



POLICY ● RESEARCH



National Evaluation of On Track Phase Two

Report of the First Wave of the longitudinal cohort study

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
CONTENTS.....	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	5
The demographics of children and families in On Track areas (Chapter 2).....	5
<i>What were the demographic features of families in On Track areas?</i>	5
<i>Were On Track users different to all households in the On Track areas?</i>	5
<i>How did the Booster sample compare with the main sample of On Track users?</i>	6
Risk and protective factors in On Track areas (Chapter 3)	6
<i>What were the levels of risk and protective factors in On Track areas?</i>	6
<i>Were On Track users different to all households in the On Track areas?</i>	6
<i>How did the Booster sample compare with the main sample of On Track users?</i>	7
Service use by children and families (Chapter 4)	7
<i>How accurate is the survey measurement of service use?</i>	7
<i>What was the level of service use?</i>	7
<i>What types of services were used?</i>	8
<i>Who used On Track services?</i>	8
<i>How did parents and children rate On Track services?</i>	8
Conclusions (Chapter 5).....	9
<i>What does Wave One tell us so far?</i>	9
<i>Looking ahead to Wave Two</i>	9
1 INTRODUCTION	10
1.1 About On Track.....	10
1.1.1 The On Track programme	10
1.1.2 Risk and protective factors in the development of antisocial behaviour in young people	11
1.1.3 Intervening in antisocial behaviour: On Track interventions	13
1.2 About the Phase Two Evaluation	15
1.3 The longitudinal cohort study	15
1.3.1 Summary of the design	15
1.3.2 Survey design	16
1.3.3 The questionnaire.....	17
1.3.4 Fieldwork.....	20
1.4 About this report.....	20
1.4.1 General guidelines for tables.....	21
1.4.2 Testing for statistical significance	21
1.4.3 The Booster sample	22
2 DEMOGRAPHICS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN ON TRACK AREAS	24
2.1 Introduction	24
2.2 Family structure.....	24
2.3 Ethnicity.....	26
2.4 Language.....	28
2.5 Education levels	28
2.6 Employment and social class.....	29

2.7	Household income.....	31
2.8	Household tenure.....	33
2.9	Summary: the demographic characteristics of families in On Track areas	34
2.9.1	What were the demographic features of families in On Track areas?..	34
2.9.2	Were On Track users different to all households in the On Track areas?	35
2.9.3	How did the Booster sample compare with the main sample of On Track users?	35
3	RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN ON TRACK AREAS	36
3.1	Introduction	36
3.2	Community and neighbourhood contexts.....	36
3.3	Support networks.....	39
3.3.1	Social support.....	39
3.3.2	Support in looking after the child.....	41
3.4	Problems experienced by parents.....	43
3.4.1	Current problems at family level.....	43
3.4.2	Relationships with partner	49
3.4.3	Financial difficulties	50
3.4.4	Physical, emotional and mental health of parent.....	52
3.4.5	Substance use by parents.....	54
3.4.6	Criminality, anti-social behaviour or offending of parents	55
3.5	Characteristics of children.....	57
3.5.1	Attendance at school and readiness to learn	58
3.5.2	Child's activities and involvement of family.....	62
3.5.3	Child's health	64
3.5.4	Special educational needs	66
3.6	Parents' relationships with their children.....	66
3.6.1	Supervision and monitoring.....	66
3.6.2	Involvement with child's education, and problems at school	70
3.6.3	Parental warmth and involvement, and hostility and criticism.....	72
3.6.4	Discipline.....	74
3.7	The child's relationships, Strengths and Difficulties.....	77
3.7.1	Strengths and Difficulties (parental assessment)	77
3.7.2	Self-esteem (child's assessment)	80
3.7.3	Relationships with parents and carers.....	81
3.7.4	Relationships with siblings and peers.....	84
3.8	Bad behaviour, anti-social behaviour and offending.....	86
3.8.1	Bad behaviour.....	86
3.8.2	Truancy and exclusions from school	87
3.8.3	Victimisation and bullying	88
3.8.4	Views on right and wrong, including anti-social behaviour	90
3.8.5	Anti-social behaviour and offending.....	92
3.8.6	Involvement with the police.....	96
3.8.7	Substance use by child and peers	97
3.9	Summary: risk and protective factors in On Track areas.....	99
3.9.1	What were the levels of risk and protective factors in On Track areas?	99
3.9.2	Were On Track users different to all households in the On Track areas?	100
3.9.3	How did the Booster sample compare with the main sample of On Track users?	100

4	SERVICE USE BY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES	102
4.1	Introduction	102
4.2	The measurement of service use.....	102
4.3	Use of services.....	103
4.3.1	Overall incidence of service use	103
4.3.2	Number of services used	105
4.3.3	Types of services used	105
4.3.4	The profile of services	108
4.3.5	How services were accessed by families	109
4.3.6	Where services were located	110
4.4	Characteristics of children and families who used services.....	110
4.5	Parents' views of services	113
4.5.1	Perceived aims of services.....	114
4.5.2	Views of the convenience and quality of the service	115
4.5.3	Views of Service Staff	116
4.5.4	Parents' perceptions of impact on themselves	117
4.5.5	Parents' perceptions of impact on their children	121
4.6	Children's views of services.....	125
4.7	Summary: service use by children and families	129
4.7.1	How accurate is the survey measurement of service use?	129
4.7.2	What was the level of service use?	129
4.7.3	What types of services were used?	130
4.7.4	Who used On Track services?.....	130
4.7.5	How did parents and children rate On Track services?.....	131
5	CONCLUSIONS	132
5.1	What does Wave One tell us so far?	132
5.1.1	Wave One confirms the picture of On Track areas as those featuring greater difficulties or risk than areas in general.	132
5.1.2	On Track services are reaching some of the more needy families.....	132
5.1.3	Use of On Track services is lower than anticipated, as measured by the study.....	133
5.1.4	On Track services form a distinctive set of services, compared to those generally available.....	133
5.1.5	On Track services are positively viewed by parents and children, although this is also true for services in general.	133
5.1.6	The Booster sample will help us look at the experiences of those On Track users with particularly high levels of problems and difficulties.	133
5.2	Looking ahead to Wave Two.....	134
5.2.1	What are the limitations on the Wave Two analysis?.....	134
5.2.2	How does the Wave Two data add to the analysis?.....	135
APPENDIX A	SAMPLE COUNTS BY ON TRACK AREA	136
APPENDIX B	SERVICE USE SHOW CARDS	137
APPENDIX C	REFERENCES	138

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This is a report of the first wave of a longitudinal cohort study of families living in 24 areas served by On Track, and in 24 Matched areas with similar characteristics. A random sample of families with children aged between five and thirteen were identified and interviews were conducted to find out about the experiences of a selected child and his or her main parent.

In On Track areas, 780 computer assisted face-to-face interviews were conducted with parents and 541 interviews with children aged between seven and thirteen; similar numbers of interviews were conducted in Matched areas. A separate Booster sample of families that had used On Track services was identified through On Track projects and 306 parent interviews and 165 child interviews were taken. Fieldwork for Wave One was conducted in the summer of 2004 and the Wave Two survey was carried out in 2005.

The demographics of children and families in On Track areas (Chapter 2)

What were the demographic features of families in On Track areas?

The **On Track Area sample** was a representative sample of families living in the 24 pilot On Track areas, who would have been eligible for On Track services (there was a child aged 5-13 in the household). Because the pilot areas were deliberately chosen to cover areas with more need for such services, households in these areas were distinctive in several ways:

- Although most children lived with both natural parents, living with a lone-parent or in a step-/reconstituted family was also common. Around a third lived in lone parent families, higher than figures suggested by the Census.
- The proportion of ethnic minorities in On Track areas was generally higher than in the population as a whole, with around a quarter belonging to a minority ethnic group (most commonly of Asian origin).
- Children lived in relatively deprived families, with more household heads in manual occupation or never having worked, more households renting and lower income than households in general.

Were On Track users different to all households in the On Track areas?

The **On Track User sample** was a subgroup of the On Track Area sample, consisting of those households who had identified themselves as using On Track services in the previous year. Compared to non-users, more of these children were younger (aged 5-7) or boys, possibly indicating higher usage of On Track services amongst these groups. Otherwise, On Track users did not seem to differ from households in the On Track area as a whole, in terms of their demographics.

How did the Booster sample compare with the main sample of On Track users?

The **Booster sample** was a supplementary sample of On Track service users of particular kinds of targeted services that were lower throughput but had more intense methods of working (e.g. family therapy). The sample was identified via On Track project records. Differences between the Booster sample and the other samples could not be tested for statistical significance, but some contrasts with the On Track User sample are worth noting:

- there was a particularly high proportion of boys (62% compared to 58% of On Track users).
- their ethnic profile was somewhat different, with fewer Asian origin children and proportionately more Black children.
- half of the Booster sample families were lone parent families, a higher proportion than the level amongst On Track users.
- the Booster sample appeared to be less affluent than On Track users, with fewer heads of household in work, lower household incomes and fewer owner-occupiers.

Risk and protective factors in On Track areas (Chapter 3)

The survey asked about a wide range of factors that may be associated with an increased or decreased likelihood of later offending: that is risk factors as well as protective factors.

What were the levels of risk and protective factors in On Track areas?

Parents living in On Track areas reported a range of difficulties in their personal and living circumstances. Comparative evidence pointed towards:

- higher numbers of problems in the family, particularly to do with money, adult relationships, accommodation and children.
- higher than average levels of mental and emotional difficulties.
- above average incidence of behavioural, emotional or relationship difficulties shown by their children, as well as a higher incidence of longstanding illness.
- on a limited comparison, similar levels of anti-social behaviour to the national average, although interviews with children did reveal some problematic attitudes and behaviour in the field of anti-social behaviour.

Were On Track users different to all households in the On Track areas?

- On Track users did show greater need than non-users on a number of indicators.

- Parents who used On Track services reported a higher incidence of current problems in their lives, while children in such families tended to have greater behavioural, emotional or relationship difficulties.
- Children in families who used On Track services were also more likely:
 - to have been excluded from school.
 - to be assessed as performing 'below average' at school by their parents.
 - for their parents to have had discussions about them with school staff because of problems such as behaviour, schoolwork or attendance.
- However, there were a number of indicators where there did not appear to be much difference between On Track service users and non-users, including:
 - specific factors to do with the parents, including their physical and mental health, and levels of anti-social behaviour;
 - aspects of parenting including measures of warmth and hostility, levels of monitoring and supervision and degree of shared family activities;
 - self-reported truancy by the child, and special educational needs.

How did the Booster sample compare with the main sample of On Track users?

- The Booster sample tended to cover users of more intensive interventions, so - as expected – they did display a greater level of need on some indicators.
- The proportion of the sample citing emotional and behavioural problems with children was higher, as were children's levels of limiting health conditions, isolation from their peers, special educational needs and exclusions. Self-reported anti-social behaviour was also higher for secondary school age children in the Booster sample. Booster sample parents seemed to be less involved in their children's education.

Service use by children and families (Chapter 4)

How accurate is the survey measurement of service use?

- There may be some under-reporting of services in the survey, as it was difficult for respondents to name all the services they used.
- While this under-reporting is not high enough to invalidate the results, measurement error should be borne in mind when looking at findings on service use.

What was the level of service use?

- Forty-three per cent of families in On Track areas named at least one kind of service that they had used in the past year.
- Thirteen per cent of parents in On Track areas reported that they or their child had used an On Track service in the past year, that is just under one-in-three of those who had used any service. This was lower than expected on the basis of (limited)

previous information, even accounting for under-reporting in the current study.

- Most families who accessed On Track (or non-On Track) services only reported using one service in the last year.

What types of services were used?

- Services were classified into five broad categories: school-based, pre-school, family and parenting support, psychologist or psychiatric or therapeutic, and youth services.
- The most common type of service – whether On Track or not – was school-based services. Nearly half (46%) of all services used in the On Track areas were school-based.
- However, On Track services had a rather distinctive profile, with far more services school-based (62%) or dealing with family and parenting support (17%).
- Most parents who used On Track services (54%) got involved as a result of a referral from a professional or other agency, which was not significantly different from non-On Track services.

Who used On Track services?

Several characteristics were found to be associated with use of On Track services:

- Service use was higher the younger the child, and for boys.
- Families that had English (or Welsh) as their main or sole language were more likely to use On Track services - and services overall - than families that spoke other languages.
- Use of On Track services was higher among parents who reported more problems in the family, or whose children had high levels of emotional or behavioural difficulties.

How did parents and children rate On Track services?

- Parents and children generally had very positive views about On Track services that they had used. Staff and factors such as the location or times of the service were all highly rated.
- Most On Track services were perceived to be helpful to parents and particularly to children. Positive impacts, particularly on children, were reported although many users did not think much had changed so far as a result of the service.
- These positive views about On Track services or services in On Track areas were similar to those held by service users in the comparison group in Matched areas, although Matched area services were sometimes rated more favourably.

Conclusions (Chapter 5)

What does Wave One tell us so far?

The main themes arising from the Wave One data are:

- Wave One confirms the picture of On Track areas as those featuring greater deprivation and need than areas in general.
- On Track services are reaching some of the more needy families.
- Use of On Track services is lower than anticipated, as measured by the study.
- On Track services form a distinctive set of services, compared to those generally available.
- On Track services are positively viewed by parents and children, although this is also true for services in general.
- The Booster sample helps us look at the experiences of those On Track users with particularly high levels of problems and difficulties.

Looking ahead to Wave Two

The Wave Two report will cover the second wave of interviews, and look at how the samples have changed between the two interviews. Some limitations do apply to the analysis that can be done, in particular:

- the size of impact that can be detected as statistically significant;
- the need to look at On Track services as a package of interventions, rather than at individual types;
- the coverage of short-term effects only, specifically those observable over the two-year period of fieldwork.

The Wave Two data will allow us to look at:

- trends in overall and On Track service usage in On Track areas.
- whether On Track and Matched areas have changed in the same way since the Wave One (subject to the limitations mentioned above).
- the direct impact on On Track users. although this will be limited due to the small number of respondents who identified themselves as On Track users.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 About On Track

1.1.1 The On Track programme

On Track is a long-term multi-component initiative aimed at children and the families of children aged four to twelve who may be at risk of offending and antisocial behaviour in England and Wales. It was originally devised by the Home Office in 1999 as a pilot or demonstration programme, funded through the national Crime Reduction Programme which was devised to address crime levels that, despite recent falls, were still high by international standards and historically. The aims, objectives and shape of the initiative have roots in the US programme *Fast Track*. A preventative intervention, targeting high risk school-age children, *Fast Track* aims to intervene in early onset conduct problems, and research has shown that the programme can be effective in reducing later conduct problems amongst children and adolescents and improving educational and social outcomes for adolescents. Recent evaluations in the US report effectiveness in a number of specific areas, for example in increased emotional and social coping skills, improved reading skills, better peer relations, better school grades and fewer behavioural difficulties (Conduct Problems Research Prevention Group 1999, 2002).

On Track was launched in December 1999 and since April 2001 it has been incorporated into the Government's £970m Children's Fund programme. There are twenty four local *On Track* projects in England and Wales in areas of high social deprivation and crime¹, each covering an average population of around 2,000 school aged children. The towns, cities and boroughs in which *On Track* was operating at the time of the first wave of the cohort study are shown below:

Bradford	Easington (Co Durham)	Luton	Rhondda (South Wales)	Solihull
Brent (London Borough)	Greenwich (London Borough)	Manchester	Rochdale	Southwark (London Borough)
Bridgend (S Wales)	Haringey (London Borough)	Northampton	Sandwell	Sunderland
Brighton	Haverhill (Suffolk)	Oldham	Scarborough	Wirral
Bristol	Kerrier (Cornwall)	Portsmouth	Sheffield	

Central to the ethos of *On Track* is co-operation and joint working between relevant agencies in order that children at risk of offending are identified early and that they and their families are provided with consistent services extending through the period of transition to school and to early adolescence. The services delivered, which like *Fast Track* in the USA include both universal and targeted approaches and are both school

¹ Bristol *On Track* was absorbed into the Children's Fund during 2004, but is included in the sample for the schools survey as it was still operative as an *On Track* project at the time of fieldwork.

and home-based, are supposed to utilise 'evidence-based' methods. That is, they are supposed to use methods of delivery shown by research to be effective (or at least 'promising' in this regard) in reducing antisocial behaviour and offending. Local On Track projects are managed by local partnerships. Membership varies, but all include a combination of various statutory services and voluntary sector organisations. The projects build on and link together existing services and initiatives for children and families.

This type of integrative, 'multidimensional' approach is very much in keeping with the model of service design and delivery that has been advocated in successive Green Papers produced by the British Government on services for children and families (*Supporting Families*, 1998; *Every Child Matters*, 2003; *Youth Matters*, 2005). The development of On Track can be seen in the context of the general evolution in policy and practice in children's services in the UK over the last decade. These include, for example, the larger *Sure Start* initiative, another multi-component programme launched in 1998 as part of the child poverty reduction strategy, targeted at infants and pre-school children aged birth to four and aimed at improving children's readiness to learn by means of locally organised services delivering a range of support in early education, childcare, health advice and family support for young children and their parents. Since its inception, over 500 local *Sure Start* programmes have been established, initially targeting children within the 20% most deprived wards in England, but more recently expanded to cover all areas of the country. Other more recent developments in this 'family' of initiatives aimed at reducing poverty, reducing crime and antisocial behaviour, and enhancing positive outcomes for children include the establishment of multi-agency *Children's Trust Pathfinders*, bringing together health, education and social care services for children under one umbrella; the gradual introduction of information-sharing systems and protocols known as *The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)*; *Information Sharing and Assessment (ISA)*; initiatives such as *Extended Schools* and the *Safer Schools Partnership Programme*; and of course the establishment of funding streams such as the *Children's Fund* and the *Parenting Fund* and the *Family Support Grant Fund* that have made it possible for a wide range of innovative new services to be set up and trialled across Britain.

1.1.2 Risk and protective factors in the development of antisocial behaviour in young people

It is now widely accepted that the likelihood of embarking on or persisting in a criminal career is strongly influenced by a combination of risk and protective factors in children's individual, family and community ecology (Farrington 2000; Rutter, Giller and Hagell 1998). By *risk factor* we mean characteristics or attributes of an individual, family, social group, or community that increase the probability of certain disorders or behaviours arising at a later point in time. *Protective factors*, on the other hand, 'inoculate' or in some way mitigate risk factors. They promote *resilience*, which is the process by which individuals maintain positive functioning in the face of adverse circumstances (see for example Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker 2000). Critically, protective factors should be more than just the mirror-image or absence of a risk factor: they should add something to our understanding of the causal pathways to different outcomes.

The precise nature of the causal relationships between risk and protective factors and various types of negative and positive outcomes remains, however, unproven (Rutter, Giller and Hagell, 1998). The relative contributions of 'nature' (genetics) and 'nurture' (environment) remain in debate, and in respect of the pathway to antisocial behaviour in young people, there are questions about whether some risk factors are more influential than others, and whether certain combinations of factors may have greater impact on

future behaviour than others. In addition, relatively more is known about risk than protective factors: protective factors have been identified as playing a significant role in preventing criminal behaviour but as yet, much of the 'theory of protection' remains at an early stage of development.

Risk and protective factors are helpfully thought of in terms of the 'ecological' model of human development (Bronfenbrenner 1977, 1979), which takes a systems perspective and provides a framework for understanding how factors that impinge on children and families nest together within a hierarchy of four interconnected levels – the level of the individual, the family, the community or neighbourhood, and at the level of the wider society or culture. For example, in terms of risk factors for violent behaviour, an individual level risk factor might be a low threshold for the tolerance of stress and problems with impulse-control; a family level risk factor might be family poverty, or inter-familial violence; a community level risk factor might be growing up in a community characterised by a concentration of peers also engaged in forms of antisocial and violent behaviour combined with low levels of community surveillance; and a social or cultural risk factor might be the tolerance or even endorsement of violence as a means to an end by the wider society (for example, a proliferation of glamorised depictions of interpersonal violence in the media). The ecological perspective reminds us that children do not develop in a vacuum but within a complex web of interacting, interdependent factors. It reminds us that we cannot understand factors associated with one level of the model without also exploring those at other levels.

The prevention research literature over the last several decades has drawn attention to a number of specific risk and protective factors that have been shown to be 'predictive' of the likelihood of future types of behaviour (Rutter, Giller and Hagell 1998). At the level of the individual child, commonly accepted risk factors (or precursors) for youth offending include: early onset behaviour disorders such as hyperactivity; difficulties with learning, poor verbal and planning skills and poor educational attainment; problems with impulse-control; and a tendency to misinterpret social interactions and circumstances as more negative or threatening than they really are. Engaging in other related forms of antisocial behaviour including truancy and substance misuse is also a strong marker for offending at the level of the individual. At the family level, having a family that includes criminal offenders; family violence and discord; and poor parenting (including use of harsh or erratic discipline, low levels of parental monitoring and supervision, and poor parent-child communication) have all been shown to be associated with poor adolescent outcomes in general and youth offending in particular. At the community level, associating with antisocial peers is a major risk factor, as is growing up in a poor, crime-ridden neighbourhood where opportunities for crime are abundant and there is little else constructive for young people to do. In terms of protective factors, certain temperaments seem to help young people avoid becoming involved in crime, and children who engage well with school and make strong peer relationships with those who are not themselves inclined to antisocial behaviour also seem more resistant to becoming involved in antisocial behaviour. Within the family, at least one strong and reliable relationship with an adult who takes a warm interest in the child's development can be protective, and within the community, opportunities to engage in constructive leisure activities and develop talents, and a community that takes an active interest in the well being of its younger members may be especially protective.

