 17% |
| 4 | Other | 30 | 15% | Theft – other | 50 | 9% |
| 5 | Theft – other | 21 | 10% | Other | 48 | 8% |
| 6 | Theft by Shoplifting | 19 | 9% | Theft by Shoplifting | 25 | 4% |
| 7 | Theft by Housebreaking | 4 | 2% | Wilful and Malicious Fireraising | 21 | 4% |
| 8 | Carrying an Offensive Weapon | 3 | 1% | Road Traffic Offence | 19 | 3% |
| 9 | Wilful and Malicious Fireraising | 2 | 1% | Carrying an Offensive Weapon | 14 | 2% |
| 10 | Housebreaking with Intent | 2 | 1% | Theft by OLP (motor vehicle) | 14 | 2% |

Pilot Areas – 13 to 14 years

| Aged 13-14 years at entry to Fast Track | | | | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------|--|---|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | Offences 6 months prior to entry | No. offences | % offences by age group | Offences 14 months after entry | No. offences | % offences by age group |
| 1 | Breach of the Peace | 114 | 22% | Breach of the Peace | 183 | 23% |
| 2 | Other | 110 | 21% | Assault | 130 | 17% |
| 3 | Assault | 85 | 16% | Vandalism/ Malicious Mischief | 97 | 12% |
| 4 | Vandalism/ Malicious Mischief | 56 | 11% | Theft - other | 66 | 8% |
| 5 | Theft – other | 38 | 7% | Other | 58 | 7% |
| 6 | Theft by Shoplifting | 18 | 3% | Theft by Shoplifting | 51 | 7% |
| 7 | Theft by OLP (motor vehicle) | 17 | 3% | Theft by OLP (motor vehicle) | 34 | 4% |
| 8 | Theft by Housebreaking | 13 | 3% | Attempting to OLP (motor vehicle) | 27 | 3% |
| 9 | Attempting to OLP (motor vehicle) | 12 | 2% | Road Traffic Offence | 26 | 3% |
| 10 | Carrying an Offensive Weapon | 8 | 2% | Theft by Housebreaking | 26 | 3% |

Pilot Areas – 15 years and over

| Aged 15+ at entry to Fast Track | | | | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------|--|---|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | Offences 6 months prior to entry | No. offences | % Offences by age group | Offences 14 months after entry | No. offences | % Offences by age group |
| 1 | Breach of the Peace | 206 | 23% | Breach of the Peace | 283 | 12% |
| 2 | Assault | 118 | 13% | Vandalism/Malicious Mischief | 149 | 11% |
| 3 | Other | 105 | 12% | Assault | 144 | 11% |
| 4 | Vandalism/ Malicious Mischief | 105 | 12% | Theft by OLP (motor vehicle) | 101 | 8% |
| 5 | Theft- Other | 50 | 6% | Other | 95 | 7% |
| 6 | Theft by Shoplifting | 43 | 5% | Theft by Shoplifting | 92 | 7% |
| 7 | Theft by OLP (motor vehicle) | 41 | 5% | Road Traffic Offence | 91 | 7% |
| 8 | Road Traffic Offence | 36 | 4% | Theft- Other | 60 | 5% |
| 9 | Theft by Housebreaking | 30 | 3% | Theft by Housebreaking | 40 | 3% |
| 10 | Carrying an Offensive Weapon | 26 | 3% | Carrying an Offensive Weapon | 38 | 3% |

Assault, vandalism/malicious mischief and **breach of the peace** were in the top four most common offences for all ages both before and after entry to the Fast Track pilot. However, a difference was in the increase in the prominence of motor vehicle related crime in the older age groups.

This increase was also evident as children grew older within age groups:

- In the **9 to 12 years** age group there were no motor vehicle related offences in the 10 most common offences prior to entry. In the 14 months after entry there were 19 road traffic offences allegedly committed and 14 thefts by opening a lockfast place (motor vehicle), accounting for 3% and 2% of the total number of offences, respectively.
- For the **13 to 14 years** age group theft by opening a lockfast place (motor vehicle) and attempting to open a lockfast place (motor vehicle) both appear in the 10 most common offences 6 months prior to entry with 17 offences (3%) and 12 offences (2%), respectively. In the 14 months after entry these figures increase to 4% and 3%, respectively but road traffic offences also appear in the 10 most common offences with 26 offences, 3% of the total offences.
- For those aged **15 years and over**, the proportion of motor vehicle related offences increased further. In the 14 months after entry theft by opening a lockfast place (motor vehicle) was the 4th most common offence, accounting for 8% of the total number of offences allegedly committed by this age group. In addition, road traffic offences are the 7th most common offence, with 7% of the total offences. In the 6 months prior to entry these two offence types accounted for 5% and 4% of total offences, respectively. A similar trend was seen in the comparison areas where, for example, road traffic offences were the third most common offence for the 15 years and over age group, being 9% of the total number of offences.