Risk and protective factors share a number of common characteristics. They tend to be:

- Overlapping (for example, poor mental health is a risk factor for a host of problems, from substance misuse to unemployment)
- Often occurring in multiples (people tend to be subject to several related factors, rather than just one at a time)

- Cumulative in effect (the higher the 'dose' of factors the greater the likelihood of certain outcomes)
- Not static; they change over the life course (what may be a protective factor at one stage of a child's development – for example, high levels of parental supervision – may become a risk factor in later stages, as children grow into adolescence and need more independence)
- Not deterministic (factors do not 'inevitably' lead to certain outcomes, though they may nevertheless be 'predictive' in a statistical sense)
- Differential in effect (the same factors may impact differentially on individuals depending on other characteristics present in the individual's ecology)

Official statistics show that young people are responsible for between a third and quarter of all crime in Britain. As tackling crime – and especially youth crime – has risen up the policy agenda, so has interest grown in exploring effective models of prevention, and in understanding not just how to 'treat' the problem but also in how to prevent it arising in the first place. However, all of the characteristics listed above combine to make intervention to avert poor outcomes and foster good ones much more complex. Because theoretically, the more risk factors to which an individual is exposed, the greater the likelihood that the individual will engage in problem behaviour, intervention must necessarily function at several levels simultaneously. Certainly, interventions at the 'treatment' end of the scale (ie, responding to young people once they have become known as offenders) have to be complex and relatively intensive to make much of a difference. The most successful interventions (such as Multi- Systemic Therapy [MST], for example; Henggeler et al 1998; Borduin et al 2000) 'wrap around' young people's lives, operating at all levels of the young person's ecology. However, the interconnected and complex nature of risk and protective factors also - theoretically at least - offers great promise for preventive intervention (ie, 'getting in early' before children begin to engage in outright antisocial behaviours). If risk factors are interconnected, so too are protective ones, and if we can both reduce the risks in young people's lives and at the same time counter risk by nurturing protective factors, the chances of preventing problems should be greatly increased. The more risk factors that are tackled and protective factors that are boosted, the greater the pay-off should be. Further, since many different forms of problem behaviour share common risk factors, reducing common risk factors is likely to reduce multiple problem behaviours and poor outcomes – not just those directly connected with crime and antisocial behaviour.

1.1.3 Intervening in antisocial behaviour: On Track interventions

Intervention programmes like On Track make three key basic theoretical assumptions:

- Antisocial behaviour is multiply determined;
- The main risk factors which place children at increased likelihood of future offending can be reliably identified at an early stage;
- Certain types of intervention have been shown to be effective in terms of reducing the likelihood of future offending.

Although primarily concerned with longer-term crime prevention, the On Track programme was also devised in order to impact directly upon more immediate social and community problems – that is, the precursors to youth antisocial behaviour - such as under-achievement in school, poor school attendance, poor 'readiness to learn' on entry to primary school, and poor parenting. The movement of policy responsibility for On

Track from the Home Office to the Department for Education and Skills via the Children and Young People's Unit has undoubtedly enhanced the family support aspect of On Track's identity. Moreover, broader child and family welfare outcomes may well be the most immediate concern of both the service providers and the users of On Track themselves, rather than the risk of long-term criminal behaviour. Thus, although On Track is a 'crime prevention' initiative, its outward form has much in common with initiatives more frequently described in the UK as about 'family support'.

The central feature of On Track is the use of five 'core' interventions – many of them based on (primarily American) research that indicates effectiveness. The five core interventions, specified by the Home Office at On Track's inception were:

- Home visitation
- Parent support and education
- Family therapy
- Home/school partnerships
- Pre-school education

In addition, to allow for local flexibility and innovation, another 'specialist' category of intervention was allowed to develop alongside these five, covering a multitude of different services (not all of which are, however, evidence-based as robustly as the five core interventions). Many of the school-based elements of On Track projects fall into this group.

Note however that no formal guidance was issued to projects to specify how these labels might translate into models of service delivery. Thus, projects were left free to interpret the brief in widely varying ways. In addition, very few projects produced manuals documenting in detail how services were to be delivered. For these reasons, the extent to which the actual models of service delivery employed by On Track projects conformed to the interventions shown in the literature to be effective is unknown.

The development of the On Track pilot programme, especially in relation to the five core interventions, has in general reflected well the attributes of risk and protective factors outlined above and have been designed to be both targeted and universal, and to be multi-dimensional, and ongoing. Thus key assumptions underlying the On Track programme design are that:

- The concepts of risk and protection can be used appropriately by a wide range of service providers, in order to identify those groups of children who are most at risk of criminal or antisocial behaviour
- Having identified those most at risk, providers work with children and families in ways that ensure that they positively engage in particular interventions on a voluntary basis, and are not stigmatised
- The provision of two or more core interventions, at critical points through the child's life, is likely to be more effective than the provision of only one type of core intervention
- There would be a focused 'continuum of care' in which children are tracked through their development and where agencies would cooperate in providing appropriate services as and when they need it.

1.2 About the Phase Two Evaluation

Phase One of the national evaluation of On Track began in 2000 and was conducted by the University of Sheffield (Doherty and Kinder, France et al, Harrington et al, Hine and Harrington; 2004).

Phase Two of the evaluation (2003-2006) is being carried out by a consortium led by the Policy Research Bureau (PRB), in collaboration with the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) and the Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science (University of London). The evaluation will measure the short and (to a lesser extent) the medium term outcomes of On Track for children, families and communities. Long-term outcomes will not form a focus of this phase of the evaluation, though the research has been structured to make continued research feasible should this be desirable.

Phase Two consists of six main strands of research:

- *Schools survey*: assesses changes in schools and individual pupils in On Track areas (lead organisation: PRB)
- *Tracking strand*: provides central monitoring information about each of the 24 On Track areas and about On Track as a whole (lead organisation: PRB)
- *Community profiling*: collection of neighbourhood level statistics to describe the communities in which On Track services are being delivered (lead organisation: University College London)
- *Cohort Study*: employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Examines the short to medium-term impacts of On Track on children and families who use its services and compare the impacts according to types and level of intervention (lead organisations: National Centre for Social Research and PRB)
- *Qualitative research amongst service providers*: explores the experiences of service providers with regard to what worked, unexpected outcomes, barriers and enabling factors in achieving medium/long term outcomes (lead organisations: National Centre for Social Research, with PRB)
- *Qualitative research amongst schools*: explores how On Track is working from the perspective of primary schools in On Track areas (lead organisation: PRB).

Each strand will report separately, and an integrated report on the overall messages arising from the study will be produced in the second half of 2006.

1.3 The longitudinal cohort study

1.3.1 Summary of the design

This element of the evaluation involves a *quantitative* longitudinal survey of families to provide comprehensive statistical measures of families' experiences of using the programme and outcomes for different groups.

The aims of the study are to explore:

- the characteristics of children and families in On Track areas and, in particular, those that use On Track services
- the range of factors and circumstances which influenced families' decision to take part in the programme and their initial expectations

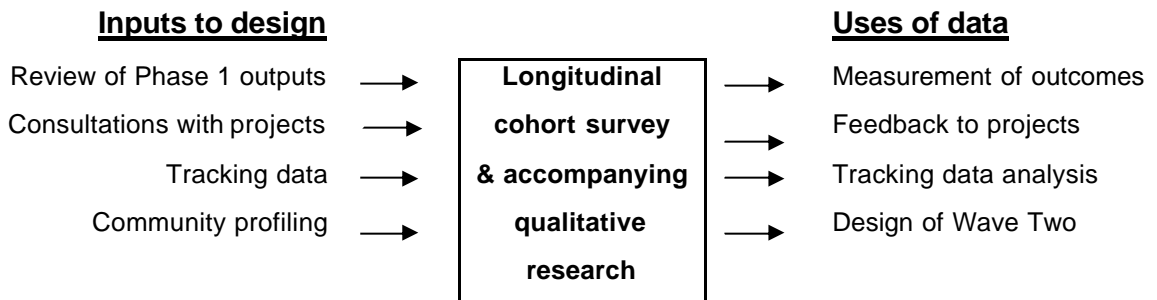
- their experiences of dealing with different service providers and other agencies, and how and why these might have changed over time
- their views on the aspects of services and types of intervention that have worked well and those that have worked less well
- the extent to which the range of services needed has been provided and continuity of care has been maintained over time
- at what stage and why service users 'drop out' early from the programme
- service users' views on how the programme could be improved and made more responsive to their needs

and most critically:

- short and medium term impacts that On Track[®] has had on children, young people and their families, using validated outcome measures wherever possible

The longitudinal cohort survey is closely linked with the other strands of the evaluation. The diagram below (Figure 1.1) shows how the development of the survey was influenced by other strands and how it in turn will feed into the remainder of the evaluation.

Figure 1.1 The role of the longitudinal cohort survey



Full details of the survey design are given in the accompanying Technical and Methods Report. The remainder of this section gives an overall summary of the design.

1.3.2 Survey design

There are three distinct samples in the Wave One survey:

- the **On Track Area sample**: children and families in On Track areas, identified by an initial stage of household screening.
- the **Matched Area sample**: children and families in matched comparison areas, identified by an initial stage of household screening.
- the **Booster sample** of Service Users: children and families receiving lower incidence interventions, identified through On Track projects' records.

In order to be eligible to take part in the study, a family had to have at least one child aged between 5 and 13 on 1st April 2004 living at the address as their main home (i.e. on an average of four days a week or more).

In addition to these distinct groups, the report also refers to a fourth 'sample':

² This aim has been modified in the light of the number of On Track users identified at Wave One (see Section 5.2). It was originally intended to look at different types of intervention,

- the **On Track User sample**: a sub-group of the On Track Area sample consisting of those families who reported using On Track services.

Under this design, comparisons can be drawn between the On Track Area and Matched Area samples to give an indication of the impact of On Track services. The comparison areas were drawn from the same local authorities as the On Track areas and were selected to match the characteristics of On Track areas in terms of available statistics including those for deprivation and incidence of crime. Areas that were adjacent to On Track areas were excluded from selection so as to ensure that families did not experience any On Track interventions.

The Booster sample was intended to augment the number of recipients of particular types of interventions, as the incidence of some groups of recipients was expected to be low.

The current study incorporated two interviews with all the samples, with an option for further waves of interviews with families to be carried out during a later programme.

In each household, one child of eligible age was chosen as the selected child. One parent (the 'main carer' for this child) was identified to be interviewed about the child. Selected children aged 7 or over were also eligible to be interviewed themselves.

1.3.3 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed jointly by the NatCen and PRB research teams, with additional input from external experts including researchers working on related large-scale studies. A number of established instruments were incorporated into the questionnaire, to make the best use of existing knowledge in different areas and to facilitate comparisons with other studies.

Figure 1.2 shows the topics covered by the questionnaire for parents. As can be seen, these cover a wide range of risk and protective factors identified by other research as possible antecedents of anti-social behaviour or offending. There are also a number of parent-rated measures of children's behaviour. Service use is also covered in depth.

Figure 1.2 Topics in the parent questionnaire

<i>Household and area factors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and local area • Community integration/support
<i>Risk and protective factors: parenting and family</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement with school/education • Attainment and aspirations for child • Family relationships • Family activities • Relationship with child and parenting skills • Current problems
<i>Risk and protective factors: parent</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical health of parents • Mental and emotional health of parents • Parental anti-social behaviour and offending • Substance use • Poverty and deprivation
<i>Risk and protective factors: child</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical health of child • Schools attended • Emotional and behavioural status (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire; Goodman, 1997) • Child's anti-social behaviour and offending • Behaviour at school • Exclusions/truancy • SEN
<i>Service Use</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of services • In-depth service use questions • Perceptions of services amongst users
<i>Demographic characteristics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social/occupational class • Income • Ethnicity • Languages spoken • Family structure

Figure 1.3 summarises the topics covered in the children's questionnaire. Some of these measures overlap with those in the parent questionnaire to provide children's perspectives on particular aspects. Again the focus is on risk and protective factors and how the child behaves in different settings.

Figure 1.3 Topics in the childrens' questionnaire

<i>Risk and protective factors: parenting and family</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship with parents and carers
<i>Risk and protective factors: child</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional and behavioural status (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire; Goodman, 1997) - secondary school children only • Strengths and Difficulties (secondary school children only) • School, learning and activities outside school • Substance misuse - secondary school children only • Peer relationships • Truancy • Victimisation/bullying • Anti-social behaviour and offending
<i>Service use</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of services amongst users - secondary school children only

For both parents and children, more sensitive questions were placed in self-completion sections which respondents could answer themselves on the computer. Interviewers could help respondents with the self-completion sections by reading out showcards or questions. In this case, however, the questions covering the most sensitive topics (e.g. relationships with parents, drug or alcohol use or anti-social behaviour) were not asked. Respondents could also decline the self-completion sections altogether.

The most challenging aspect of the questionnaire design was the section on measuring service use, and much development went into the design of these questions. The final design used for the survey can be summarised as follows:

- A series of four showcards (see Appendix B) was presented to respondents. Show cards for the On Track areas included names and descriptions of On Track services in that area, alongside generic service categories. (Matched Area show cards included the generic categories only.)
- Parents were asked about any services in their local areas that they or the selected child had used or had contact with in the last 12 months. The term 'service' was explained as 'any kind of help, advice, support or activities for parents and children that may be provided by your local council, health or education authority, local schools, local community groups, Sure Start and so on'.
- Respondents could name an unlimited number of On Track and/or generic services, but were only asked in-depth questions for a maximum of three services.³ In selecting services to be the subject of more detailed questions, priority was given to On Track services and those the parents felt to be most 'helpful'.

³ Very few respondents (4% overall) had used more than three services, so this upper limit did not have a large impact on the sample.

1.3.4 Fieldwork

Interviews were conducted between May and August 2004 for the On Track Area and Matched Area samples, and between August and October 2004 for the Booster sample.

In the On Track and Matched areas, interviews were achieved with 62% of those families identified as eligible for the study in the initial screening stage (Table 1.1). The response rate was higher in Matched areas than in On Track areas, 65% compared with 58%. Among families where the child was aged seven or older and so eligible for interview, interviews were achieved in 88% of cases where a parent interview had been carried out.

Table 1.1 Response rates: all samples

	OT areas	Matched areas	All areas	Booster sample
Issued sample	1334	1126	2460	502
Parent interview	780	736	1516	306
Response rate	58%	65%	62%	61%
Child 5-6 so no child interview	159	181	340	89
Total child interview possible	621	555	1176	217
Child interview refused	80	56	136	52
Child interview (primary)	346	290	636	119
Child interview (secondary)	195	209	404	46
Proportion of possible child interviews achieved	87%	90%	88%	76%

Note: The issued Booster sample is the number of cases eligible, excluding 59 cases originally issued but deleted as they were duplicated with the OT area sample or within the Booster sample.

The Booster sample only covered 11 out of the 24 pilot On Track areas. A total of 306 parent interviews were achieved, representing a response rate of 61%. The response rate for children, where a parent had been interviewed and the child was aged seven or older, was 76%.

1.4 About this report

This report looks at results from the first wave of interviews in the longitudinal cohort study. The main aim of the report is to give a description of the samples, in terms of their demographics, levels of risk and protective factors and service use, as they were at the outset of the study.

The Wave One data in itself cannot tell us about the impact of On Track on users or areas. This is because differences between users and non-users, or On Track and Matched areas, at Wave One may have been pre-existing differences unconnected with On Track. The Wave Two results will however be able to account for any existing differences, as they look at changes between interviews. The second report will cover the Wave Two results and changes from Wave One.

Chapter 2 of this report looks at the demographic characteristics of children and families in On Track areas, while Chapter 3 examines their levels of risk and protective factors. Chapter 4 explores service use and characteristics. Chapter 5 presents our overall summary and conclusions from Wave One.

1.4.1 General guidelines for tables

Throughout the report, results are shown for the main four samples defined earlier, that is:

- the *On Track Area sample*;
- The *On Track User sample*;
- the *Matched Area sample*;
- the *Booster sample* of On Track users.

The tables in this report show percentages that are calculated from weighted data for the On Track Area and User samples and the Matched Area samples. However, Booster sample percentages are not weighted. Except where stated, percentage figures shown in the tables should be read vertically. Due to rounding, percentage figures may not add to exactly 100% but may total between 98% and 102%.

All bases shown are unweighted, that is they indicate the actual number of people asked the questions.

A description of the base is provided below each question. Numbers in the main bases shown are given in Table 1.1, but please note that these may differ in individual tables. This may be because:

- the routing for particular questions excludes certain groups of individuals;
- levels of 'don't know's responses, refusals or 'not applicable' responses may be higher for certain questions, and these may not be included in tables.
- bases for self-completion questions exclude those who chose not to answer the self-completion at all. In addition, the most sensitive questions were not asked if the interviewer helped the respondent with the self-completion, thus reducing some bases further.

Throughout this report the findings about children and their families have been broken down into three sub-groups according to the age of the child. These are children aged five or six, who were too young to be personally interviewed, children who were aged seven or over and attended primary school, and children who attended secondary school (typically those aged 11 or over, 12 was the maximum age).

1.4.2 Testing for statistical significance

The number of On Track users identified in the current study was lower than originally envisaged. This was mainly because the initial design for the study depended on estimates of the likely levels of usage of services, which were based on limited information available from the first phase of the evaluation (2000-2003). In the event, the Phase Two evaluation suggests rather lower levels of usage than these earlier estimates. There may also have been some under-statement of service use in the current study (see Chapter 4 for a fuller discussion of this).

The smaller than anticipated number of On Track users for the Wave One cohort study has implications when testing the statistical significance of differences between groups. The smaller sample size means that we can only expect relatively large observed differences to be statistically significant. Table 1.3 indicates the *minimum* differences between groups that would reach statistical significance at the 95% level, for the groups most commonly compared in this report. For example, if we wanted to compare two percentages (close to 50%) comparing On Track service users and non-users in On Track areas, only differences of around 8-10 percentage points or greater could be reported as statistically significant. However, on many of the measures, we may not be expecting this level of difference; more specifically, for this study we may expect the receipt of On Track services to result in relatively modest differences.

Table 1.3 Minimum differences that reach 95% level of statistical significance when comparing percentages

If looking at differences in percentages between:	To reach statistical significance, differences between percentages would have to be at least (number of percentage points):	
	For percentages close to 50%	For percentages close to 10%/90%
Households in On Track (n=780) and Matched areas (n=736)	5	3
On Track service users (n=107) and On Track area non-users (n=673)	10	8
All services in On Track areas (n=554) and all services in Matched areas (n=640)	6	4
On Track services (n=136) and all services in Matched areas (n=640)	9	7

Assuming 95% level of significance.

In reporting the findings of the study, differences between the results for different sub-groups of the sample, for example between users of and non-users of On Track services, are generally highlighted where they are statistically significant. Similarly, association between variables are generally only reported where they are statistically significant. However, we do not entirely disregard other differences that do not reach statistical significance. We have also taken the view that a pattern of (even non-significant) differences may in itself be of interest in this analysis, and worthy of further examination in Wave Two.

1.4.3 The Booster sample

The Booster sample differs from the above samples in that it was not recruited by random probability methods but from a small proportion of cases for which records were supplied by projects and where families had consented to be contacted for research purposes. Because it was not possible to calculate the probabilities of selection for this sample, and the evidence suggested that the returns in some areas represented a very low proportion of the total users of the project, it was not possible to combine this sample with the household sample as originally envisaged. It is therefore analysed separately, with references made to it throughout Chapters 2-4. It is also not possible to test the statistical significance of differences between the

Booster sample and the other samples, as such tests can only be applied to random samples.

2 DEMOGRAPHICS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN ON TRACK AREAS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the demographic characteristics of children and families who live in On Track areas. Because On Track is an area-based initiative it is relevant to look at the characteristics of the whole population in the areas it serves. Some On Track interventions are universal, that is they are offered to all eligible people within the specified area. Home-school partnership interventions are the main example of this type of intervention, which is likely to be less intensive and less easily recognised by parents (so the level of reported interventions is likely to be an understatement). However, many interventions are targeted at children and families who have particular characteristics. It is therefore important to identify qualifying characteristics both in our population sample as a whole and in our On Track User sample in particular.

This chapter looks at the characteristics of families in On Track areas in terms of their household structure, ethnicity and language, and the education levels, employment, income and tenure of the householders. The main focus is on the **On Track Area sample** (households resident in On Track areas) and the **On Track User sample**. In addition, the chapter also includes details of the **Booster sample** of On Track users, which was a non-random sample of users of more intense interventions.

Differences between the On Track area and On Track User samples have been tested for statistical significance, and attention is drawn to significant (or promising but non-significant) findings where relevant. However, results from the Booster sample cannot be tested in this way, although we still draw attention to contrasts in characteristics that are likely to affect any comparative analysis.

Comparisons are also drawn with external sources, where appropriate and where comparable sources exist.

2.2 Family structure

For each family in the On Track Area sample an interview was completed with a parent who was identified as the sole or joint main carer for the selected child. In 87% of cases this parent was the mother of the child.

Fifty-five per cent of interviewed parents were married and a further 9% were living with a partner. Nineteen per cent described themselves as separated, divorced or widowed, including 4% who described themselves as separated from a partner to whom they had not been married. The remaining 17% of respondents described themselves as single.

The selection method generated a sample of children in On Track areas that was fairly evenly distributed between children of different ages between five and 13. The On Track User sample was also fairly evenly distributed except that there were more young children in this group (see Table 2.1). The age profile of the Booster sample was generally similar to the main sample, with slightly fewer older children aged 12 or 13 (8% compared with 14%).

The sample was evenly divided between boys (51%) and girls (49%). However, in the On Track User sample there were more boys than girls (58% compared with 42%), indicating that families with boys were somewhat more likely to use On Track services overall. The Booster sample also contained a particularly high proportion (62%) of boys.

Table 2.1 Age profile of selected children in families

Age (years)	OT area sample	OT user sample	Booster sample
	%	%	%
5	11	16	14
6	9	10	15
7	12	13	15
8	12	9	11
9	10	12	13
10	13	15	12
11	11	10	12
12	12	10	6
13	10	4	2
Base (unweighted)	780	107	306

Base: families in On Track areas and Booster sample

Nearly two thirds (64%) of children in On Track areas lived in a two-parent family with the remainder living in a lone parent family (34%) or with guardians only (2%; Table 2.2). The two parent category comprised 59% of children who lived with both natural parents and 6% who lived with one natural parent and one step-parent. Older children were less likely than younger children to be living with both their natural parents and more likely to be living with a step-parent.

Overall, 97% of children lived with their natural mother and 60% lived with their natural father.

The Booster sample contained a particularly high proportion of lone parent families: half of the Booster sample children lived with one parent, compared to a third of the On Track User sample.

Table 2.2 Parents of selected child in the household

	OT area sample				OT user sample	Booster sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Two natural parents	65	60	53	59	60	41
One natural and one step-parent	4	5	7	6	6	8
Lone natural parent	30	33	38	34	31	50
Guardian(s) only	1	2	2	2	3	1
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107	306

Base: families in On Track areas and Booster sample

Some details of family structure are available from the 2001 Census, although the comparison is not exact.⁴ Even bearing this in mind, the 2001 Census indicated that a much higher proportion - 65% - of dependent children lived with two natural parents, while 10% lived in step-families and 26% with a lone natural parent. On Track users seemed to be more likely than the national average to be resident in single-parent families.

Among those children who did not live with two parents, approximately two thirds had contact with an absent parent (27% of all children) while one third had no contact with that parent (13%; Table 2.3). Where children had contact with an absent parent, this was usually weekly (18% of all children) or at least once a month (7%). Only 2% of children had some contact with an absent parent that occurred less often than once a month. However, 13% of children lived with one parent and had no contact at all with their other parent.

Table 2.3 Selected child's contact with natural parents

	OT area sample				OT user Sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	
	%	%	%	%	%
Live with both	65	60	53	59	60
Live with one, some contact with other	25	26	29	27	26
- weekly contact with other	17	16	22	18	14
- fortnightly or monthly contact with other	8	7	5	7	10
- less frequent contact with other	-	3	1	2	2
Live with one, no contact with other	9	12	16	13	11
Live with neither but some contact	*	2	1	1	1
No contact	*	*	1	1	1
Base (unweighted)	159	399	218	780	107

Base: families in On Track areas. ** denotes less than 0.5%.

About half the children (51%) lived with a brother or sister.

2.3 Ethnicity

Seventy-one per cent of parents described their child's ethnic group as 'white British' (Table 2.4). 'Asian or Asian British' was the second largest group and comprised 15% of children, including 9% who were Pakistani. Black or Black British was the third largest group with 8% and the majority of this group were reported to be of African origin. 6% of children were reported to have mixed ethnic origin. 2% belonged to an 'other white' group.

⁴ The Census profile does not have a category corresponding to 'guardians only'. It also covers all families with any dependent child in the age range 0-16, rather than those with a 5-13 year old resident. In addition, some families in the current study where the selected child lived with two natural parents would have been categorised as step-families in the Census, as they contained half- or step-siblings of the selected child.

The ethnic group profile of children in On Track areas differed from the profile of the total population (as indicated by recent data from the General Household Survey that are shown in the last column of Table 2.4). There were much higher proportions of minority ethnic groups among the population in On Track areas, particularly Black African and Pakistani or Bangladeshi groups. The proportion of children who were reported to have a mixed ethnic group was also higher (4% of children in On Track areas compared with 1% of the general population). This high incidence of minority ethnic groups was expected given the predominantly inner city areas the projects covered.

Children in families that used On Track services were broadly comparable to the total sample in terms of their ethnic group.

Compared to the On Track User sample, there were far fewer 'Asian or Asian British' respondents in the Booster sample: only 3%, compared to 11%. There were proportionately more 'Black or Black British' respondents (14% compared to 6%), although the proportion of children described by their parents as 'white British' was very similar.

Table 2.4 Selected child's ethnic group

	OT area sample				OT user sample	Booster sample	GHS 2003 #
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All			
White – British	61	72	76	71	75	76	87
Other white	4	1	2	2	-	2	3
Mixed ethnic group	3	4	3	4	6	4	1
Total Asian or Asian British	19	14	12	15	11	3	4
- Indian	4	2	3	3	4	*	2
- Pakistani	12	10	4	9	5	3	2
- Bangladeshi	3	2	4	3	1	-	2
- other Asian or Asian British	1		1	*	1	-	1
Total Black or Black British	11	7	6	8	6	14	3
- Caribbean	2	2	2	2	4	6	1
- African	9	5	4	5	2	8	1
- other Black or Black British	*	-	-	*	1	*	*
Turkish	2	-	-	*	2	-	*
Other ethnic group	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107	306	24430

Base: families in On Track areas and Booster sample

Figures taken from the General Household Survey 2003 (ONS)

'*' denotes less than 0.5%.

2.4 Language

One-in-six families in On Track areas (17%) did not have English or Welsh as their first or sole language (Table 2.5). Nine per cent of families had a different first language and 8% were bilingual. Families with younger children were less likely to have English as their main or sole language.

Reflecting the particular ethnic profile of the sample, 95% of the Booster sample spoke English as their first language, slightly more than the figure for On Track users in general (89%).

Table 2.5 Whether English/Welsh is main language in family

	OT area sample				OT user Sample	Booster sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, English	76	84	86	83	89	95
No, another language is family's first	12	8	8	9	6	4
Family is bilingual	12	8	6	8	4	1
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107	306

Base: families in On Track areas and Booster sample

2.5 Education levels

Education level was collected for the interviewed parent using a series of three showcards. Most parents had fairly low qualification levels. About a third had no qualifications or only those that were below Level 1 (Table 2.6). A further 40% had qualifications at Levels 1 or 2 (typically GCSEs). Twelve per cent had qualifications at Level 3 such as A levels. Sixteen per cent had higher qualifications such as higher vocational certificates and diplomas or degrees.

Education levels of parents that reported use of On Track services were similar to those for other parents in the area.

Levels in the Booster sample were fairly similar to the main samples.

Table 2.6 Highest educational qualification of parent

	OT area sample				OT user Sample	Booster sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Levels 4 or 5 including degree	17	18	12	16	14	19
Level 3	10	12	14	12	18	14
Entry level to Level 2	40	39	41	40	38	38
Below entry level or no qualifications	33	31	33	32	30	30
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107	306

Base: families in On Track areas and Booster sample

2.6 Employment and social class

The questionnaire collected data on the occupation of the head of household, that is the householder who was responsible for the family having their accommodation and, if two parents were jointly responsible, the one with the highest income. Table 2.7 shows the working status of the head of household and Table 2.8 shows the NS-SEC group of that person.⁵

About two thirds (65%) of families in On Track areas had a head of household who was in work. In 5% of families the head of household was unemployed and in a further 7% the head was either temporarily or permanently sick or disabled. Twenty-two per cent of household heads looked after the home or family as their main activity.

Table 2.7 Head of household's working status

	OT area sample				OT user Sample	Booster sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Employed	64	63	66	65	71	55
- Full-time paid employee (30 or more hours per week)	46	48	52	49	50	34
- Part-time paid employee (under 30 hours per week)	13	11	10	11	17	11
- Full-time self-employed	5	4	3	4	4	9
- Part-time self-employed	*	*	1	1	-	1
Unemployed and seeking work	9	4	3	5	3	4
Full-time education	*	1	1	1	-	1
Temporarily sick/disabled	2	1	3	2	3	1
Permanently sick/disabled	-	6	6	5	3	5
Looking after home/family	23	23	20	22	21	30
Wholly retired	*	1	1	1	-	1
Other (specify)	1	1	-	1	1	1
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107	306

Base: families in On Track areas and Booster sample. '**' denotes less than 0.5%.

In families that used On Track services the activities of heads of households were broadly similar to those in non-user families. Although the proportion of heads of

⁵ Since 2001, NS-SEC (National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification) has been the recommended classification of socio-economic status for official UK statistics and surveys.

household that worked was slightly higher in On Track user families than in non-user families, the difference was not significant.

Perhaps reflecting the distinctive profile in family structure, a relatively high proportion of household heads in the Booster sample classed themselves as looking after the home/family (three in ten compared to about a fifth of the On Track User sample). Just over half were in work, a much lower proportion than that found for the main samples.

Heads of households were classified into NS-SEC groups based on their current occupation or, if they were not employed, on a previous occupation. The majority (60%) of heads of households in On Track areas had occupations in NS-SEC classes 5 to 7 which were lower supervisory, semi-routine or routine occupations. However, one-in-five heads of household were classified in the highest NS-SEC classes of managerial, higher professional, lower professional and technical occupations.

The NS-SEC profile of heads of households in On Track areas differed notably from that for the profile of the total population (as indicated by recent data from the General Household Survey that are shown in the last column of Table 2.3). Compared with the total population, there were more heads of household in lower supervisory, semi-routine and routine occupations in On Track areas, as well as more families where no adult had ever been in employment and so no NS-SEC could be classified.

The NS-SEC profile of heads of household in families that used On Track services did not differ notably from that for other families in On Track areas.

The NS-SEC for the Booster sample also showed very little difference from the main On Track samples.

Table 2.8 NS-SEC of head of household's occupation

	OT area sample				OT user sample	Booster sample	GHS 2003 #
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All			
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Classes 1.1 and 1.2: Higher managerial and professional occupations	8	6	4	6	5	5	10
Class 2: Lower professional and technical occupations	17	14	13	14	14	13	22
Class 3: Intermediate occupations	9	6	6	6	9	7	13
Class 4: Employers in small organisations	3	4	2	3	3	7	8
Class 5: Lower supervisory occupations	12	12	16	13	10	11	10
Class 6: Semi-routine occupations	23	24	27	25	26	25	18
Class 7: Routine occupations	19	22	23	22	26	21	15
Not classifiable	9	12	9	11	7	11	5
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107	306	17898

Base: families in On Track areas and Booster sample

Figures taken from the 2003 General Household Survey (ONS)

2.7 Household income

The questionnaire collected information about the family's main source of income and an estimation of the total gross income of the family before deductions.

Employment was the main source of income for two thirds of families in On Track areas (Table 2.9). The remaining third drew their income principally from benefits, especially Job Seekers Allowance or Income Support. Families that used On Track services did not differ from other families in their main sources of income.

In line with differences already observed in the activity of the household head, Booster sample families were less likely to say their main earnings came from employment income, and more likely to be dependent on job seeker's allowance.

Table 2.9 Main source of income for family

	OT area sample				OT user Sample	Booster sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Earnings from employment	62	66	66	66	68	54
JSA or Income Support	28	18	17	19	18	27
Occupational pensions from previous employer	-	1	1	*	-	*
Invalidity/ Incapacity/ Sickness/ Disabled pension or benefits	2	5	5	4	3	5
Child Benefit	-	1	1	1	1	1
State retirement or widow's pension	1	-	1	*	-	1
Other state benefits	6	8	7	7	9	8
Other main source of income	1	1	2	1	1	3
Not stated	*	1	*	*	-	2
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107	306

Base: families in On Track areas and Booster sample. "*" denotes less than 0.5%.

Parents were asked to estimate their family's gross total income before deductions by reference to a card that provided bands with weekly, monthly and annual amounts. Eighty-nine per cent of parents gave an answer to this question (Table 2.10). Those parents could be divided into three roughly equal groups: those with higher incomes of around £20,000 or more per annum, those with medium incomes approximately between £10,000 and £20,000 per annum and those with low incomes of less than £10,000 per annum. Seven per cent reported having very low incomes of less than £5,000 per annum.

Families in On Track areas had a different income profile compared to families (with dependent children) in the population as a whole. Although the proportion of very low income families (less than £5,000 a year) was similar between the two studies, only a quarter of families in the On Track areas had higher incomes (of £20,000 pr more) compared to nearly two-thirds in the GHS. Conversely, the proportion of low income families (with £5,000-£15,000 per annum) was much lower than in the GHS.

Incomes for families that used On Track services were comparable with those for families of non-users.

In terms of gross income, the Booster sample appeared to contain more lower-income families particularly those in the £5,000-£10,000 per annum bracket (nearly a third of the sample).

Table 2.10 Total annual income of family before deductions

	OT area sample				OT user sample	Booster sample	GHS 2003 #
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All			
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
£20K or more	26	27	29	27	29	24	65
£15K less than £20K	7	11	12	11	13	12	9
£10K less than £15K	23	23	16	21	28	17	9
£5K less than £10K	24	20	27	23	14	31	12
Less than £5K	8	6	8	7	9	8	5
Not stated	11	12	8	11	6	9	N/A
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107	306	2852

Base: families in On Track areas and Booster sample

Figures taken from the 2003 General Household Survey (ONS) were based on usual gross weekly income and are based on families with dependent children only.

2.8 Household tenure

Half of the families in On Track areas owned their house with a mortgage or outright (Table 2.11). A quarter rented from a Council or New Town, 15% rented from a housing association and 7% rented privately. A further 2% held their property rent-free or through some other arrangement. The forms of tenure for families that used On Track services did not differ notably from those of other families.

The tenure profile of families in On Track areas differed notably from that for the total population (as indicated by recent data for families with children, taken from the General Household Survey that are shown in the last column of Table 2.11). Compared to families in the population as a whole, On Track areas contained fewer families that owned their own homes or rent privately, and many more families that rented from a council or housing association.

The contrast in home ownership was particularly marked for the Booster sample where only two fifths of the sample owned their home outright or with a mortgage. Private renting was highest in the Booster sample.

Table 2.11 Type of accommodation held by family

	OT area sample				OT user sample	Booster sample	GHS 2003 #
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All			
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Owned outright	7	7	3	6	3	5	12
Being bought on a mortgage/bank loan	40	42	51	44	50	36	57
Shared ownership (owns & rents property)	-	*	1	*	-	-	NA
Rented from a Council or New Town	32	27	21	26	26	27	13
Rented from a Housing Association	12	15	15	15	18	19	8
Rented privately	7	5	9	7	4	11	10
Rent free	*	*	1	*		1	NA
Some other arrangement	2	2		1		2	NA
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107	306	3945

Base: families in On Track areas and Booster sample

Figures taken from the 2003 General Household Survey (ONS)

'*' denotes less than 0.5%.

2.9 Summary: the demographic characteristics of families in On Track areas

2.9.1 What were the demographic features of families in On Track areas?

The **On Track Area sample** was a representative sample of families living in the 24 pilot On Track areas, who would have been eligible for On Track services (there was a child aged 5-13 in the household). Because the pilot areas were deliberately chosen to cover areas with more need for such services, households in these areas were distinctive in several ways:

- Although most children lived with both natural parents, living with a lone-parent or in a step-/reconstituted family was also common. Around a third lived in lone parent families, higher than figures suggested by the Census.
- The proportion of ethnic minorities in On Track areas was generally higher than in the population as a whole. Twenty-six per cent of children belonged to a minority ethnic group, most commonly of Asian (15%), Black (6%) or mixed ethnic origin (6%). In line with this, one-in-six children lived in families where English or Welsh was not the first or sole language overall.
- Children lived in relatively deprived families. More than half of heads of household had a manual occupation or had never been in employment and about half rented their accommodation. These proportions were higher than the national average. Similarly, the household income of families in On Track areas tended to be lower than the national average.

2.9.2 Were On Track users different to all households in the On Track areas?

- There were more younger children (aged 5-7) and boys in the On Track User sample, compared to the On Track Area sample. This could indicate that such children were more likely to use On Track services.
- Otherwise, On Track users did not seem to differ from households in the On Track area as a whole, in terms of their demographics.

2.9.3 How did the Booster sample compare with the main sample of On Track users?

The **Booster sample** was a supplementary sample of users of lower incidence On Track interventions, identified via On Track project records. Differences between the Booster sample and the other samples could not be tested for statistical significance, but some contrasts with the On Track User sample are worth noting:

- the Booster sample contained a particularly high proportion of boys (62% compared to 58% of On Track users).
- their ethnic profile was somewhat different, with fewer Asian origin children (3% compared to 11%) and proportionately more Black children (14% compared to 6%).
- half of the Booster sample families were lone parent families, a higher proportion than the level amongst On Track users (31%).
- the Booster sample appeared to be less affluent than On Track users, with fewer heads of household in work, lower household incomes and fewer owner-occupiers.

3 RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS IN ON TRACK AREAS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the On Track areas in terms of factors that may be associated with an increased or decreased likelihood of later offending, that is risk factors as well as protective factors. For a more detailed theoretical discussion of the risk and protective factor model underpinning On Track, see McKeown and Ghate (2004).

As for Chapter 2, the focus is primarily on the **On Track area** and **On Track User samples**. Some comparisons are also drawn with the **Booster sample** for selected characteristics to highlight the type of On Track users in this sample. Please also note (see Section 2.1) that differences between the Booster sample and the main On Track Area and User samples cannot be tested for statistical significance.

3.2 Community and neighbourhood contexts

Parents were asked a series of questions about problems in the neighbourhood in which they lived. Nine common problems were presented and, for each, parents were asked to state whether it was a 'serious problem', 'a bit of a problem' or 'not a problem'. The list of problems was a shortened version of that used for the Parenting in Poor Environments study (Ghate and Hazel 2002).

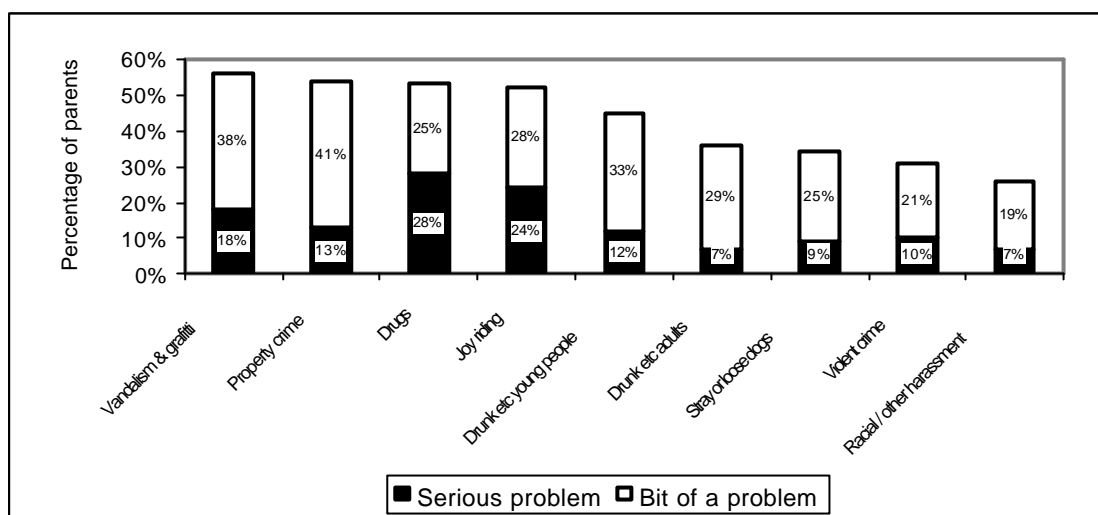
Problems are presented on Table 3.1 and Figure 3.1 in descending order of the number of mentions. Four problems were mentioned by just over half of parents (between 52% and 56%). These were vandalism and graffiti, property crime, drugs and joy riding. Among these, drugs and joy riding were of greatest concern to parents. Twenty-eight per cent said that drugs were a serious problem and 24% said that joy riding was a serious problem.

Table 3.1 Perceived problems in the local area

	OT area sample			Booster sample
	Bit of a problem	Serious problem	Any problem	Any problem
	%	%	%	%
Vandalism and graffiti	38	18	56	48
Property crime (e.g. burglaries, car thefts)	41	13	53	48
Drugs	25	28	53	43
Joy riding	28	24	52	42
Drunk or disorderly behaviour on streets by children and young people	33	12	45	47
Drunk or disorderly behaviour on streets by adults	29	7	36	39
Stray or loose dogs	25	9	34	32
Violent crime (e.g. mugging or assaults)	21	10	32	36
Racial and other forms of harassment or abuse	19	7	26	23

Base: parents in On Track areas and Booster sample

Figure 3.1 Perceptions of problems in the local area



Base: parents in On Track areas (780)

Drunken or disorderly behaviour was also a common problem, though this was not usually characterised as serious. Parents more often said that drunken or disorderly behaviour by young people was a problem (45%) than drunkenness involving adults (36% of parents).

Other, less common, problems such as stray or loose dogs, violent crime and racial or other harassment were each nonetheless mentioned by more than a quarter of parents. Indeed, 86% of parents reported that at least one of the nine problems was present in their area (Table 3.2). The majority (60%) reported at least three problems while about a third (34%) reported at least five of the nine problems.

The areas covered by the Booster sample were a sub-set of the same On Track areas used in the main sample, and so were characterised by similar high levels of problems to the whole On Track Area sample. Given this similarity to the main sample, the rest of this section contrasts the main On Track Area sample with that in the Matched areas.

Table 3.2 Number of problems parent reported for local area

	On Track	Matched
	%	%
No problems reported	14	18
One or two problems	27	27
Three or four problems	26	24
Five or six problems	24	20
Seven or more problems	10	12
Mean number of problems	3.3	3.2
Standard deviation	2.33	2.43
Base (unweighted)	780	736

Base: parents in On Track and Matched areas

These findings confirm that parents living in the areas served by On Track services experienced high levels of environmental and social problems. To put the results in context, Table 3.3 compares the incidence of problems in On Track areas with the average of those covered by the Parenting in Poor Environments study (Ghate and Hazel, *op cit*) which covered areas in the upper 30% of the national distribution for an index of factors associated with social deprivation⁶, and with the sub-set of areas which fell in the highest band of three for that index and were termed 'extremely poor areas'. The Matched areas are also shown on the table.

Table 3.3 Comparison of problems reported in On Track areas with those reported in the areas covered by the Parenting in Poor Environments study

	On Track Survey		PPE Survey	
	OT areas	Matched areas	All areas	Extremely poor areas (highest PPE-Index band)
	%	%	%	%
Vandalism & graffiti	56	54	48	55
Property crime (e.g. burglaries, car thefts)	53	53	56	N/A
Drugs	53	49	45	60
Joy riding	52	51	31	37
Drunk or disorderly behaviour on streets by C&YP	45	47	39	46
Drunk or disorderly behaviour on streets by adults	36	38	32	41
Stray or loose dogs	34	27	43	56
Violent crime	32	31	25	34
Racial and other forms of harassment or abuse	26	23	12	N/A
Base (unweighted)	780	736	Range 1743- 1752	Approx. 580

Base: parents in On Track and Matched areas, parents in PPE survey

N/A = data not available

The comparison indicates that the levels of reports of these problems by parents in On Track areas were broadly comparable with Matched areas except that parents were more likely to report problems with stray or loose dogs. The incidence of reports of most problems was higher than the average for the Parenting in Poor Environments study but similar or lower than the levels reported by parents in the 'extremely poor areas' sub-set within that survey. However, the proportion of parents reporting problems with joy riding was higher than in the poorest areas in that survey. This could be because joyriding is a particular problem in On Track areas, or that this problem, or awareness of it, has increased since the Parenting in Poor Environments study fieldwork in 1998.