Non Offence Referrals to the Children’s Reporter

Children and young people can also be referred to the Children’s Reporter on non-offence grounds. This is the case for children and young people who are not involved in offending behaviour (the majority of children and young people referred) and for those referred on offence grounds including persistent young offenders.

Grounds for referral in the Scottish Children’s Hearings System.

At the time of the Fast Track pilot, under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 s52(2), children and young people could be referred to the Children’s Reporter on one or more of the following grounds:

- (a) is beyond the control of any relevant person
- (b) is falling into bad associations or is exposed to moral danger
- (c) is likely (i) to suffer unnecessarily ; or (ii) be impaired seriously in his health or development, due to a lack of parental care
- (d) is a child in respect of whom any of the offences mentioned in Schedule 1 to the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 (offences against children to which special provisions apply) has been committed
- (e) is, or is likely to become, a member of the same household as a child in respect of whom any of the offences mentioned in paragraph (d) above has been committed
- (f) is, or is likely to become, a member of the same household as a person who has committed any of the offences referred in paragraph (d) above
- (g) is, or is likely to become, a member of the same household as a person in respect of whom an offence under sections 1 to 3 of the Criminal Law (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 1995 (incest and intercourse with a child by a step-parent or person in position of trust) has been committed by a member of that household
- (h) has failed to attend school regularly without reasonable excuse
- (i) has committed an offence
- (j) has misused alcohol or any drug, whether or not a controlled drug within the meaning of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
- (k) has misused a volatile substance by deliberately inhaling its vapour, other than for medicinal purposes
- (l) is being provided with accommodation by a Local Authority under s25, or is the subject of a parental responsibilities order obtained under section 86, of this Act and , in either case, his behaviour is such that special measures are necessary for his adequate supervision in his interest or the interest of others.

The numbers of children and young people in this study who were referred to the Reporter on non-offence grounds is shown in the table below.

| | Pilot Areas | | Comparison Areas | |
|---|-------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | 6 months prior to entry | 14 months after entry | 6 months prior to identification | 14 months after identification |
| No. children and young people with non-offence ground referred | 77 | 66 | 23 | 14 |
| % of Total Sample | 47% | 40% | 43% | 26% |

A breakdown of these non-offence grounds is detailed below. Percentages are given in brackets.

| Ground for referral | Pilot areas | | Comparison areas | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| | No. referrals 6 months prior to entry | No. referrals 14 months after entry | No. referrals 6 months prior to identification as a PO | No. referrals 14 months after identification as a PO |
| a | 68 (36%) | 76 (42%) | 19 (48%) | 12 (46%) |
| b | 55 (29%) | 43 (24%) | 1 (3%) | 1 (4%) |
| c | 9 (5%) | 8 (4%) | 4 (10%) | 4 (15%) |
| d | 12 (6%) | 17 (9%) | 3 (8%) | 2 (8%) |
| e | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| f | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| g | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| h | 12 (6%) | 7 (4%) | 5 (13%) | 2 (8%) |
| j | 30 (16%) | 25 (14%) | 7 (18%) | 3 (12%) |
| k | 0 | 2 (1%) | 1 (3%) | 2 (8%) |
| l | 1 (1%) | 3 (2%) | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 187 | 181 | 40 | 26 |

Both the number of children and young people referred on non-offence grounds and the number of non-offence referrals reduced in the 14 months after identification as a persistent young offenders when compared to the previous 6 months in both the pilot and comparison areas. In the pilot areas, the three most common grounds of referral were beyond the control of any relevant person (a), falling into bad associations or exposed to moral danger (b), and misusing drugs or alcohol (j).

The non-offence grounds of referral for these children and young people differ to the majority of children and young people referred to the Reporter. The most common grounds for this sample were behaviour-based, whereas the most common non-offence grounds of referral to the Children's Reporter are lack of parental care (c) and being a victim of a Schedule 1 offence (d)^{v.x.11}.

¹¹ In 2003/2004 36% of referrals were for lack of parental care (c) and 28% for being the victim of a Schedule 1 offence (d). In 2004/2005 one third (33%) of all referrals were for lack of parental care and 32% of referrals were for being the victim of a Schedule 1 Offence.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to analyse the offending patterns of a sample of children and young people who participated in the Fast Track Children's Hearings pilot, 14 months after being identified as persistent young offenders.