On average, parents in On Track areas reported that 3.3 of the nine problems applied to their local neighbourhood. This proportion varied considerably between the 24 On Track areas, between 1.33 and 4.65. Although the base sizes for individual areas are

⁶ The Poor Parenting Environments Index, or PPE-Index, was constructed using Census-derived variables about unemployment, overcrowding, lone parents, social housing, manual occupations, non-car ownership and incidence of recent movers.

too low for the incidence of problems to be reliably reported, it is useful to look at the areas which had the highest and lowest numbers of claims to see whether there are any common features. Accordingly, Table 3.4 shows the areas with the highest and lowest numbers of claims (five areas in each case).

Table 3.4 On Track areas with the highest and lowest numbers of problems reported

Areas with <u>highest</u> numbers of problems	Mean no. of probs.	Base	Areas with <u>lowest</u> numbers of problems	Mean no. of probs.	Base
Manchester	4.65	32	Luton	1.33	31
Rochdale	4.48	23	Haverhill	1.43	32
Brent	4.08	29	Brighton	2.26	29
Wirral	4.00	17	Kerrier	2.97	24
Solihull	3.96	59	Sandwell	2.98	26

Base: parents in On Track areas

3.3 Support networks

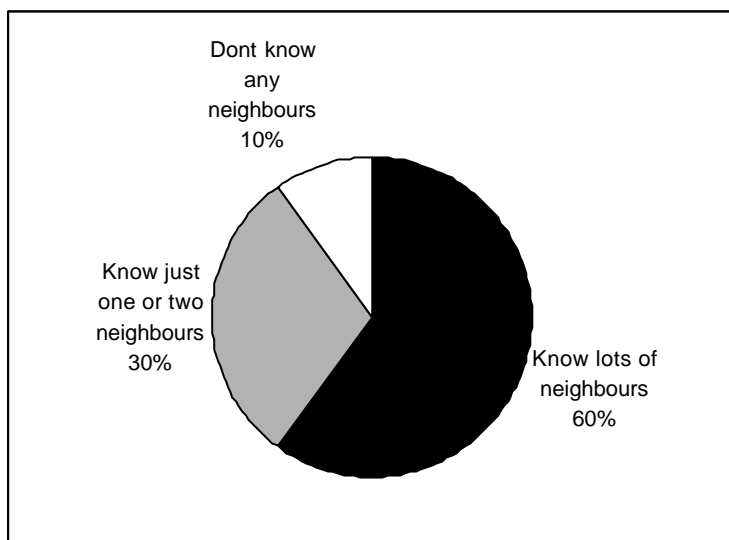
The survey investigated the extent and quality of informal support, that is support arising out of a parent's own network of family and friends. The absence or presence of good support of this kind can constitute a risk or protective factor for families and children⁷. This section looks at parents' integration with their community, the extent to which they had support with childcare, and had emotional support from their families and friends, and where this support came from. Comparisons are drawn with the Booster sample for the level of childcare support.

3.3.1 Social support

The majority of parents in On Track areas (60%) reported that they knew lots of their neighbours and most of the remainder said that they knew some of them (Figure 3.2). Only 10% reported that they knew none of their neighbours.

⁷ See Parenting in Poor Environments, Chapter Six 'Informal Support'.

Figure 3.2 Contact with neighbours



Base: parents in On Track areas (780)

We observed relationships between answers to this question and ethnicity, family structure, working status and education. Black and Asian parents were less likely than White parents to know their neighbours. Lone parents and those who did not work also reported knowing fewer of their neighbours than those who had partners or who worked. A relationship was also observed with level of education: parents who had qualifications at Level 3 or above were most likely to report knowing a lot of neighbours while those who had qualifications below Level 1 or no qualifications were least likely to say this.

A further question sought to establish whether parents had people that they could talk to about any problems they had. The question was: 'Most people feel worried about something from time to time. If you were worried about something to do with your children or parenting, is there anyone you could talk to or get practical help, information or advice from?' Overall, five out of six parents (84%) said that they could talk to someone in this way (Table 3.5). Two groups that were less likely than others to be in this position were Asian parents (73% said yes) and who had qualifications below Level 1 or no qualifications (74% said yes). Those who used On Track services were no different from other parents in this respect.

This form of support was most commonly provided by partners (55% of all parents gave this answer), other family members (62%) and friends (44%). Several types of professional staff were mentioned, notably teachers (mentioned by 26%), doctors (24%) and health workers (10%). Overall, users of On Track services were not significantly more likely to use these sources of professional advice than were parents who were non-users.

Table 3.5 Whether parent could talk to someone about problems with children or parenting

	OT area sample				OT user Sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	
Whether could talk to anyone if worried	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	81	87	81	84	82
No	19	12	18	15	18
Not stated	-	*	1	*	-
Another family member	59	63	60	62	63
Partner that I live with	59	56	51	55	53
A friend	40	43	48	44	48
Teacher or adult at school/nursery	16	30	22	26	31
Doctor/GP	21	26	22	24	28
Colleague at work	7	9	15	10	11
Health visitor	12	10	9	10	12
Child	2	7	4	5	5
Support services e.g. counsellors	2	2	4	3	5
Childminder, babysitter or nanny	2	1	1	1	1
Nurse	1	2	-	1	1
Other professionals	2	*	1	1	1
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107

Base: parents in On Track areas. ** denotes less than 0.5%.

3.3.2 Support in looking after the child

Help with childcare can be an important source of support for parents. However, only about half of parents in On Track areas (48%) reported that they had any such help (Table 3.6). Even for parents of the youngest children in the sample (aged five or six), for whom help might be thought to be most needed, this proportion was only 51%. Interestingly, lone parents in these areas were more likely to have help with childcare than those with partners (58% compared with 43%), which contrasts with the picture reported in a national survey of childcare use (Woodland et al 2003). It suggests that the availability of this sort of help for lone parents is above average in these areas. One group that reported very low levels of help with childcare was Asian parents (31% had help); this reflects other research⁸.

⁸ Woodland et al 2003.

Table 3.6 Sources of regular help with childcare

	OT area sample				OT user Sample	Booster sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Some help with childcare	51	50	43	48	53	60
None	49	50	57	52	47	40
Sources of help:						
Child's grandparents	23	28	23	26	27	31
Other adult relatives	14	20	16	18	18	18
Out of school clubs etc	12	9	4	8	18	19
Former spouse/partner	5	8	9	8	5	8
Child's siblings	2	6	5	5	4	7
Childminder/nanny/au pair	4	4	1	3	1	6
Nursery class/school	5	*	1	1	3	2
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107	306

Base: parents in On Track areas and Booster sample

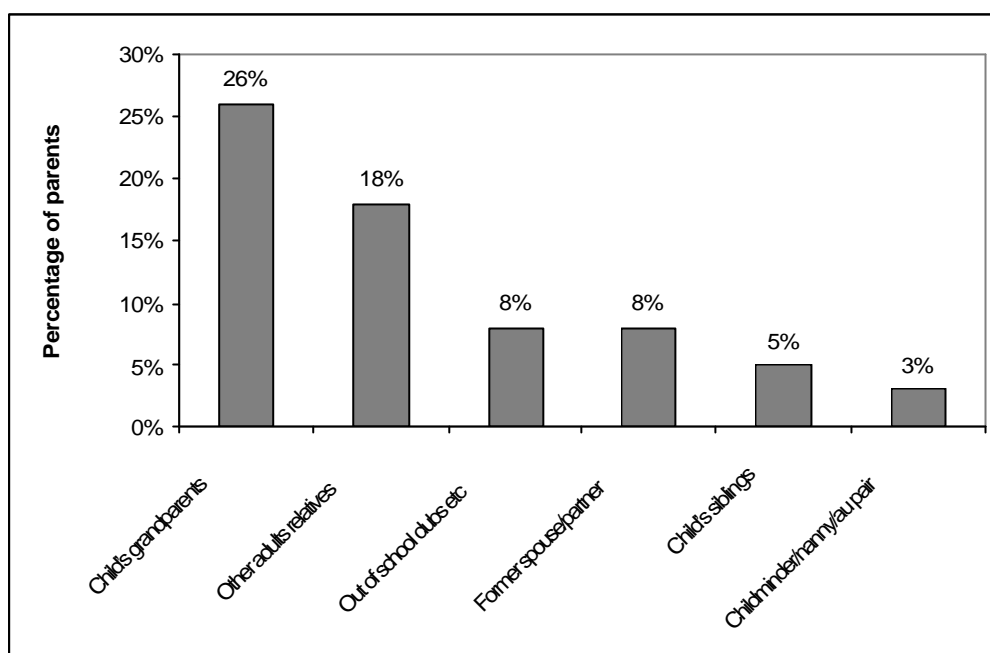
Note: Other options mentioned by fewer than 1% of parents are not shown

'**' denotes less than 0.5%.

Most of the childcare that parents reported having access to was 'informal', that is it was given by family members, friends and siblings rather than organisations or paid services (Figure 3.3). Help from grandparents (used by 26%) and other relatives (18%) was particularly common. Out-of-school clubs were the most common formal provider and were used by 8% of parents in these areas. It is notable that this proportion was higher among users of On Track services (18%), as a number of On Track services contain childcare elements. However, aside from this difference, the sources of childcare support accessed by parents who used On Track services were similar to those for other parents in the area.

About six in ten Booster sample parents got help with childcare, slightly more than was observed for the main On Track User sample.

Figure 3.3 Most common sources of regular help with childcare



Base: parents in On Track areas (780)

3.4 Problems experienced by parents

This section looks at a variety of problems and difficulties experienced by parents in On Track areas and which could constitute precursors to anti-social behaviour and offending by their children. Comparisons are drawn with the Booster sample for selected or summary indicators of parental problems, to give an indication of their experiences in the context of the main On Track sample findings.

3.4.1 Current problems at family level

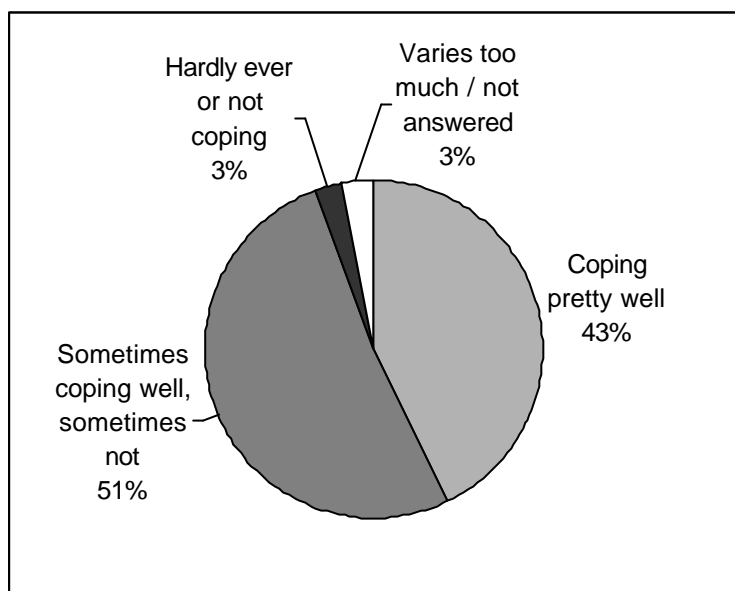
To see how well parents thought they were coping with parenting, the questionnaire included self-report measures that had been developed in the Parenting in Poor Environments study (Ghate and Hazel, *op cit*). Parents were asked: 'Taking everything into account, which of these statements best describes how you are coping with parenthood these days?'

- I am coping pretty well with being a parent, things rarely get on top of me
- Sometimes I feel I'm coping well, but sometimes things get on top of me
- I hardly ever feel I'm coping well
- I'm not coping at all these days

Nearly all parents responded fairly positively to this question with just over half choosing the second option (sometimes coping) and only 3% choosing either of the last two options that implied that they were not coping (Figure 3.4). These results were virtually identical to those in the Parenting in Poor Environments study. A number of the factors that were found to be significantly associated with not coping in that study (that is not reporting to be 'coping pretty well') were also found to be associated with parents in On Track areas, for example, having a high level of current problems or a high Malaise score (see Section 2.5.3), being a lone parent and having a low income. Black and Asian parents were less likely than White parents to report difficulties with

coping. This was echoed in another recent evaluation which used self-completion methods (Bhabra and Ghate (2004), although we should be cautious that for both studies this apparent difference may reflect cultural factors in the interview situation. No difference was observed between the self-reported coping of parents who used On Track services and non-users.

Figure 3.4 Coping with being a parent



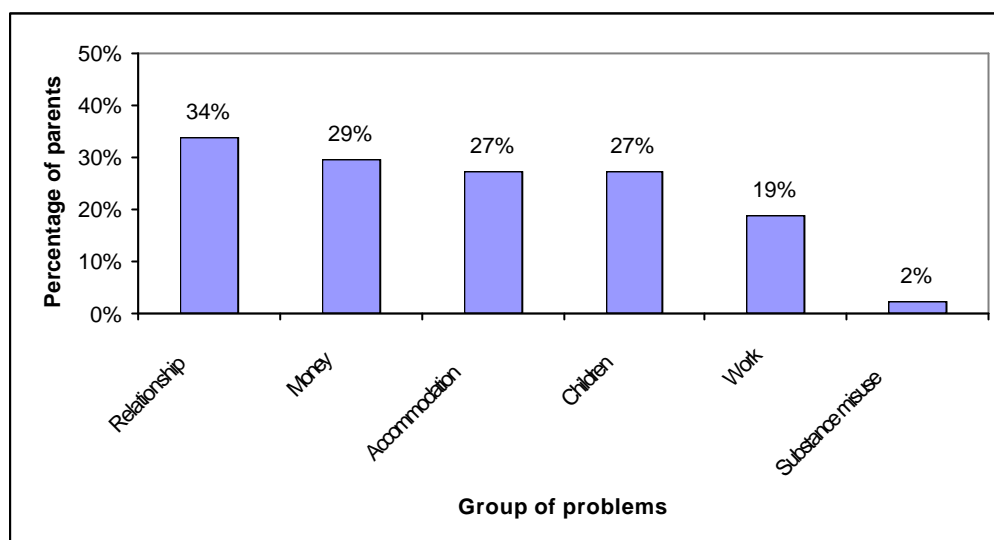
Base: parents in On Track areas (780)

Current problems at the family level were explored in greater depth using the self-report Current Problems Questionnaire, or CPQ, where respondents answer 'yes' or 'no' to 23 items covering current problems with money, family relationships, accommodation, work, children and substance use. The CPQ is based on the American 'Difficult Life Circumstances Questionnaire' (DLC; Mitchell et al 1998) and was adapted for use in the UK by the Policy Research Bureau for the Parenting in Poor Environments study. This instrument records how many of these diverse risk factors are perceived to be present by the respondent. This section will first examine the perceived presence of particular groups of problems and then look at how many problems were reported overall and the characteristics of parents who reported above average numbers of problems.

The reported incidence of the 23 individual problems among parents in On Track areas is given in Table 3.7. Figures are also shown for the incidence of any problem of a particular group, such as any money problem and any relationship problem. The table breaks down the results according to the age of the selected child and also shows results for the sub-group of parents who used On Track services.

The most common area of difficulty for parents was that of relationships and about a third of parents in On Track areas reported any of the seven types of problem included in this group (Figure 3.5). The most common of these problems were abuse by someone other than the present partner (mentioned by 18% of parents), partners verbally abusing the parent ('said things to you on purpose to make you feel really bad or worthless'; 15%) and partners being away from home for more than half the time (12%). Problems with a former partner were reported by nearly one-in-ten of the parents.

Figure 3.5 Groups of problems reported in the Current Problems Questionnaire (net figures for six problem groups)



Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions (740)

Three other broad groups of problems were each reported by more than a quarter of the parents in On Track areas. These were money problems (mentioned by 29%), problems with accommodation (27%) and problems with children (27%). The most common accommodation problems were lack of privacy (mentioned by 20%) and trouble finding a place to live that was suitable and affordable (12%). By far the most common problem associated with children was problems at school – this was mentioned by nearly one-in-four parents (23%). Work problems, either for the parent or a partner, were mentioned by nearly one-in-five parents (19%). Problems with substances were relatively uncommon among these parents and were mentioned by only 2% of them.

The incidence of problems among this sample was very similar to that reported in the Parenting in Poor Environments study⁹.

Overall, 72% of parents in On Track areas reported having at least one of the difficulties listed on the CPQ. This proportion did not differ greatly according to the age of the selected child. The only difference observed was that relationship problems were more common among parents of children of secondary school age than among their younger counterparts.

⁹ (Ghate and Hazel 2002, Chapter Four).

Table 3.7 Problems reported on the Current Problem Questionnaire (1)

	OT area sample				OT user
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	sample
	%	%	%	%	%
Money problems					
Long term debts other than a house mortgage (debts had for two years or more)	27	27	26	27	38
Problems with owing money – for example loans, credit cards, catalogue companies, debt collectors and moneylenders.	12	15	15	14	15
Either of these money problems	29	30	30	29	40
Relationship problems					
Respondent ever abused physically, sexually or emotionally by someone other than present partner	14	17	20	18	21
Partner has ever said things to respondent on purpose to make her/him feel really bad or worthless	12	11	23	15	15
Partner is away from home for more than half the time because of a job or some other reason	14	13	9	12	12
Problem with any former partner	11	7	11	9	9
Partner has ever hit or injured respondent	3	3	2	3	1
Having regular arguments or fights with present partner	5	4	10	6	10
Partner is in prison	-	-	1	*	-
Any of these relationship problems	30	31	42	34	37
Problems with accommodation					
Not enough privacy in home	21	18	22	20	19
Trouble finding a place to live that is suitable and that they can afford	17	12	10	12	11
People living with parent – relatives or friends – that s/he wishes wasn't there	3	2	2	2	1
Trouble with landlord	7	2	2	3	3
Any of these accommodation problems	31	26	28	27	27
Base (unweighted)	152	386	218	756	105

Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions. ** denotes less than 0.5%.

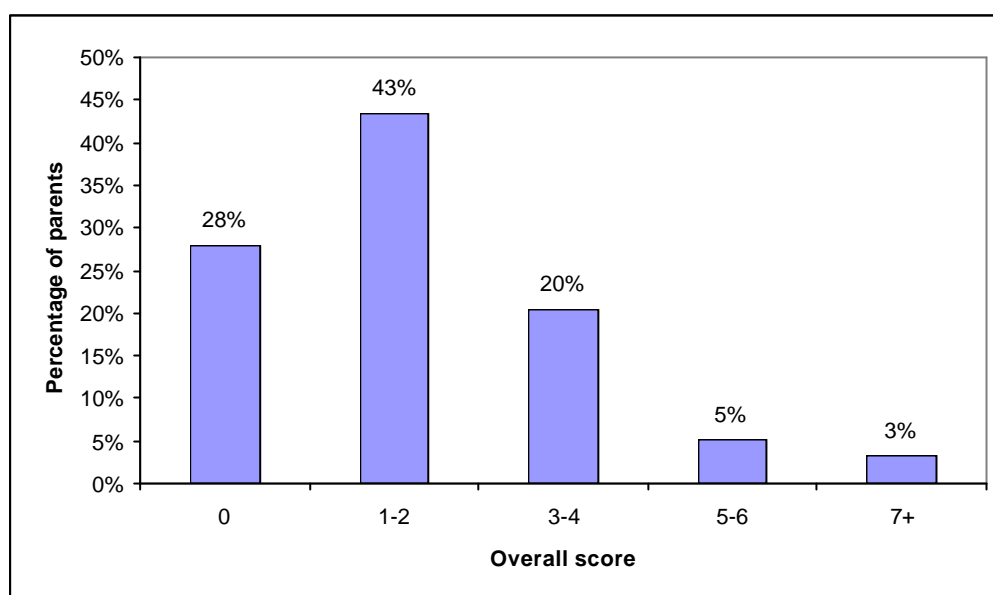
Table 3.7 Problems reported on the Current Problem Questionnaire (2)

	OT area sample				OT user
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	sample
	%	%	%	%	%
Work-related problems					
Respondent's work interferes with family life	13	14	16	14	13
Partner's work interferes with family life	21	15	17	17	12
Either of these work-related problems	19	18	20	19	17
Problems with children					
Child in family having problems at school that mean respondent has to visit the teacher or other staff	26	21	24	23	30
Child in family abused by someone physically, sexually or emotionally	10	5	7	6	12
Currently in contact with Social Services because of a problem with a child in the family	5	2	2	3	6
Child in family currently in trouble with the police or the courts	3	1	2	2	-
Child in family is currently on the Child Protection Register	-	1	-	*	-
Any of these problems with children	30	25	29	27	34
Problems with substances					
Respondent has problem with alcohol or drugs	3	*	1	1	-
Partner has problem with alcohol or drugs	3	1	2	2	2
Other person in family has problem with alcohol or drugs	2	1	1	1	1
Any of these problems with substances	4	2	1	2	1
Any problems	73	69	77	72	75
<i>Base (unweighted)</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>386</i>	<i>218</i>	<i>756</i>	<i>105</i>

Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions. '*' denotes less than 0.5%.

Figure 3.6 shows the number of problems reported by parents. Most parents reported quite a small number of problems: 28% reported none and 43% reported just one or two problems. Collectively, these 71% of parent constituted the 'low or normal problem score' group for this questionnaire. The remaining 29% of parents who constituted the 'high problem score' group generally also had a fairly moderate number of problems. Only 3% of parents reported seven or more problems.

Figure 3.6 Overall score on Current Problems Questionnaire



Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions (740)

Interestingly, parents who used On Track services reported more problems on this questionnaire than their non-user counterparts did. Forty per cent of On Track users fell in the 'high problem score' group (Table 3.8) compared with 29% of the sample as a whole. The main area in which these parents reported more problems than non-users was in problems with their children, including abuse and contact with social services, and money problems, particularly long-term debts. In other respects, such as difficulties with relationships, accommodation and work, users of On Track services were no different from non-users.

Table 3.8 Current problems score

	OT area sample				OT user sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	
	%	%	%	%	%
No problems	27	31	23	28	25
One problem	21	23	28	24	19
Two problems	20	20	18	19	16
Three problems	16	13	12	13	19
Four problems	4	6	11	7	10
Five problems	5	2	3	3	5
Six problems	2	2	2	2	3
Seven or more problems	5	3	2	3	2
Low or normal (2 problems or less)	68	74	69	71	60
Higher (greater than 2 problems)	32	26	31	29	40
<i>Base (unweighted)</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>386</i>	<i>218</i>	<i>756</i>	<i>105</i>

Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions

Table 3.9 contrasts the summary types and levels of problems experienced by the Booster sample and the On Track User sample. Booster sample families were more likely to say they had relationship problems (42%), problems with children (41%) or

problems with accommodation (32%). However, money problems featured less often for Booster sample families than in the main sample (28% compared to 40%).

In terms of levels of problems, the proportion of the Booster sample experiencing high numbers of problems was similar to that of the On Track User sample.

Table 3.9 Comparison of problems reported on the Current Problem Questionnaire: OT user and Booster sample

	OT user sample	Booster sample
	%	%
Relationship problems	37	42
Problems with children	34	41
Problems with accommodation	27	32
Money problems	40	28
Work-related problems	17	17
Problems with substances	1	2
Any problems	75	78
% with higher numbers of problems (greater than 2 problems)	40	38
<i>Base (unweighted)</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>306</i>

Base: parents in On Track areas and Booster sample who answered the self-completion questions

3.4.2 Relationships with partner

Parents who lived with a partner were asked three questions about their relationship with that person, covering how happy they were with it, how often they argued and how often lack of support from their partner caused them stress (Table 3.10). The majority of parents (88%) reported that they were 'very happy' or 'mostly happy' with their relationship with nearly all the remainder saying they were 'sometimes happy but sometimes unhappy' rather than unhappy. Only 2% of parents said they argued 'all of the time', while 34% chose 'some of the time' in preference to 'rarely'. Only 5% said that lack of support from their partner caused them stress all the time while just under a quarter (23%) said that this sometimes happened. Thus, the proportions of parents who reported serious problems such as being unhappy with their relationship or arguing or being caused stress 'all the time' were very low – just a few per cent. As the table shows, the extent of difficulties with partners did not differ very much according to the age of the child.

Results for parents who used On Track services did not differ significantly from those for non-users.

Table 3.10 Parent's relationship with partner

	OT area sample				OT user
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	sample
	%	%	%	%	%
Description of relationship					
Very happy	60	54	49	54	48
Mostly happy	28	36	34	34	37
Sometimes happy but sometimes unhappy	10	8	14	10	14
Mostly unhappy	-	-	-	-	-
Very unhappy	1	-	-	*	-
Not stated	1	3	3	3	1
How often parent argues with partner					
All of the time	5	2	2	2	3
Some of the time	30	32	42	34	42
Rarely	62	61	52	59	53
Not stated	3	5	2	5	2
How often lack of support from partner causes parent stress					
All of the time	5	4	5	5	2
Some of the time	15	25	26	23	30
Rarely	74	65	63	66	65
Not stated	6	6	7	6	4
Base (unweighted)	99	236	122	457	71

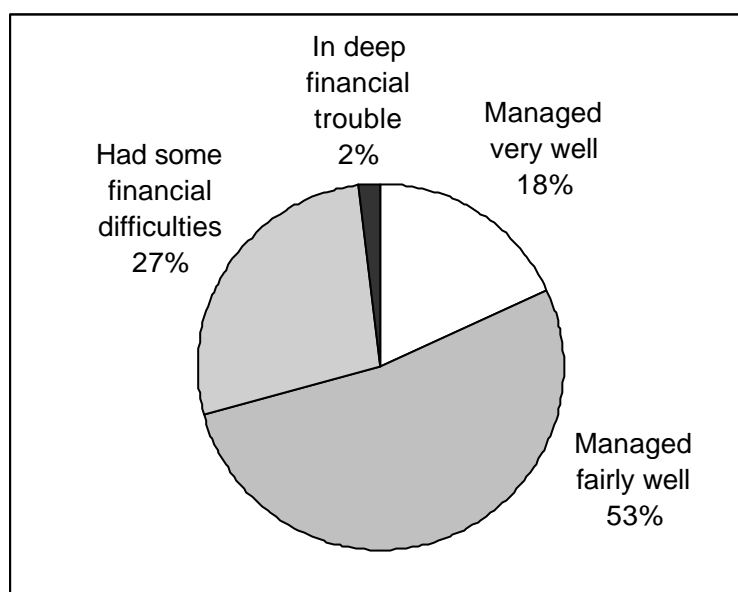
Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions and who had partners. ** denotes less than 0.5%.

3.4.3 Financial difficulties

Many parents in On Track areas experienced financial difficulties. Evidence of this was collected in the Current Problems Questionnaire, in a subjective question about how well the parents felt their family was coping financially and in question about items of expenditure that could not be afforded.

As reported in the previous section, 29% of parents claimed to have one of the money problems featured in the Current Problems Questionnaire. A similar proportion reported difficulties in a direct question about this subject. When asked how they and their family had managed financially over the last year, 27% of parents said that they had 'some financial difficulties' while 2% said that they were in 'deep financial trouble' (Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7 Whether families had financial difficulties in the last year



Base: parents in On Track areas (780)

In order to check how financial difficulties impacted on families' spending, the interview included a question from the Parenting in Poor Environments study, which was similar to questions used in more detailed studies of poverty and social exclusion (for example Gordon et al,2000; Kempson, 1996), and asked which of about eight common items of family expenditure the family did not have because it could not afford it. The items were cooked meals for adults and children, warm winter clothes, use of heating whenever it is needed, family holidays and trips and toys and sports gear for children. About half of parents in On Track areas (51%) were unable to afford at least one of these items (Table 3.11). By far the most common item that was not afforded was a family holiday; this was mentioned by 50% of respondents, nearly all of those who mentioned an item at all. The next most common item that was not afforded was family trips; this was mentioned by 11% of parents. None of the other items were mentioned by more than 7% of parents. The distribution of answers to these questions was broadly similar to that found in the Parenting in Poor Environments study except that a higher proportion of parents in that study reported not affording any of the items (62% compared with 51%).

Table 3.11 Basic items of expenditure that cannot be afforded by parents

Item of expenditure not afforded	OT area sample				OT user sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	
	%	%	%	%	%
Family holiday once a year	47	49	53	50	46
Family trip once a year	12	10	14	11	8
Basic toys for child	3	8	9	7	6
Winter clothes – adult	6	6	5	6	3
Heating when need it	5	3	6	5	4
Winter clothes – child	5	3	2	3	3
Cooked main meal – adult	1	2	3	2	1
Cooked main meal – child	*	2	2	2	1
Any items not afforded	47	51	56	51	48
All items afforded	53	49	44	49	52
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107

Base: parents in On Track areas. ** denotes less than 0.5%.

Parents who used On Track services did not give substantially different answers to non-users about either their views about how well they managed financially or about which items they could not afford. However, as was reported in the previous section, they were more likely than non-users of On Track services to report having long-term debts on the Current Problems Questionnaire.

Among the population of parents in On Track areas the groups that reported above average financial difficulties at both questions were the same as those that had reported lower than average incomes. These included lone parents and Asian and Black parents.

3.4.4 Physical, emotional and mental health of parent

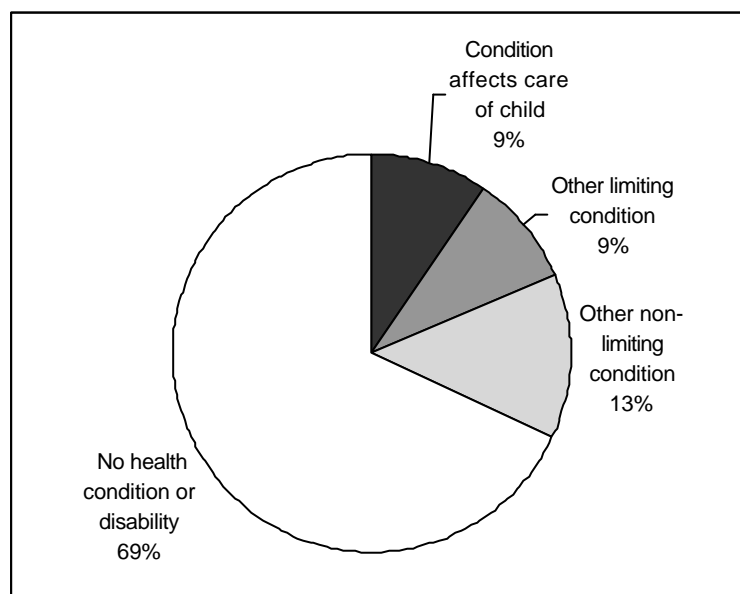
About a third of parents in On Track areas reported that either they or their partner had a health condition or disability (Table 3.12 and Figure 3.8). A little under one-in-five families had a parent with a condition that limited their activities in some way. Just under one-in-ten had a parent with a health condition or disability that affected their ability to care for or look after their child or children. The incidence of these kinds of problems did not differ significantly according to the age of the child and parents who used On Track services were not more likely to have a health condition or disability than non-users.

Table 3.12 Parents' health conditions and disabilities

	OT area sample				OT user sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	
	%	%	%	%	%
Any parent has a health condition or disability	28	32	35	32	34
Any parent has a limiting health condition or disability	13	18	20	18	21
Any parent has a health condition or disability that affects care of child	5	11	10	9	12
<i>Base (unweighted)</i>	<i>159</i>	<i>399</i>	<i>222</i>	<i>780</i>	<i>107</i>

Base: parents in On Track areas

Figure 3.8 Whether parents in families had health conditions or disabilities



Base: parents in On Track areas (780)

Parents were asked to complete a series of 24 questions about their mental and emotional health as part of the second self-completion section of the interview. The instrument used was the Malaise Inventory developed by the Institute of Psychiatry from the Cornell Medical Index (Rutter, Tizard and Whitmore 1970). A score of eight or more affirmative answers out of 24 statements is known to be associated with elevated risk of depression. Contributory statements that were commonly given affirmative answers in the Malaise Inventory included whether the parents often got worried, were tired all the time, had backache or headaches, had difficulty sleeping or woke unnecessarily early, often found people annoying or often felt depressed.

Overall, 19% of parents had high scores (Table 3.13). This was a much higher proportion than has been found in a national survey of adults at age 33 (around 7%; The National Child Development Study, NCDS; Cheung and Buchanan 1997) but a similar level to that found for women in the Parenting in Poor Environments study. Thus, parents in On Track areas had worse mental and emotional health than the general population. On Track users also had worse mental and emotional health compared with national data but similar levels to non-users in On Track areas.

Table 3.13 Mental and emotional health of parent – scores on Malaise inventory

	OT area sample				OT user Sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	
	%	%	%	%	%
High scores (8 or more)	22	16	22	19	15
Low scores	78	84	78	81	85
Mean scores (out of 24)	4.2	4.1	4.8	4.3	4.1
Base (unweighted)	146	378	216	740	101

Base: parents in On Track areas who completed malaise inventory

3.4.5 Substance use by parents

Parents were asked about consumption of alcohol for both themselves and their partners (if applicable). This series of questions was included in the second self-completion section in the interview. A fairly moderate use of alcohol was reported. Only 8% of parents in On Track areas said that either they or a partner drank four or more times per week (Table 3.14). 1% said that either they or their partner had been unable to carry out their normal daily duties at some point in the last year because of alcohol. A similar proportion reported that they had been advised to cut down on their alcohol intake in the last year by a relative, friend, doctor or other health worker.

Table 3.14 Alcohol intake of parents (as reported by the interviewed parent)

	OT area sample				OT user Sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	
	%	%	%	%	%
Any parent drinks 4+ times per week	6	7	11	8	7
Whether alcohol makes any parent unable to do duties	2	1	-	1	-
Whether relative, friend, doctor or other health worker had been concerned about main parent's drinking or suggested they cut down in last year	1	2	2	2	1
Base (unweighted)	146	378	216	740	101

Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions

Table 3.15 shows the levels of consumption reported by main parents for themselves and for their partners (where applicable). This indicates slightly lower intake by the interviewed parent (who was typically female) compared with second parent (who was typically male), which accords with patterns found in the Health Survey for England. Few high intakes were reported for either parent.

Table 3.15 Alcohol intake of parents (as reported by the interviewed parent)

	OT area sample		OT user sample	
	Main parent	Second parent	Main parent	Second parent
	%	%	%	%
Never	28	28	23	23
Monthly or less	30	23	31	37
2 - 4 times a month	19	17	19	10
2 or 3 times a week	17	21	21	23
Four or more times a week	5	8	5	6
Not stated	2	2	1	2
<i>Base</i>	<i>740</i>	<i>443</i>	<i>101</i>	<i>68</i>

Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions

Information about parents' use of drugs was collected in the second self-completion section of the interview. Parents were asked about both their own consumption and that of their partner (if applicable). Overall, 12% of parents in On Track areas reported that they or their partner used any drugs (Table 3.16). Cannabis was by far the most commonly used drug, reported for 11% of families while only 3% used other drugs (this category was prompted by a list of 10 different drugs including Ecstasy, LSD, solvents, amphetamines, cocaine and heroin; specific drugs that were taken were not identified). Only 1% of parents reported that their ability to carry out normal daily activities had been affected by taking drugs.

Parents and families that used On Track services did not differ from non-users in their use of drugs.

Table 3.16 Parents' use of drugs (as reported by the interviewed parent)

	OT area sample				OT user Sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	
	%	%	%	%	%
Any parent takes cannabis	10	12	10	11	11
One or both parent(s) takes other drugs	5	2	3	3	3
Any parent takes any drugs	10	13	12	12	14
One or both parent(s) have had ability to carry out normal daily activities affected by taking drugs	3	*	-	1	-
<i>Base (unweighted)</i>	<i>146</i>	<i>378</i>	<i>216</i>	<i>740</i>	<i>101</i>

Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions. '**' denotes less than 0.5%.

3.4.6 Criminality, anti-social behaviour or offending of parents

Presence of anti-social behaviour or offending among adults in families has been identified as a risk factor for anti-social behaviour or offending among children. Accordingly, the questionnaire included a series of questions about involvement in anti-social behaviour and offending by parents and other household members. Due to their sensitivity, these questions were included in one of the self-completion sections of the interview. A general question was asked about a range of anti-social

behaviours, rather than asking about each type individually. A showcard was used to explain what kinds of activities were of interest – this is reproduced on Figure 3.9 below. About one-in-eight parents (13%) reported that they had done any of the things on the showcard since the age of 18.

Figure 3.9 Self-completion showcard for anti-social behaviour and offending

- SELF-COMPLETION SHOWCARD**
- Driven a car, motorcycle or moped when you were disqualified from driving by a court
 - Driven a car, motorcycle or moped in a dangerous or reckless manner
 - Damaged or destroyed, on purpose or recklessly, something belonging to someone else (for example telephone box, bus shelter, car, window or a house etc)
 - Stolen money from a gas or electricity meter, public telephone, vending machine, video game or fruit machine
 - Stolen anything worth more than £5
 - Taken away a motorcycle or moped without the owner's permission
 - Taken away a car without the owner's permission
 - Stolen anything out of or from a car
 - Pickpocketed anything from anybody
 - Snatched from a person a purse, bag or something else
 - Sneaked or broken into a private garden, a house or a building intending to steal something (not meaning abandoned or ruined buildings)
 - Bought or held onto something you know or believed at the time had been stolen
 - Used a cheque book, credit card, cash point card (ATM card) which you knew or believed at the time had been stolen to get money out of a bank account
 - Claimed on an insurance policy, an expenses form, a tax return or a social security benefit form that you knew to be incorrect to make money
 - Carried a weapon (such as a knife or stick) to use to defend yourself or to attack other people
 - Threatened someone with a weapon or with beating them up, in order to get money or other valuables from them
 - Participated in fighting or disorder in a group or public place (for example, football ground, railway station, music festival, riot, demonstration, or just in the streets)
 - Set fire on purpose or recklessly to something not belonging to you. It might be to paper or furniture, to a barn, a car, a forest, a basement, a building or something else
 - Beaten up someone not belonging to you immediate family, to such an extent that you think or know that medical help or a doctor was needed.
 - Beaten up someone belonging to your immediate family, to such an extent that you think or know that medical help or a doctor was needed.
 - Hurt someone with a knife, stick or other weapon

Further questions were asked about whether either parent had been arrested since the age of 18 (see lower part of Table 3.17). 9% of parents said that they had been arrested while 8% had a partner who had been arrested. Either parent had been arrested in 13% of households. In addition, 5% of parents reported that another member of the household had been arrested in the last five years. This person could have been a child or other relative.

Table 3.17 Offending and arrests of parents

	OT area sample				OT user sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	
	%	%	%	%	%
Offending					
Interviewed parent committed any of a list of specified crimes since the age of 18	12	13	13	13	14
Arrests					
Interviewed parent arrested since age 18	8	8	13	9	9
Partner arrested since age 18	9	9	7	8	4
Either parent arrested since age 18	11	13	16	13	10
Anyone in the household has arrested in past five years	4	3	8	5	6
Base (unweighted)	146	378	216	740	101

Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions

3.5 Characteristics of children

This section describes the characteristics of the selected children in families in On Track areas. Some findings have been drawn from the parent interview while others have been taken from interviews with the children themselves. Results have been broken down by the age of child (primary school or secondary school) wherever sample sizes allow. It should be noted that the sample sizes for children interviews were lower than those for parents because child interviews were not possible in all cases, either because the parent or child refused, or because the child was not available.

Results for users of On Track services are broken out where sample sizes allow, which is for the parent sample as a whole and for the sample of primary school children. It should be noted that families are classified as On Track users based on the parents' reports, and the selected child has not necessarily used an On Track service. Nonetheless, such children are included in the On Track user group because involvement in On Track by a parent or other family members might be expected to have beneficial results for the child (further information about use of services is provided in Chapter 3).

On the face of it, there did appear to be some systematic differences in the On Track service users compared to others. Very few of these differences were statistically significant, so we are not able to say with any confidence that they are indeed genuine differences. However, we also need to bear in mind that the smaller than anticipated sample sizes meant that only very large differences between the samples could reach statistical significance.

Again, selected comparisons of characteristics of the children are drawn with the Booster sample. Rather than perform an exhaustive comparison, the emphasis here is

on looking at a range of different indicators to give an overall impression of how the Booster sample children compared with children in the more generalisable On Track Area and User samples.

3.5.1 Attendance at school and readiness to learn

'Readiness to learn' in children is seen as a protective factor against anti-social behaviour and offending. The child questionnaires therefore included some questions designed to measure this trait and results for three such questions are presented on Table 3.18.

Children of both age groups in On Track areas had generally positive feelings about their school. However, small minorities of 14% of primary school children and 12% of secondary school children said that they did not like going to school. A little under a quarter of each group expressed negative feelings about their teachers, with 22% saying that they only liked one or two of them, while only 1% said that they liked none. Despite these negative feelings, there was near unanimity among interviewed children about the importance of getting good marks at school: more than three quarters of each age groups said that this was 'very important' and only 2% of primary school children and 1% of secondary school children said that this was 'not very important'.

The findings for primary school children in families that used On Track services suggest the possibility that this group might have less readiness to learn than non-users but the differences were not significant. (There were insufficient numbers of secondary school On Track users to show reliable figures.)

Comparing primary school On Track users in the On Track User and Booster samples, there was some indication that primary school children in the Booster sample were less positive about school (on the basis of how many teachers they liked and how important they thought exams were). However, if anything, more said they liked school a lot.

Table 3.18 Attitudes to school and readiness to learn

	OT area sample		OT user Sample Primary	Booster sample	
	Primary	Sec'dary		Primary	Sec'dary
	%	%	%	%	%
How much child likes going to school					
Like it a lot	42	38	37	41	38
Like it a little bit	43	50	45	42	43
Do not like it	14	12	18	17	17
Not stated	1	-	-	1	2
How many of the teachers child likes					
..All teachers	32	11	32	26	15
Some teachers	44	66	40	49	70
1 or 2 teachers	22	22	25	21	11
No teachers?	1	1	2	3	2
Not stated	1	1	-	1	2
How important child considers getting good marks to be					
..Very important	78	77	69	63	77
Fairly important	18	21	24	23	19
Not very important?	2	1	7	13	2
Not stated	1	1	-	1	2
Base (unweighted)	347	199	58	120	47

Base: interviewed primary and secondary school children in On Track areas and Booster sample

Primary school children were asked how frequently they got into trouble at school – 'often', 'sometimes' or 'never' (Table 3.19). 'Sometimes' was the most common answer and only 7% of these children said that they 'often' got into trouble. Although the proportion was slightly higher among On Track users, this was not a significant difference.

Table 3.19 Primary school children's reporting of how often they get into trouble at school

	OT area Sample Primary	OT user sample Primary
	%	%
Often	7	13
Sometimes	50	50
Never	42	37
Not stated	1	-
Base (unweighted)	347	58

Base: interviewed primary school children in On Track areas

As a further check on their feelings about school, children were asked how well they were doing in three key parts of the curriculum – maths, reading and writing for those in primary school, and maths, English and sports/PE for those in secondary school

(Table 3.20). In On Track areas, between 8% and 12% of those attending primary school and between 12% and 15% of those attending secondary school said that that they were 'not very good' at individual subjects. However, they usually mentioned only one or two subjects as problematic for them. Only 1% of primary school children and 2% of secondary school children said that they were 'not very good' for all three subjects.

Table 3.20 Primary and secondary school children 's reporting of how well they were doing at school

Primary subjects	OT area Sample Primary	OT user Sample Primary	Booster Sample Primary	Secondary subjects	OT area Sample Sec'dary	Booster Sample Sec'dary
	%	%	%		%	
Maths				Maths		
Very good	47	51	42	Very good	31	15
Fairly good	41	37	39	Fairly good	54	64
Not very good	12	12	17	Not very good	15	19
Not stated	1	-	3	Not stated	1	2
Reading				English		
Very good	57	64	50	Very good	30	32
Fairly good	34	23	32	Fairly good	58	45
Not very good	8	13	18	Not very good	12	21
Not stated	1	-	1	Not stated	1	2
Writing				Sports/PE		
Very good	44	52	36	Very good	48	45
Fairly good	47	38	48	Fairly good	39	47
Not very good	8	10	16	Not very good	13	6
Not stated	1	-	1	Not stated	1	2
Problem subjects				Problem subjects		
Three 'not very good'	1	-	4	Three 'not very good'	2	-
One/two 'not very good'	22	29	29	One/two 'not very good'	31	43
None 'not very good'	77	71	67	None 'not very good'	68	57
Base (unweighted)	347	58	120	Base (unweighted)	199	47

Base: interviewed primary and secondary school children in On Track areas

Primary On Track users were not significantly different from the On Track area sample as a whole.