Numbers of offences

There were significant variations between Local Authority areas in the mean numbers of offences per child per month. Three of the pilot areas (East Lothian, South Ayrshire and the Scottish Borders) were within the range of the three comparison areas. Two of these pilot areas (South Ayrshire and the Scottish Borders) out-performed two of the comparison areas. Although none of the pilot areas exceeded the best performing comparison area, Fife. One pilot area, East Ayrshire, showed a significant *increase* in the number of offences allegedly committed after entry to Fast Track. The remaining two pilot areas, Dundee and North Ayrshire, showed significant reductions in offending but not to the extent of the worst performing comparison area. In the case of Dundee, this was due to the relatively high proportion of 9 to 12 year olds who, as a group, were resistant to changes in offending and the Fast Track pilot. If this group is taken out of the analysis, the reduction in the number of offences allegedly committed in Dundee decreases to within 1% of the comparison areas.

For the majority of children and young people from both the pilot and comparison areas, prison sentences and Secure Authorisations did not result in reductions in offending. It was those who remained in the same offending category and those who moved to a higher offending category who were the most likely to have received Secure Authorisations or prison sentences in the 14 months after being identified as persistent young offenders. The proportion of young people from the comparison areas who received prison sentences was higher than the pilot areas, whereas the proportion of children and young people who received Secure Authorisations from Children's Hearings was higher in the pilot areas. This may indicate that the children and young people from the pilot areas were more likely to have remained in the Children's Hearings System than progress to the adult Criminal Justice System.

Age

The youngest age group in this sample, those aged 9 to 12 years at entry, did not generally respond to the Fast Track pilot in terms of reducing the number of offences. Within this group it was boys, in particular, who did not show a reduction in the number of offences allegedly committed after being identified as persistent young offenders. Two speculative reasons for this are suggested. First, that the services in the pilot areas were not tailored specifically for those younger persistent offenders and secondly that the backgrounds of these children may have a greater influence on their offending behaviour. This issue warrants research to determine precise reasons for the trend, and identify interventions to successfully address offending by younger children.

Gender

Females showed a greater reduction in offending than males, a pattern that spanned the age groups and was common across the pilot and comparison areas. The Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime has found that as they get older young females are much more likely to desist in offending behaviour than males, with both instances of self reported 'broad delinquency' and 'serious delinquency' for females peaking aged 14.^{xi} This finding is consistent with this study as the majority of females (54%) entered Fast Track aged 13 or 14 years of age and by the end of the 14 months in Fast Track all had reduced their offending. The Edinburgh study found that particularly for 'serious delinquency' possible explanations

for their behaviour vary between males and females.¹² Thus it may be assumed that interventions designed to tackle persistent youth offending need to be tailored specifically to males or females.

Types of offences

The types of offences allegedly committed before and after entry to Fast Track did not generally alter. This meant that as the children and young people matured the broad types of offences committed by them remained very similar and did not become of a more serious nature. Perhaps as expected, there were some differences in the most common types of offences committed both before and after being identified as persistent young offenders for males and females and between the different age groups. The predominance of motor vehicle related crime for males and the older age groups was one particular difference, as was the prominence of theft by shoplifting and police assault/resisting arrest for females.

Overall Conclusion

This research supports the conclusion of the Scottish Executive's evaluation that 6 months is not a long enough period over which to draw conclusions on the impact of the Fast Track pilot on a child or young person's offending patterns. When this research is compared to the Scottish Executive's evaluation there is a downward trend in the number of young people who increased their offending areas 14 months after entering the Fast Track pilot and an upward trend in those who's offending decreased or remained the same over the same period. A significant number of children and young people from the pilot areas reduced their offending to zero 14 months after being identified as persistent young offenders. This research has also shown that when considered on an individual basis five of the six pilot areas showed significant reductions in offending, three within the range of the comparison areas, with another only 1% outside of this range. This is in contrast to the position 6 months after entry reported by the Scottish Executive's evaluation where even though offending in the pilot areas decreased, the offending in the comparison areas decreased more.

Further Research

This study has highlighted a number of areas where research is necessary to further inform the debate around persistent young offenders. The following two areas are considered to be the most important:

- Persistent young offenders aged 9 to 12 years and their response to interventions to address offending. This research has shown that the children in this age group at the date of being identified as a persistent young offender did not respond in terms of reducing their offending behaviour. Further research is essential to determine if this trend is replicated beyond this sample, why the interventions used in Fast Track were not effective for this age group, and to identify interventions that will work in reducing offending by younger children.
- To compile a complete picture of the offending patterns of the young people in this sample who had reached their 16th birthday and were not the subject of a Supervision Requirement it was necessary to contact individual police forces to ask for data on each young person. This was not a small undertaking for these police forces and SCRA. Therefore research is needed to explore the data challenges in tracking young people from the Children's Hearings System into the adult Criminal Justice System.

¹² 'Serious delinquency' was used to describe instances of joyriding, carrying a weapon, damage to property, housebreaking, robbery, fire-raising and car-breaking. These were rated as the most serious by respondents during sweep 2 of the study. Examples of 'broad delinquency' include shoplifting, being noisy or cheeky in public, writing or spraying graffiti, theft from home, assault and truancy.

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