Higher proportions of Booster sample children rated themselves as 'not very good' for individual subjects with the exception of sports at secondary level.

Parents' views about their child's progress were also generally positive, especially for older children. Overall, 88% of parents in On Track areas perceived that their child was doing average or better than average at school (Table 3.21).

Parents in families that used On Track services were more likely to say that their child was performing below average at school, which indicates that On Track is reaching

children who have difficulties at school. Other characteristics of families where parents perceived that their child performed below average were that the parents were more likely to have high scores on the Current Problems Questionnaire or Malaise Inventory, and were more likely to be out of work.

Table 3.21 Parent's perception of how well child is doing at school

	OT area sample				OT user sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	
	%	%	%	%	%
Better than average	41	51	53	50	42
About average	38	39	35	38	36
Below average	8	9	12	10	16
No answer	5	-	-	1	2
Don't know	7	*	-	2	3
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107

Base: parents in On Track areas. *** denotes less than 0.5%.

Another measure of readiness to learn is the child's aspirations to undertake further study and parents' aspirations and expectations for their child. All were covered in the interviews and the results are summarised on Table 3.22. It can be seen that four out of five parents wanted their child to continue in education beyond the age of 16, although just under two thirds expected that they actually would stay on. The proportion of children who expected to stay on in education fell some way between parental wishes and expectations, at 68%.

Table 3.22 Secondary school children: comparison of parents' career aspirations and expectations for child with child's own aspirations for activity on reaching 16

	OT area sample		
	What Parent wants	What Parent Expects	What Child wants
	%	%	%
Get a full-time paid job	5	15	15
Stay at school or go to college, for example studying for A levels	80	63	68
Learn a trade or go on a training course	12	14	10
Or, something else?	1	4	4
Not stated	2	3	2
Base (unweighted)	222	222	199

Base: parents of secondary school children and interviewed secondary school children in On Track areas

Overall, the picture is one of parents and children having similar aspirations and this was confirmed by cross-tabulations of answers given by parents and children which showed that 77% of children whose parents wanted them to continue in education at 16 also wanted to do this themselves.

3.5.2 Child's activities and involvement of family

Parental involvement in leisure activities with their child is seen as a protective factor against anti-social behaviour and offending. The child interviews therefore included detailed questions to establish the incidence of different types of leisure activities among children and the extent to which other family members were involved with them.

Of the eleven leisure activities included in the list, watching TV or videos was by far the most common. Ninety-eight per cent of both primary and secondary school children in On Track areas mentioned this. The next most common leisure activities were playing computer games or using the internet, and listening to music, each of which were claimed by more than two thirds of children in each age group (Table 3.23). Reading books, painting and drawing, swimming, riding a bike and going to the cinema were also popular activities, mentioned by more than a third of children in each age group. In general, these were more commonly mentioned by primary school children than by secondary school children.

Table 3.23 Children's spare time activities in recent weeks and the level of involvement of family members

	All child's activities in last few weeks			Those activities done with other family members		
	OT areas		OT user sample Primary	OT areas		OT user sample Primary
	Primary	Sec'dary		Primary	Sec'dary	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Watched TV or videos#	98	98	100	79	70	81
Played computer games or used internet	71	73	76	32	24	27
Listened to music	69	80	64	29	19	19
Read books for fun	63	45	64	15	2	21
Did painting, drawing or another art activity	59	43	46	17	10	13
Went swimming	51	38	52	29	18	25
Went for bike rides	45	39	39	22	13	19
Made things, e.g. models, clothes	37	20	49	12	8	18
Went to the cinema	34	39	43	30	22	36
Played a musical instrument	23	19	37	3	3	6
Went skateboarding or skating	22	13	26	8	2	7
Base (unweighted)	346	197	58	346	197	58

Base: interviewed primary and secondary school children in On Track areas

Activities are ranked in descending order of mentions for primary school children

The question about involvement of family members in TV and video watching was only available for a subset of cases – bases for this = 226 On Track areas primary; 121 On Track areas secondary; 36 On Track users primary.

Children reported that many of these activities were carried out with family members. Watching TV and videos was of outstanding importance in this respect as about eight in ten primary school children and seven in ten secondary school children said they did this with other family members. Aside from watching TV and videos, however,

there were no activities that more than a third of children in either age group did with another family member. Among primary school children the most common other family activities were playing computer games, listening to music and swimming, each of which were mentioned by between a quarter and a third of children. These were also the most common other family activities for secondary school children but they were mentioned by less than a quarter of those children.

Analysis of the number of the 11 specified activities that children reported doing in the last few weeks confirms that the level of activities was higher among primary school children (a mean of 5.7 activities) than among secondary school children (a mean of 5.1 activities; Table 3.24).

Table 3.24 Number of different activities undertaken

	OT area sample		OT user Sample Primary	Booster sample	
	Primary	Sec'dary		Primary	Sec'dary
	%	%	%	%	%
None	*	-	-	1	-
One or two	6	7	4	8	2
Three or four	23	38	23	21	24
Five or six	35	33	35	33	41
Seven or more	36	22	39	38	33
Mean	5.7	5.1	6.0	5.8	6.0
Std. Error of Mean	0.116	0.144	0.275	0.216	0.301
Std. Deviation	3.78	2.025	2.019	2.353	2.044
Base (unweighted)	353	198	58	119	46

Base: interviewed primary and secondary school children in On Track areas and Booster sample. '*' denotes less than 0.5%.

The types of activities and the levels of family involvement reported by primary school children in families that used On Track services appeared to be no different from those of non-users.

Levels of activity amongst the Booster sample were of a similar level for primary school aged children, with some tendency for greater activity amongst secondary school aged children.

The parent questionnaire also included a question about involvement in activities with their children and the level of claims implies a higher level of shared activity than the answers given by the children, although the form of the questions was different and so direct comparisons cannot be made. Parents were asked to state how frequently they or their partner did nine different activities with their child. The answer categories were 'most days', 'at least once a week', 'less than once a week' and 'never' and Table 3.25 below shows the proportions of parents who claimed either of the two most frequent options.

Table 3.25 Parents' involvement with child (activities with child at least once a week)

	OT area sample				OT user sample	Booster sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Watch TV or videos	93	94	92	93	96	95
Go shopping	84	77	71	76	79	71
Visit friends or relatives	78	74	64	72	81	74
Play sports or go to watch sports	51	47	34	44	52	48
Go for walks or bike rides	57	43	30	42	52	51
Play on the computer	47	40	36	40	45	44
Go out for something to eat	38	33	33	34	35	33
Go on trips or outings	24	24	22	23	24	25
Go to the cinema, theatre or concerts	5	5	5	5	6	7
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107	306

Base: parents in On Track areas and Booster sample
Activities are listed in descending order of mentions

Watching TV or videos was again identified as the most common shared activity and was mentioned by 93% of parents. Going shopping and visiting friends and relatives were also very common with roughly three quarters of parents saying that they did these with their children at least once a week. The categories of playing or watching sports, going for walks or bike rides and playing on the computer were each done at least once a week by 40% or more of parents.

Parents of secondary school children reported slightly fewer shared activities than parents of primary school children. Visits to relatives, participation in sport and shared walks and bike rides were all less common among parents of older children.

Users of On Track services reported very similar shared activities with their children to those of non-users. The small differences that were observable were generally explicable by the slightly younger age profile of children in families that were involved with On Track services.

Table 3.25 also shows parents' ratings for the Booster sample. In common with the On Track Area and User samples, watching TVs and videos was the most common form of shared activity (95%) in the Booster sample. Booster sample children also said they regularly visited friends or relatives and went shopping with their parents (71% and 74% respectively).

3.5.3 Child's health

Parents were asked to report whether their child had any health condition or disability that they expected would last for more than a year, including problems with physical health, mental health, learning difficulties and behaviour problems. If such a condition was reported, parents were asked whether it made it harder for the child in their everyday life, for example when playing or attending school (that is, whether the problem was limiting). Twenty-nine per cent of children in On Track areas were

reported to have such a health condition or disability, including 17% for whom the condition was judged to be limiting (Table 3.26).

The proportion of children with longstanding illness (29%) was slightly higher than observed in the 2002 Health Survey for England (HSE) which reported levels of 27% for boys aged five to 15, and 22% for girls aged five to 15 (Sproston and Primatesta et al 2003). The proportion with a limiting longstanding illness (17%) was also higher than that reported for boys and girls aged five to 15 on the HSE (10% and 9% respectively).

Although 38% of children in the 107 families that used On Track were reported as having longstanding illnesses, the proportion was not significantly higher than that for non-users.

The Booster sample contained a very high proportion of children (30%) with limiting health conditions compared to the On Track Area and User samples.

Table 3.26 Longstanding illness or disability and whether limiting

	OT area sample				OT user sample	Booster sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Limiting longstanding illness or disability	16	18	17	17	24	30
Non-limiting longstanding illness or disability	13	12	11	12	14	17
Neither	71	70	72	71	62	53
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107	306

Base: parents in On Track areas and Booster sample

The most common forms of longstanding illness or disability for the On Track Area sample are shown on Table 3.27.

Table 3.27 Most common types of longstanding illness or disability among children in On Track areas

	OT Area sample
	%
Asthma	11
Eczema	6
Learning difficulties, behavioural or mental difficulty	6
Hayfever	3
problems in hearing	3
Problems in seeing	3
Speech difficulty	2
Problem with arms, legs, hands, feet, back or neck (including arthritis or rheumatism)	2
Others	4
Base (unweighted)	780

Base: parents in On Track areas

3.5.4 Special educational needs

Parents were asked a series of questions about special educational needs. These established whether their child had ever been assessed as having such needs and whether he or she had ever been given a Statement of Special Educational Needs. In each case, it was checked whether the assessment or statement was current. Overall, 13% of children in On Track areas currently had special educational needs and a further 5% had formerly had such needs (Table 3.28). The 13% of children who had special educational needs comprised 5% who were statemented and 8% who were not.

Table 3.28 Whether children had special educational needs

	OT area sample				OT user sample	Booster sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Currently has SEN	8	15	12	13	19	26
- statemented	2	7	5	5	9	12
- not statemented	6	9	7	8	10	14
Formerly SEN	5	6	4	5	6	6
Never SEN	87	79	84	82	75	68
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107	306

Base: parent in On Track areas and Booster sample

Although 19% of children in the 107 families that used On Track were reported as having special educational needs, the proportion was not significantly higher than that for non-users.

The level of special educational needs was high in the Booster sample. A quarter of Booster sample children were designated as currently having special educational needs, split fairly evenly between those with statements and those without.

3.6 Parents' relationships with their children

This section looks at aspects of parents' relationships with their children from the parent's perspective, highlighting issues that might constitute precursors to anti-social behaviour and offending by their children. It covers supervision and monitoring, involvement with the child's education and problems at school, measures of parental warmth and hostility, and disciplinary practices.

3.6.1 Supervision and monitoring

Lack of parental supervision and monitoring is regarded as a risk factor for anti-social behaviour and offending. Therefore, the parent interview included questions to establish how closely the parents were able to monitor when their children went out and what they did. Only 15% of parents reported that their child never went out without them; as may be expected this proportion was higher for children aged five or six (25%) and older primary school children (17%) than for secondary school children (7%; Table 3.29). Just over a third of parents said that their child often went out without them while about half said that this happened sometimes.

Table 3.29 How often child goes out without parent (as reported by parent)

	OT area sample				OT user sample	Booster sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Often	30	35	43	36	45	38
Sometimes	46	48	50	48	42	44
Never	24	17	7	15	14	18
Base (unweighted)	151	383	217	751	104	299

Base: parent in On Track areas and Booster sample who answered the self-completion questions

On the basis of how often their children went out without them, Booster sample parents did not seem to differ from the main samples.

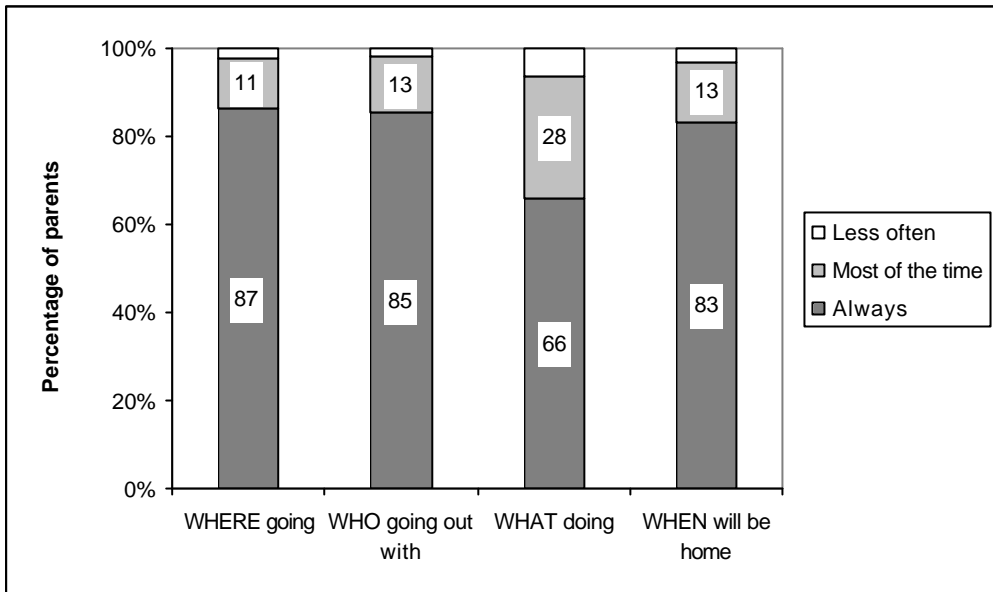
Parents were also asked to state what they knew about their child's going out – how often did they know where they went, who they went with, what they were doing and when they would be back. The answers to these questions, which are summarised on Figure 3.10 and presented in detail on Table 3.30, show that between 83% and 87% of parents considered that they always know where their child was going, who they were with and when they would be back (parents who said that their children never went out have been included in this group). However, fewer parents considered that they always know what they were doing – 66% said this while 28% said that they sometimes knew. Extremely few parents reported that they never knew these sorts of details about their child's going out.

Table 3.30 shows how parents' answers to this question differed according to the age of their child. Only about three quarters of parents of secondary school children considered that they always knew where their child was going, who they were with and what time they would be home and only about half of them considered that they always knew what they were doing.

In answer to a further question, 12% of parents in On Track areas said that their child had ever come back more than an hour late against their wishes (Table 3.31). This proportion was 4% for children aged five or six, 10% for older primary school children and 20% for secondary school children. Where this had happened it was a rare occurrence; only 1% of parents said that this had happened 'lots of times'.

The reported levels of monitoring for parents of families that used On Track services were no different from those for families that did not use any services.

Figure 3.10 Parents' knowledge of their child's going out



Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions (751)

Table 3.30 Parents' knowledge of their child's going out

	OT area sample				OT user sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	
	%	%	%	%	%
WHERE going					
Always knows#	95	88	78	86	86
Knows most of the time	4	9	20	11	11
Knows less often	1	3	2	2	3
Not stated		*		*	
WHO going with					
Always knows#	95	88	75	85	84
Knows most of the time	4	10	24	13	12
Knows less often	1	2	2	2	5
Not stated		*		*	
WHAT doing					
Always knows#	79	69	50	66	65
Knows most of the time	16	25	41	28	25
Knows less often	6	5	9	6	10
Not stated	-	*		*	-
WHEN will be home					
Always knows#	92	83	77	83	78
Knows most of the time	5	14	19	13	15
Knows less often	3	3	4	3	7
Not stated	-	*	-	*	-
Base (unweighted)	151	383	217	751	104

Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions

These categories include those parents whose children never went out without them

'*' denotes less than 0.5%.

Table 3.31 Whether child ever back home more than an hour late against parents' wishes

	OT area sample				OT user sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	
	%	%	%	%	%
Never#	95	88	78	87	86
Ever	4	10	20	12	11
- once or a few times	4	9	20	11	11
- lots of times	-	1	*	1	-
Not stated	1	2	2	2	3
Base (unweighted)	151	383	217	751	104

Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions

These categories include those parents whose children never went out without them

'*' denotes less than 0.5%.

Table 3.32 gives an overall comparison of the Booster sample and On Track user parents, by showing the proportion of children with lower levels of monitoring when out by themselves. The proportion of Booster sample parents in this category was low and in line with the levels observed in the On Track User sample.

Table 3.32 Comparison of parents knowledge of their child’s going out: OT user and Booster sample

	OT user sample	Booster sample
	%	%
Parents knows less often (i.e. often, sometimes or never):		
WHERE going	3	5
WHO going with	5	5
WHAT doing	10	8
WHEN will be home	7	5
Base (unweighted)	104	299

Base: parents in On Track areas and Booster sample who answered self-completion questions. Base includes don’t know and not stated responses, and children who never went out without parents.

3.6.2 Involvement with child’s education, and problems at school

Parental involvement with their child’s education is considered to be a potential protective factor against anti-social behaviour and offending. Results for three measures of parental involvement are presented on Table 3.33.

High proportions of parents attended school parents’ evenings. Only 10% reported that neither they nor a partner had been to the parents’ evening in the last year. About half of parents were also involved in a more substantial way with activities at the school. The list of activities at this question included fund raising, helping in class, helping with trips and being a part of parents’ associations or governing bodies. Overall, a third of parents (34%) described themselves as being ‘very involved’ and 45% described themselves as ‘fairly involved’ in their child’s school life. Only a fifth (21%) described themselves as ‘not very involved’ or ‘not at all involved’.

There were some interesting contrasts between users of On Track services and non-users. Higher proportions of parents who used On Track services had attended parents’ evenings, were involved in some activity at the child’s school and said they felt ‘very’ involved in school life.

On all three measures shown, Booster sample parents tended to show less involvement with their children’s school life, with lower proportions saying that they felt involved, attended parents’ evenings or helped out at school in any other ways.

Table 3.33 Parents' involvement in child's education

	OT area sample				OT user sample	Booster sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Attendance at parents' evenings in last 12 months						
Respondent and partner went	44	42	45	43	43	40
Respondent went alone	44	46	36	43	52	49
Respondent's partner went on own	3	3	6	4	1	*
Nobody has been	9	9	14	10	4	11
Involvement in activity at child's school (e.g. helping out in class, fund raising, parents' association)						
Yes	44	45	20	38	51	45
No	56	55	80	62	49	55
How involved parent feels with child's school life						
Very involved	41	33	29	34	43	41
Fairly involved	43	46	43	45	43	44
Not very involved	15	17	22	18	14	12
Not at all involved	-	3	5	3	1	4
Not stated	1	1	-	1	-	-
Base (unweighted)	158	399	22	779	107	296

Base: parents in On Track areas and Booster sample. '**' denotes less than 0.5%.

More than half of parents reported that they had spoken with a teacher or a member of staff about their child's progress or behaviour in the last school year other than in parents' evenings. Table 3.34 shows which of four categories of problem parents reported talking to teachers about. These were usually to do with the child's learning or school work (41%) or his or her behaviour at school (34%). Eighteen per cent of parents had spoken to someone at the school about a problem their child had with another child and 7% had discussed a problem with attendance or truancy.

Parents in families that used On Track services were much more likely to report having these sorts of discussions with school staff – 72% did so compared with 57% of parents in non-user families. It is possible that this reflects the activities of On Track home school partnership interventions. Particular difficulties with the child's behaviour that were associated with his or her referral to an On Track service may also explain this trend.

A similar pattern of more discussions was also seen amongst the Booster sample.

Table 3.34 Parents' special discussions with school staff about child in the last year (other than at parents' evenings)

	OT area sample				OT user sample	Booster sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Any such discussions	61	60	51	57	72	79
- about child's behaviour in school	30	34	35	34	52	60
- about child's attendance or truancy	3	6	11	7	11	9
- about child's learning or schoolwork	45	42	34	41	54	67
- about another problem to do with child	17	19	17	18	27	33
Base (unweighted)	158	399	22	779	107	296

Base: parents in On Track areas and Booster sample.

3.6.3 Parental warmth and involvement, and hostility and criticism

The extent to which a parent's relationship with the selected child could be characterised as warm or hostile was measured using a series of statements for which the parent was asked to say whether they agreed or disagreed and how strongly¹⁰. Three statements measured aspects of warmth and involvement in the children's activities: 'We have a warm and affectionate relationship', 'I take lots of interest in what he/she is doing' and 'I am always finding reasons to praise him/her' (see Table 3.35). Two statements measured aspects of hostility and criticism: 'I often feel angry with him/her' and 'I find I am constantly criticising, nagging or telling him/her off' (see Table 3.36).

Parents in On Track areas predominantly opted for positive responses to the warmth and involvement statements. Nearly all parents characterised their relationship with their child as warm and affectionate. Ninety-five per cent of parents agreed with the statement while only 1% disagreed (5% chose the 'neither agree nor disagree option'). Similarly, 95% of parents agreed that they took an interest in what their child was doing while only 1% disagreed. A smaller majority of 74% parents agreed that they were always finding reasons to praise the child, while 4% disagreed.

¹⁰ The statements had been developed for an earlier study 'Parents, Children and Discipline', funded by the ESRC. See Ghate et al (forthcoming)

Table 3.35 Parental warmth and involvement

	OT area sample				OT user sample	Booster sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
We have a warm and affectionate relationship						
Strongly disagree	-	-	*	*	-	*
Disagree	-	*	2	1	1	2
Neither agree or disagree	4	4	7	5	5	7
Agree	18	27	31	27	36	25
Strongly agree	77	69	60	68	59	62
Base (unweighted)	150	386	215	751	103	301
I take lots of interest in what he/she is doing						
Strongly disagree	-	-	-	-	-	-
Disagree	*	*	1	1	1	2
Neither agree or disagree	5	4	5	4	5	3
Agree	31	33	36	33	32	31
Strongly agree	63	63	58	62	63	64
Base (unweighted)	152	386	217	755	105	306
I am always finding reasons to praise him/her						
Strongly disagree	-	-	1	*	-	-
Disagree	3	4	6	4	4	7
Neither agree or disagree	22	22	22	22	23	20
Agree	46	48	54	49	48	50
Strongly agree	29	26	18	24	25	22
Base (unweighted)	152	383	215	750	105	304
Warmth and involvement summary						
Average or above average	50	47	40	46	43	44
Below average	50	53	60	54	57	56
Base (unweighted)	152	386	218	756	105	307

Base: parents in On Track areas and Booster sample who answered the self-completion questions. ^{**} denotes less than 0.5%.

Answers to the hostility and criticism statements were more mixed. Over a quarter of parents (27%) agreed that they often felt angry with their child while 41% disagreed (32% chose the 'neither agree nor disagree option). Around a fifth (21%) of parents agreed that they found themselves constantly criticising, nagging or telling the child off while half disagreed (29% chose the 'neither agree nor disagree option).

Each set of statements were scored¹¹ and the values added together to construct overall warmth and hostility scores, after which parents were classified into groups as follows:

- Average or above average warmth and involvement (at or above the mean for the sample as a whole; 46% of parents in On Track areas); Below average warmth and involvement (below the mean; 54% of parents in On Track areas). (See Table 3.35).

¹¹ The scores for the statements were: agree strongly 5, agree 4, neither agree nor disagree 3, disagree 2 and disagree strongly 1.

- Average or below average hostility and criticism (at or below the mean for the sample as a whole; 67% of parents in On Track areas); Above average hostility and criticism (above the mean; 33% of parents in On Track areas)¹². (See Table 3.36).

Table 3.36 Parental hostility and criticism

	OT area sample				OT user sample	Booster sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I often feel angry with him/her						
Strongly disagree	8	8	8	8	6	7
Disagree	32	34	32	33	33	31
Neither agree or disagree	31	33	31	32	32	27
Agree	22	19	22	21	19	27
Strongly agree	6	5	7	6	9	8
Base (unweighted)	152	383	215	750	105	303
I find I am constantly criticising, nagging or telling him/her off						
Strongly disagree	9	9	6	8	8	8
Disagree	46	43	39	42	39	32
Neither agree or disagree	29	29	30	29	29	27
Agree	15	15	17	16	17	25
Strongly agree	1	4	8	5	7	8
Base (unweighted)	149	384	214	747	105	302
Hostility and criticism summary						
Average or below average	67	66	68	67	68	71
Above average	33	34	32	33	32	30
Base (unweighted)	152	385	216	753	105	305

Base: parents in On Track areas and Booster sample who answered the self-completion questions

Parents who were classified as having below average warmth and involvement were significantly more likely to have high scores on the Current Problems Questionnaire or Malaise Inventory. The incidence of below average warmth and above average hostility and criticism scores did not differ significantly according to the age of child and the levels for users of On Track services were comparable with those for non-users.

3.6.4 Discipline

Parents' disciplinary practices with their children are regarded as potential risk factors for anti-social behaviour and offending when discipline is harsh or inconsistent. The questionnaire sought to identify which types of disciplinary strategy parents followed with their children by presenting a series of nine possible responses and checking how often the parent had used them in the last year. The list of statements was a shortened version of the Misbehaviour Response Scale (Creighton et al 2003) which

¹² The distribution of the hostility summary measure was heavily clumped around a few values, and it was not possible to split the sample evenly based on this measure.

comprises 24 statements in all.¹³ The MRS was in turn adapted from the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus et al 1998).

The statements are presented on Table 3.37 in groups according to how aggressive the behaviour was. Net figures are presented for the following five groups:

- Non-aggressive responses (three statements): used by 96% of parents in On Track areas
- Psychologically aggressive responses (two statements): used by 87% of parents
- Minor physical responses (two statements): used by 41% of parents
- Severe physical responses (two statements): used by 9% of parents

Overall, 42% of parents in On Track areas reported using any of the four physical responses to misbehaviour that were presented to them. This proportion was significantly higher for parents of younger children (63% for those aged five or six) than for parents of older children (23% of those at secondary school) and this partly explains the apparently higher proportions of physical responses in families that used On Track services.

¹³ A fuller list of statements was used in the 'Parents, Children and Discipline' study, funded by the ESRC. See Ghate et al (forthcoming)

Table 3.37 Disciplinary strategies followed in the last year

	OT area sample				OT user sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	
Discussed the issue calmly/explained why the behaviour was wrong	92	91	85	90	94
Made him/her take 'time out' to think about his/her behaviour	84	80	77	80	83
'Grounded' or stopped him/her going out, or took away treats (e.g. sweets. TV)	75	80	72	77	79
Any non-aggressive response to misbehaviour	97	96	94	96	98
Shouted, yelled or swore at him/her	77	80	79	79	86
Threatened to smack him/her (but did not actually do it)	67	61	47	58	73
Any psychologically aggressive response to misbehaviour	88	89	84	87	92
Smacked or slapped him/her on hands, arms or legs	41	31	19	29	38
Smacked his/her bottom	46	33	11	29	35
Any minor physical response to misbehaviour	63	44	22	41	52
Smacked or slapped him/her on face, head or ears	6	7	7	7	12
Hit him/her with something like a slipper, belt hairbrush or other hard object	2	3	4	3	4
Any severe physical aggressive response to behaviour	7	9	9	9	14
Any physical response to misbehaviour	63	45	23	42	55
Base (unweighted)	152	386	218	756	105

Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions
 (Note: don't know answers have been kept in the base as respondents used this option selectively.
 Therefore, this has been treated as a negative answer.)

Table 3.38 gives an overall comparison of disciplinary measures used by Booster sample parents compared to On Track users. Overall, figures for the two samples were close, with the vast majority responding non-physically when disciplining their child.

Table 3.38 Comparison of disciplinary strategies followed in the last year: OT user sample and Booster sample

	OT user sample	Booster sample
	%	%
Non-aggressive response to misbehaviour	98	95
Psychologically aggressive response to misbehaviour	92	87
Minor physical response to misbehaviour	52	48
Severe physical aggressive response to behaviour	14	12
Base (unweighted)	105	306

Base: parent in On Track areas and Booster sample who answered the self-completion questions. (Note: don't know answers have been kept in the base as respondents used this option selectively. Therefore, this has been treated as a negative answer.)

3.7 The child's relationships, Strengths and Difficulties

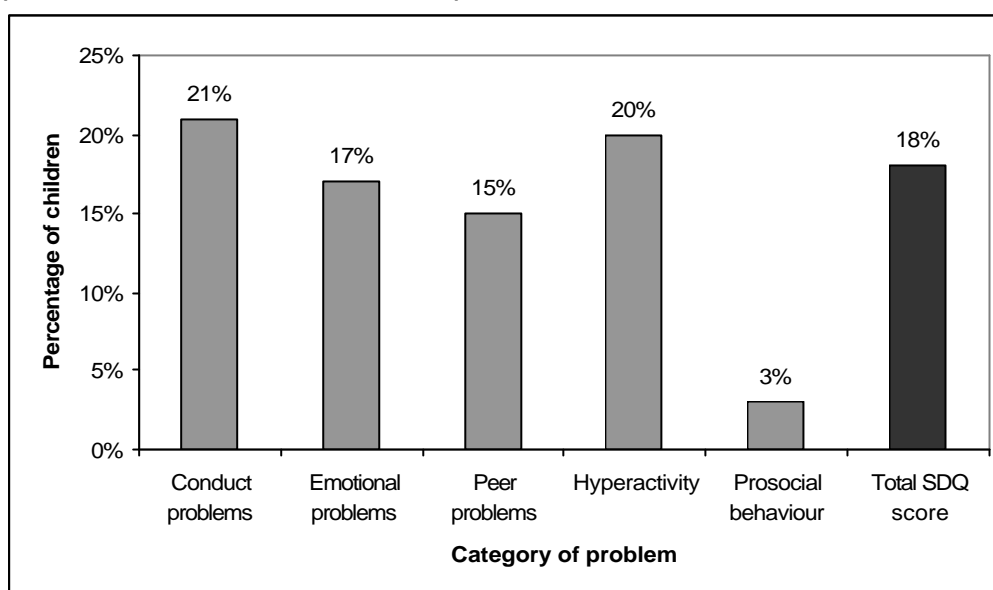
This section looks at the child's score on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, as reported by the interviewed parents, and at the child's perception of their relationships with their parents, siblings and peers.

3.7.1 Strengths and Difficulties (parental assessment)

In order to collect information about children's behavioural, emotional or relationship difficulties, the parent interview incorporated the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), a standardised instrument that is designed to detect these sorts of problems in children aged between four and 15 (Goodman 1997). The SDQ comprises 25 questions with five questions for each of the following categories: hyperactivity, emotional symptoms, conduct problems, peer problems and prosocial behaviour. Each question had three possible answers which were assigned different scores (for example a score of 2 for 'certainly true', 1 for 'somewhat true' and 0 for 'not true') which contributed to total scores for each category of problem. A Total Difficulties Score can be constructed by summing the four category scores of hyperactivity, emotional symptoms, conduct problems and peer problems (i.e. prosocial behaviour is excluded from the Total SDQ Score). For each category and the Total SDQ score, children can be classified as normal, borderline or abnormal according to their score, based on comparisons with normal data. An 'abnormal' score generally indicates levels of behavioural and emotional problems that would be judged to be of concern by a clinician.

Figure 3.11 summarises the SDQ results by showing the proportion of children in On Track areas who were classified as abnormal based on their parents' answers; Table 3.39 shows the full results.

Figure 3.11 Abnormal scores on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Parent's assessments of their child)



Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions (755)

The findings indicate that children in On Track areas had above average incidence of behavioural, emotional or relationship difficulties. This is illustrated by Table 3.40 which compares the results with those from a general population sample, the Health Survey for England 2002 (Sproston and Primates et al 2003). The higher result for On Track areas is to be expected as the HSE found that SDQ scores were significantly higher in areas of high deprivation and in families where the head of household had a semi-routine or routine manual occupation, and where income was lower. Similar relationships were observed within the sample for On Track areas as children with abnormal SDQ scores were more likely to be located in families where parents did not work or had low qualification levels. In addition, parents who reported abnormal SDQ scores for their children were more likely to have high scores on the Current Problems Questionnaire themselves.

The SDQ scores provide some evidence that On Track services are reaching children with above average levels of behavioural, emotional or relationship difficulties. In total, 27% of children in families using On Track services had high SDQ scores, a significantly higher level than that for non-users. In particular, abnormal hyperactivity scores were significantly more common among children in families that used On Track, with one-in-three classified in this way compared with one-in-five for the On Track Area sample as a whole.

The Booster sample had higher proportions of children with abnormal scores on all these measures compared to the main sample of On Track users. The discrepancy between the samples was particularly marked for conduct and peer problems.

Table 3.39 Scores on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Parent's assessments of their child)

	OT area sample				OT user sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All	
Conduct problems sub-scale scores	%	%	%	%	%
Normal	61	67	69	66	55
Borderline	13	14	13	13	17
Abnormal	27	20	18	21	29
Base (unweighted)	151	385	217	753	104
Emotional symptoms sub-scale scores	%	%	%	%	%
Normal	77	72	67	72	69
Borderline	6	12	12	11	6
Abnormal	16	15	21	17	25
Base (unweighted)	151	385	217	753	103
Peer problems sub-scale scores	%	%	%	%	%
Normal	76	71	73	73	67
Borderline	12	13	10	12	14
Abnormal	12	16	17	15	19
Base (unweighted)	152	385	217	754	104
Hyperactivity sub-scale scores	%	%	%	%	%
Normal	68	73	76	73	62
Borderline	7	7	8	7	5
Abnormal	25	20	16	20	32
Base (unweighted)	149	384	215	748	103
Prosocial sub-scale scores	%	%	%	%	%
Normal	94	92	91	92	90
Borderline	3	6	5	5	5
Abnormal	3	3	4	3	6
Base (unweighted)	152	384	216	752	104
Total difficulties score	%	%	%	%	%
Normal	68	72	71	71	62
Borderline	15	10	12	12	11
Abnormal	18	18	17	18	27
Base (unweighted)	152	385	218	755	104

Base: parents in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions

Table 3.40 Proportions with abnormal scores on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Parent's assessments of their child)

Category with abnormal scores	On Track Survey			HSE 2002	
	OT Area sample	OT user sample	Booster sample	Males 4-15	Females 4-15
	%	%	%	%	%
Conduct problems	21	29	42	15	12
Emotional problems	17	25	33	10	12
Peer problems	15	19	34	14	11
Hyperactivity	20	32	35	18	9
Prosocial behaviour	3	6	10	5	3
Total difficulties score	18	27	39	12	8
Base (unweighted)	755	104	299	n.s.	n.s.

Base: parents in On Track areas and Booster sample who answered the self-completion questions.

3.7.2 Self-esteem (child's assessment)

Low self-esteem has been considered by some authors to be a potential risk factor for anti-social behaviour and offending behaviour. In order to explore this dimension, secondary school children were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about themselves¹⁴. The findings indicate low self-esteem among a minority of children. In response to three positive statements, 73% agreed that they liked themselves (17% responded that they were not sure, 4% disagreed and 6% did not answer; Table 3.41). However, slightly higher proportions of children agreed that they were able to do things well or that they had a number of good qualities (85% and 83% respectively). In response to some negative statements, between a quarter and a half of children agreed with statements to the effect that they often wished they were someone else, they had a low opinion of themselves and there were a lot of things about themselves, that they would like to change.

Table 3.41 Secondary school children's self-esteem (attitude statements)

	'I like myself'	'I am able to do things well'	'I feel I have a number of good qualities'	'I often wish I was someone else'	'I have a low opinion of myself'	'Lots of things about myself I would like to change'
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Agree	73	85	83	30	29	47
Not sure	17	12	14	24	26	16
Disagree	4	2	2	44	39	31
Not stated	6	1	2	2	6	6
Base (unweighted)	196	196	196	196	196	196

Base: secondary school children in On Track areas who answered the self-completion questions.

¹⁴ The six statements were taken from the Edinburgh Survey of Youth Transitions and Crime (Smith et al 2001). These had in turn been adapted from the ten-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg 1965).

The questions about self-esteem were not judged to be suitable for younger children. A simpler question was substituted which sought to establish how happy the children felt and how happy they felt about their family. A numerical scale of 1 (meaning extremely happy) to 5 (meaning extremely unhappy) was illustrated by 'smiley face' symbols. Children's answers to both questions were predominantly 'happy' with the majority of children choosing the happiest option (Table 3.42). Only 1% of children indicated that they were unhappy overall while 3% indicated that they felt unhappy about their family. The answers given by children in families that used On Track services were comparable with those given by other children.

Table 3.42 Primary school children's feelings of happiness

	How happy are you?		How do you feel about your family?	
	OT area sample Primary	OT user Sample Primary	OT area sample Primary	OT user Sample Primary
	%	%	%	%
1 (Extremely happy)	53	54	56	63
2	41	37	33	24
3	4	10	6	7
4	1	-	2	-
5 (Extremely unhappy)	-	-	1	6
Not stated	1	-	1	-
Base (unweighted)	347	58	347	58

Base: interviewed primary school children in On Track areas

3.7.3 Relationships with parents and carers

Having supportive adults in their social networks is considered a potential protective factor against anti-social behaviour and offending by children. Children were therefore questioned about their relationships with their parents and other carers.

Firstly, children were asked which of three groups of adults they would talk to if they were worried about something such as getting ill, schoolwork, being bullied or having arguments with friends (Table 3.43). Overall, 93% of primary school children and 78% of secondary school children reported having at least one supportive adult whom they could talk to about this sort of matter. Parents were by far the most common choice of adult to speak to and were mentioned by 87% of primary school children and 69% of secondary school children. Teachers were mentioned by more than three quarters of those attending primary school and by a little under half of those at secondary school. Other adults were also commonly mentioned by children of both ages.

Primary school children whose families used On Track services gave similar answers at this question to those in non-user families.

Booster sample children did not seem particularly isolated from adults.

Table 3.43 Which adults child would talk to if worried about something

	OT area sample		OT user Sample Primary	Booster sample	
	Primary	Sec'dary		Primary	Sec'dary
	%	%	%	%	%
Child's parents	87	69	83	85	61
Teacher or adult at school	77	44	65	77	48
Another adult	46	38	39	52	57
Any supportive adult	93	78	86	93	80
Base (unweighted)	344	196	58	116	46

Base: primary and secondary school children in On Track areas and Booster sample who answered the self-completion questions. Base includes don't know/no answer.

Questions were also asked to establish how frequently children spoke to their main parent about two aspects of their everyday lives: what they did at school and their friends (Table 3.44). About half of children in each age group reported that they 'often' spoke to their parent about school, a further third said that they did this 'sometimes' and about 15% said that they did not do this very often. Children gave very similar answers at the question about talking to the parent about their friends. In the OT area sample, the majority (59%) of children in each age group said that they talked to their parents about both subjects often while about 10% in each age group said that they talked about both of them 'not very often'.

Table 3.44 How often children talk with their main parent about school or their friends

	OT area sample		OT user Sample Primary	Booster sample	
	Primary	Sec'dary		Primary	Sec'dary
	%	%	%	%	%
Talking about school					
Often	48	52	61	60	46
Sometimes	31	31	26	18	32
Not very often	15	16	9	18	20
Not stated	6	2	4	5	2
Talking about friends					
Often	40	42	42	46	37
Sometimes	34	37	31	37	44
Not very often	15	16	15	11	17
Not stated	12	5	12	6	2
Talking about school or friends					
Talk about either often	59	59	64	70	56
Talk about neither often but either sometimes	29	30	26	24	29
Talk about neither very often	8	9	7	4	12
Not stated	4	2	4	2	2
Base (unweighted)	309	189	50	84	41

Base: primary and secondary school children in On Track areas and Booster sample who answered self-completion by themselves.

Again, On Track user and Booster sample children did not seem particularly isolated from adults or unwilling to talk about their daily life.

When asked if they had ever gone on their own to visit a drop-in centre or play-worker to talk over any problems they had, 4% of primary school children (5% of those in families that used On Track services) and 3% of secondary school children said that they had.

Table 3.45 Whether parents knows who child's friends are

	OT area sample		OT user Sample
	Primary	Sec'dary	Primary
	%	%	%
None of them	2	3	-
Some of them	27	34	23
Most or all of them	70	61	77
Not stated	1	1	-
Base (unweighted)	347	199	58

Base: interviewed primary and secondary school children in On Track areas

As a further measure of the extent of communication with their parents, children in both age groups were asked what proportion of their friends were known by their parents. The majority of children (70% of those in primary schools and 61% of those in secondary schools) said that their parents knew all of their friends (Table 3.45). Most other children said that they knew some of their friends. Only between two and 3% of children said that their parents knew none of their friends.

Children were also asked how often they were praised ('told that you have done something well') or told off by their main parent. Although there were some differences in the language used in the questionnaires for different age groups, broad comparisons of the perceived frequency of praising and blaming are presented in Table 3.46 below. A little over half of the children in each age group perceived that they were frequently praised while fewer than a quarter perceived that they were frequently blamed. Indeed, roughly half of children reported that they were frequently praised and infrequently blamed while only about 10% reported that they experienced infrequent praise combined with frequent telling off. The experiences of children in families using On Track services were no different from those of children in non-user families in this respect.

Table 3.46 Frequency of admonition and praise from parents

	OT area sample		OT user
	Primary	Sec'dary	Sample Primary
	%	%	%
Frequency PRAISED by parents			
Frequently #	55	62	56
Infrequently ##	35	36	33
Not stated	10	2	11
Frequency TOLD OFF by parents			
Frequently #	20	19	23
Infrequently ##	76	80	73
Not stated	5	1	4
Frequent praise & infrequent telling off	46	53	44
Frequent praise & frequent telling off	9	8	12
Infrequent praise & infrequent telling off	26	26	27
Infrequent praise & frequent telling off	9	10	7
Not stated	11	3	11
Base (unweighted)	310	189	51

Base: primary and secondary school children in On Track areas who answered self-completion by themselves.

The 'Frequently' category includes Primary school children who answered 'often' and Secondary school children who answered 'all of the time' or 'most of the time'.

The 'Infrequently' category includes Primary school children who answered 'sometimes' or 'not very often' and Secondary school children who answered 'sometimes', 'rarely' or 'never'.

3.7.4 Relationships with siblings and peers

The previous section looked at whether children had a supportive adult that they could talk to if they were worried about something such as getting ill, schoolwork, being bullied or having arguments with friends and showed that 93% of primary school children and 78% of secondary school children said that they had. Table 3.47 shows the answers given to the same question when it was asked about siblings and peers. More than a quarter of children in each age group said that they had a brother or sister that they could talk to in this way. This represented at least half of those who had a sibling. Two thirds or more of children said that they had a friend of their own age whom they could talk to if they were worried.

Table 3.47 Which peers (siblings/friends) would talk to if worried about something

	OT area sample		OT user	Booster sample	
	Primary	Sec'dary	Sample Primary	Primary	Sec'dary
	%	%	%	%	%
A brother or sister	29	27	20	16	16
A friend of own age?	66	71	74	54	50
Base (unweighted)	344	196	58	116	46

Base: primary and secondary school children in On Track areas and Booster sample who answered self-completion questions. Base includes don't know/no answer. Base for sibling includes 'no brother/sister'.

In contrast to the findings for adults, Booster sample children did seem to be relatively disadvantaged when it came to contact with other children, with only around half saying they could talk to a friend their own age if they were worried and 16% saying they could talk to a brother or sister.

Further questions established how many friends children felt they had and how many of these were regarded as close friends (Table 3.48). Children generally reported having a lot of friends. More than half of primary school children and two thirds of secondary school children selected the largest category of 'More than 10' friends. When asked about close friends, Primary school children most commonly said that they had one or two (51%) or between three and five (33%). Secondary school children claimed more close friends; between three and five was the most common answer and a quarter of children claimed to have a number.

A small proportion of children in each age group reported having few friends. Very few reported that they had none – fewer than 1% of primary school children and just 1% of secondary school children – but 7% of primary school children and 4% of secondary school children said that they had just one or two friends.

Primary school children in families that used On Track services did not appear to have any particular problems with peer relationships and the answers given by this group were comparable with those for children in non-user families.

Primary school children in the Booster sample also seemed fairly similar to the On Track areas sample. Secondary school aged children were noticeably different however in how many close friends they estimated they had, with nearly a quarter saying they had more than 10 close friends.

Table 3.48 Number of friends child has

	OT area sample		OT user	Booster sample	
	Primary	Sec'dary	Sample Primary	Primary	Sec'dary
	%	%	%	%	%
How many friends					
More than 10	54	67	50	54	64
Between 6 and 10	22	18	27	12	9
Between 3 and 5	15	10	15	25	13
One or two	7	4	7	8	13
None	*	1	-	-	-
Not stated	1	1	-	1	2
How many close friends					
More than 10	3	5	2	3	23
Between 6 and 10	4	19	6	4	15
Between 3 and 5	33	41	36	26	21
One or two	51	32	54	51	36
None	8	2	2	15	2
Not stated	1	1		1	2
Base (unweighted)	347	199	58	120	47

Base: interviewed primary and secondary school children in On Track areas and Booster sample. '*' denotes less than 0.5%.

A further question about visits to and from friends in the last seven days found that most children had gone to friends' homes or had friends round (Table 3.49). However, about a third of children in each age group reported having no visits from friends and the same proportion reported no visits to friends in the last week.

Once again, the answers given by primary school children in families that used On Track services were broadly similar to those of their peers.

Table 3.49 Visits from friends and to friends' houses

	OT area sample		OT user
	Primary	Sec'dary	Sample
	%	%	Primary
How many visits FROM friends			
Six days or everyday	14	10	18
Between 3 and 5 days	15	22	19
One or two days	36	36	36
No days	33	31	27
Not stated	1	1	-
How many visits TO friends			
Six days or everyday	14	12	14
Between 3 and 5 days	17	22	21
One or two days	32	35	32
No days	35	30	32
Not stated	1	1	-
Base (unweighted)	347	199	58

Base: interviewed primary and secondary school children in On Track areas

3.8 Bad behaviour, anti-social behaviour and offending

This section looks at various forms of bad or transgressive behaviour by the child that was reported in either the parent or child interviews. It begins by looking at forms of bad behaviour that are possible precursors to anti-social behaviour and offending such as getting into trouble, bullying and victimisation, and truancy. It then looks at the child's attitudes towards right and wrong and offending, and the presence of anti-social behaviour by peers. The section looks at evidence of anti-social behaviour or offending by the child, including involvement with the police and substance use.

3.8.1 Bad behaviour

Questions about bad behaviour were asked of secondary school children only. They were asked how often they got into trouble and most said that they only did so infrequently. Indeed, 40% said that they never got into trouble while 22% said that they did so less often than once a week (Table 3.50). A third of the children said that they got into trouble at least once a week, including 13% who said that they did so 'nearly every day'.

Table 3.50 Getting into trouble (secondary school children)

	OT area
	Sec'dary
	%
How often child gets into trouble	
Nearly everyday	13
About once a week	19
About once a month or less often	22
Never / almost never	40
Not stated	6
Base (unweighted)	196

Base: secondary school children in On Track areas who answered self-completion questions

Children were asked whether they saw themselves as a 'troublemaker' and whether they thought that others – their friends, other people their age, parents, teachers or other adults – saw them in this way. Only one-in six children (17%) said that they were regarded as a trouble maker and only 4% of these regarded themselves in this way (Table 3.51). It was usually parents, teachers and other adults who saw them this way rather than their peers.

Table 3.51 Whether perceived as a troublemaker (secondary school children)

	OT area
	Sec'dary
Perceived as a trouble maker	
Yes	17
No / not stated	83
Who perceives the child as a troublemaker?	
- the child him/herself	4
- friends	4
- other people my age	2
- parents	8
- teachers	8
- other adults	5
Base (unweighted)	196

Base: secondary school children in On Track areas who answered self-completion questions

3.8.2 Truancy and exclusions from school

Both primary and secondary school children were asked questions about whether the child had ever played truant for a whole day. The questions used various slang terms to describe this act (such as 'bunking off', 'skipping or skiving') and for secondary school children it was positioned in a self-completion format to enhance the confidentiality of the answer. 6% of primary school children and 10% of secondary school children said that they had played truant (Table 3.52). The level of truancy among primary school children in families that used On Track services was the same as for the rest of the sample.

On the basis of self-reported admissions of truancy, Booster sample children were relatively similar to the On Track Area and User samples.

Table 3.52 Truancy from school (self-reported)

	OT area sample		OT user Sample	Booster sample	
	Primary	Sec'dary	Primary	Primary	Sec'dary
	%	%	%	%	%
Ever played truant (for whole day)	6	10	6	8	9
Base (unweighted)	347	196	58	120	46

Base: interviewed primary school children and secondary school children answering self-completion questions in On Track areas and Booster sample.

Information about whether the child had been excluded in the previous 12 months was collected in the parent interview. Overall, 4% of children had been excluded, including 4% of those in primary schools and 6% of those in secondary schools (Table 3.53). Fewer than 1% of children had been permanently excluded.

The proportion of children in families that used On Track services that had been excluded was higher, at 9%.

Table 3.53 Child's exclusions from school in the last 12 months

	OT area sample				OT user sample	Booster sample
	Aged 5/6	Primary	Sec'dary	All		
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Child temporarily excluded	4	4	6	4	9	16
Child permanently excluded	-	-	1	*	1	2
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	780	107	306

Base: parents in On Track areas and Booster sample. ** denotes less than 0.5%.

A relatively high proportion of Booster sample had been excluded in some way in the last 12 months. Sixteen per cent had been temporarily excluded, while 2% had been permanently excluded.

National figures for the year 2003/04 are available. These stated that 0.13% of pupils had been permanently excluded, and 2.63% had a fixed period exclusion. The On Track Area sample does not appear to be significantly different from these national averages.

3.8.3 Victimization and bullying

Questionnaires for both ages of child included a series of questions about bullying. The secondary school questions were slightly more extensive and were positioned in a self-completion format to enhance their confidentiality.

The question about victimisation asked '*Have you ever been picked on or bullied by other pupils at your school? By bullied we mean things like when other pupils say*

mean or hurtful things to you, ignore you, hit, kick, push or shove you around, take your things or tell lies about you.' The majority of primary school children (61%) said that they had been bullied (Table 3.54). Far fewer secondary school children said this – just 34% – possibly because they interpreted the question differently or because they were only thinking of their recent experiences. Certainly, only a small number of secondary school children who did report bullying said that it happened frequently – 6% said that it happened at least once a week, including 4% who said that it happened several times a week.

In primary schools in On Track areas the most common forms of bullying were being called names (mentioned by 33% of children) and being attacked, hit, kicked or chased (29%). In secondary schools name-calling and other psychological forms of bullying were more common than physical mistreatment.

The question about bullying had a shorter reference period than those for victimisation. Children were asked whether they had picked on or bullied other pupils in the last term. Ten per cent of primary school pupils and 15% of secondary school children said that they had (although 12% out of the 15% who reported bullying said that they had done so 'only once or twice').

Table 3.54 **Victimisation and bullying**

	OT Area		OT user	Booster sample	
	Primary	Sec'dary	Primary	Primary	Sec'dary
	%	%	%		
Ever been bullied	61	34	71	61	41
- several times a week	-	4	-	-	11
- about once a week	-	2	-	-	4
- less often than weekly but more than once or twice	-	5	-	-	2
- once or twice	-	13	-	-	11
- not in last term	-	77	-	-	72
Called nasty names about colour or race	11	4	20	13	13
Called nasty names in other ways	33	18	40	34	24
Attacked (e.g. hit, kicked or chased)	29	10	27	38	15
Threatened	13	11	24	19	22
No-one would talk to you	9	6	10	13	13
Other pupils spread nasty stories about you	16	10	21	13	17
Someone took away something that belonged to you	11	8	23	13	11
Bullied in another way	NA	7	NA	NA	9
Whether bullied other pupils					
Yes	10	15	13	18	24
No	89	81	87	78	70
Not stated	1	-	4	3	7
Base (unweighted)	347	196	58	120	46

Base: interviewed primary school children and secondary school children answering self-completion questions in On Track areas and Booster sample.

A higher proportion of primary school children amongst On Track users reported being bullied (71%), but the difference was not significant. Levels of self-reported bullying were similar for On Track users and non-users.

Primary school children in the Booster sample reported similar levels of being bullied, while the proportion of secondary school children saying they were bullied was a little higher. Higher proportions of both age groups admitted to bullying other children.

3.8.4 Views on right and wrong, including anti-social behaviour

Primary and secondary school children were presented with a series of misdemeanors and asked to judge whether they were 'wrong' (for primary respondents) or how 'serious' they were (for secondary respondents)¹⁵. Different language was used for the different age groups because some of the desired concepts and language were felt to be too complicated for younger respondents. The questions were provided in self-completion sections of the respective interviews so as to maximise their confidentiality. The answers have been ranked in descending order of mentioned on Tables 3.55 (primary) and 3.56 (secondary) so as to highlight which misdemeanors were considered to be the worst. Both tables show the proportions of children rating an offence as 'very' wrong or serious, as well as the broader category of 'very' or 'quite' wrong or serious.

Table 3.55 Primary school children's views on right and wrong

	OT Area	OT user
	Very wrong	Very/ quite wrong
	%	%
Taking something from a shop without paying	90	94
Writing or spraying paint on someone's things	81	96
Breaking someone's things on purpose	81	94
Hitting punching or kicking someone to injure	81	93
Missing school when you should be there	73	92
Being noisy/rude in public so people complain	65	96
Base (unweighted)	347	58

Base: primary school children in On Track areas who answered self-completion questions

Primary school children characterized most of the forms of misdemeanor presented to them as 'very wrong'. This answer was most frequently given for stealing from a shop ('taking something from a shop without paying from it') which 90% characterized as 'very wrong'. The lowest ranked of these misdemeanors were being 'noisy or rude in a

¹⁵ These misdemeanours were a sub-set of those used in the questions about the involvement of children and their peers in anti-social behaviour – see section 2.9.5.

public place so that people complained or you got into trouble'. This form of anti-social behaviour was considered wrong by 93% of primary school children but only 65% regarded it as 'very wrong'. The answers given to these questions by children in families that used On Track services were broadly comparable with those for their peers in non-user families.

Stealing was also the misdemeanor that secondary school children in On Track areas most commonly considered to be 'very serious' (Table 3.56). Breaking into a house to steal was judged to be 'very serious' by 85% of children while stealing a car or joyriding was so judged by 84%. Perhaps surprisingly, these children were more tolerant to stealing from a shop which only 62% judged to be 'very serious' (although 89% judged it to be 'very' or 'quite' serious, so only 11% did not regard it as a serious offence).

Anti-social behaviour in the form of being 'noisy or rude in a public place so that people complained or you got into trouble' was again ranked lowest of the list of misdemeanors and secondary school children appeared to be more accepting of this behaviour than primary school children, with under a third (30%) judging it to be 'very serious' and nearly a quarter (24%) considering it to be not serious at all. Indeed, several of these misdemeanors were tolerated by quite sizeable minorities of children. For example, one-in-six (17%) did not regard hitting, punching or kicking someone to injure them as serious and one-in-seven (14%) did not regard damaging someone's property on purpose as serious.

Table 3.56 Secondary school children's views on right and wrong

	OT Area		
	Very serious	Very/ quite serious	Not at all serious
	%	%	
Breaking into a house or building to steal	85	92	4
Stealing a car or riding in a stolen car	84	92	5
Setting fire to or trying to set fire to property	83	90	5
Breaking into a car or van to steal something	81	92	4
Using force, threats or a weapon to get money etc	77	93	4
Carrying a knife or weapon around	75	92	6
Stealing money or something from home or school	69	89	4
Taking something from a shop without paying	62	87	4
Hitting punching or kicking someone to injure	54	83	5
Damaging someone's property on purpose	53	86	6
Skipping or skiving school	51	79	5
Writing or spraying paint on someone's things	37	78	6
Being noisy/rude in public so people complain	30	76	5
Base (unweighted)	196	196	196

Base: secondary school children in On Track areas who answered self-completion questions

3.8.5 Anti-social behaviour and offending

Primary and secondary school children were asked about their own (and peers') anti-social behaviour and offending in different ways, based on questions used in the Edinburgh Survey of Youth Transitions and Crime (Smith et al 2001). Because of this, results cannot be combined and are shown separately for the two groups.

Table 3.57 Peers' and child's anti-social behaviour and offending – Secondary school children in On Track survey and 2003 Crime and Justice Survey (C&JS)

	On Track survey		C&JS
	Peers	Child	2003 Child#
	%	%	%
Asked of peers only:			
Skipped or skived school	39	NA	NA
Hit, kicked or punched someone on purpose to injure	25	NA	NA
Broken into car or van to steal something out of it	2	NA	NA
Sold drugs	1	NA	NA
Asked of both peers and child:			
Tried to avoid paying correct fare on bus or train	29	11	11
Taken something from a shop without paying for it	26	7	NA
Noisy or rude in public so people complained	24	7	11
Had a neighbour complain of behaviour or noise	17	14	18
Written or sprayed paint on something shouldn't have	14	9	5
Damaged someone else's property on purpose	11	2	NA
Taken money or something else from school	11	2	NA
Attacked, threatened, rude due to skin, race, religion	11	2	1
Carried a knife or weapon for protection in case needed	10	2	5
Set fire or tried to set fire to property or building	6	1	NA
Ridden in/on stolen car, van, motorbike, scooter	5	2	*
Taken money/something from home	5	5	NA
Broken into a house or building to steal something	3	-	NA
Used, force, threats, weapon to get money/something	1	*	NA
Base (unweighted)	189	189	707

Base: secondary school children in On Track areas who answered self-completion by themselves. ^(*) denotes less than 0.5%.

#Figures shown for 12-13 year olds. The wording of two of the items on the C&JS differed from the OT study. In the C&JS, 'graffiti' was defined as writing things or spraying paint 'on a building, fence, train or anywhere else you shouldn't have' compared to the shorter OT description of 'on something you shouldn't have'; the C&JS definition of 'joyriding' only included 'cars', whereas the OT description extended to cars, vans, motorbikes or scooters.

Secondary school children were presented with a list of 18 forms of anti-social behaviour or offence and asked whether any of their friends had ever done them (see first column of Table 3.57). This was intended to identify a group of children that were

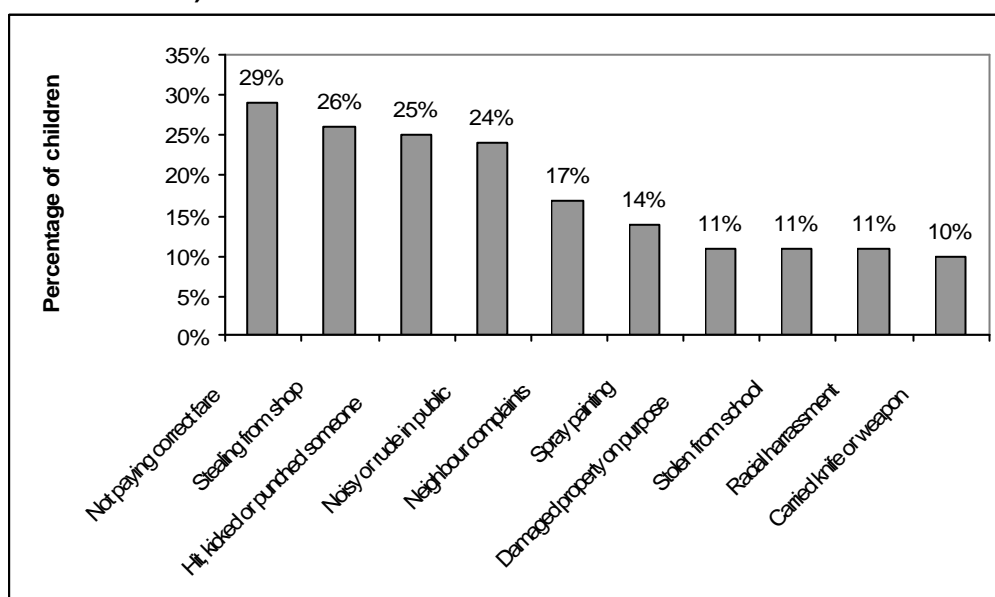
at high risk of involvement with this sort of activity. After the questions about peers, the children were asked a shorter list of questions about themselves (see second column of Table 3.57). The questions were included in a self-completion section of the interview.

A few of the most sensitive items, covering kicking or punching other people, stealing and selling drugs, were omitted from the child list because of concern that it was difficult to ensure absolute confidentiality with home interviews when parents were present. The question about truancy was omitted because the same issue was covered in a separate question. It is possible however that some types of behaviour may be under-reported, if childrens' parents were nearby during the interview.

A high proportion of children, 39%, said that their friends had played truant. This was the most common activity reported for their peers. By comparison, only 10% of children said that they had played truant themselves.

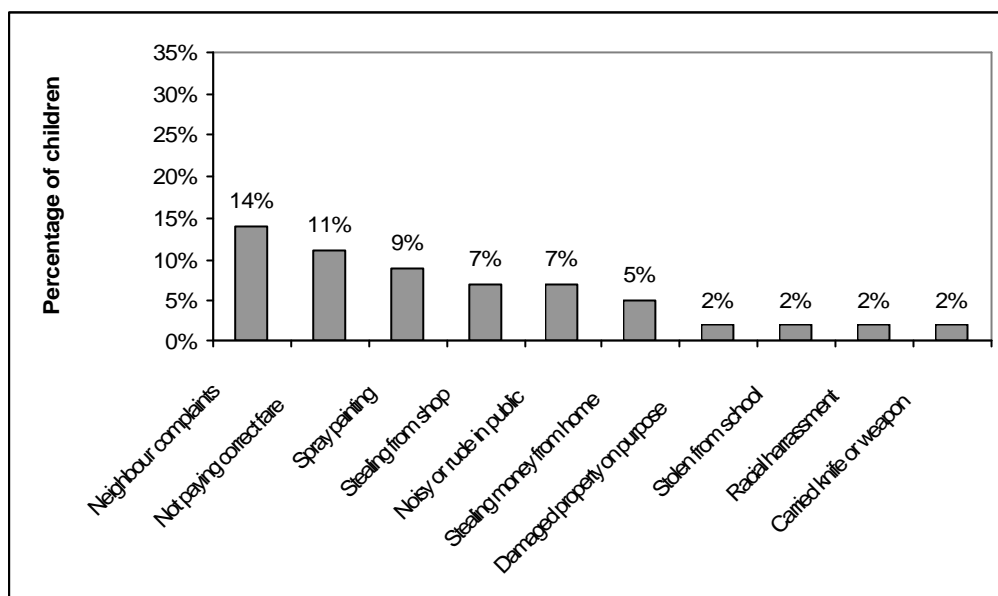
The other most common forms of anti-social behaviour that children reported that their friends were involved with are summarised on Figure 3.12. The most common form of offence by peers was avoiding paying fares, which was mentioned by 29% of children. A quarter of children said that any of their friends had kicked or punched anyone on purpose to injure them. Similar proportions of children said that a friend had stolen something from a shop or had been noisy or rude in a public place so that people complained. Causing neighbours to complain about their behaviour or noise and using spray paint were also commonly reported (17% and 14% respectively). Several other serious offences such as damaging property, stealing from school, racial harassment and carrying a weapon were reported as done by their peers by at least one-in-ten children. Lower incidence offences by peers that were mentioned by at least 5% of children were arson, joyriding and stealing from home. 2% of children said that a friend had broken into a car or van to steal something out of it and 1% said that a friend had sold drugs.

Figure 3.12 Peers' anti-social behaviour and offending (reported by Secondary school children)



Base: secondary school children in On Track areas who answered self-completion by themselves. (189)

Figure 3.13 Secondary school children's anti-social behaviour and offending (self-reported)



Base: secondary school children in On Track areas who answered self-completion by themselves. (189)

Children's reports about which of the shorter list of actions and offences they had done in the last year are summarised on Figure 3.13. The level of claims here were generally much lower than for their peers. Two categories of anti-social behaviour – having a neighbour complain and being noisy or rude in public, were among the most commonly reported actions (by 14% and 7% of children respectively). Not paying the correct fare on buses, spray painting and stealing from shops or from home were also fairly common (between five and 11%). The remaining categories, that included a number of quite serious offences, were only reported by one or 2% of children.

Some comparison is available with the 2003 Crime and Justice Survey (C&JS) items on anti-social behaviour (Hayward and Sharp, 2005).¹⁶ The age group differs slightly as only figures for 12-13 year olds are published (which might be expected to inflate the C&JS levels of anti-social behaviour in relation to the current study). In fact, the levels on behaviour on some measures were higher than those in the C&JS while for others the reverse was true: overall there was no significant difference between the children in the On Track Area sample and those in the C&JS sample.¹⁷

There were insufficient numbers of secondary school children in the On Track User sample to provide reliable estimates, so Table 3.58 draws a general comparison between secondary school children in the OT area and Booster sample. For simplicity, this is based on the five most common behaviours as cited by the main sample, namely making a neighbour complain, fare-dodging, spray painting, shoplifting and being noisy or rude in public. Self-reported levels were high in the Booster sample compared to the On Track Area sample: a fifth of secondary school

¹⁶ The C&JS 2003 also publishes figures for some of the categories in Table 3.57 which are not compared. No comparison is made for these as they derive from the C&JS screener questions on offending as opposed to anti-social behaviour. The terms used differ too much from the current study wording to make a reliable comparison.

¹⁷ For all but one of the items, the difference between the two samples was not significant. There was a significant difference for joyriding, but this may have been due to differences in wording between the two studies.

children said they had made a neighbour complain, spray painted something or been noisy or rude in public.

Table 3.58 Comparison of most common anti-social behaviour for secondary school children: OT area sample and Booster sample

	OT area sample	Booster sample
	%	%
Tried to avoid paying correct fare on bus or train	11	20
Taken something from a shop without paying for it	7	12
Noisy or rude in public so people complained	7	20
Had a neighbour complain of behaviour or noise	14	20
Written or sprayed paint on something shouldn't have	9	7
Base (unweighted)	189	41

Base: secondary school children in On Track areas and Booster sample who answered self-completion by themselves.

Primary school children were presented with a much shorter list that contained the items that were most appropriate to a younger age. The results for peers and the children themselves are summarised on Table 3.59 and Figure 3.14.

Table 3.59 Peers' and child's anti-social behaviour and offending – Primary school children

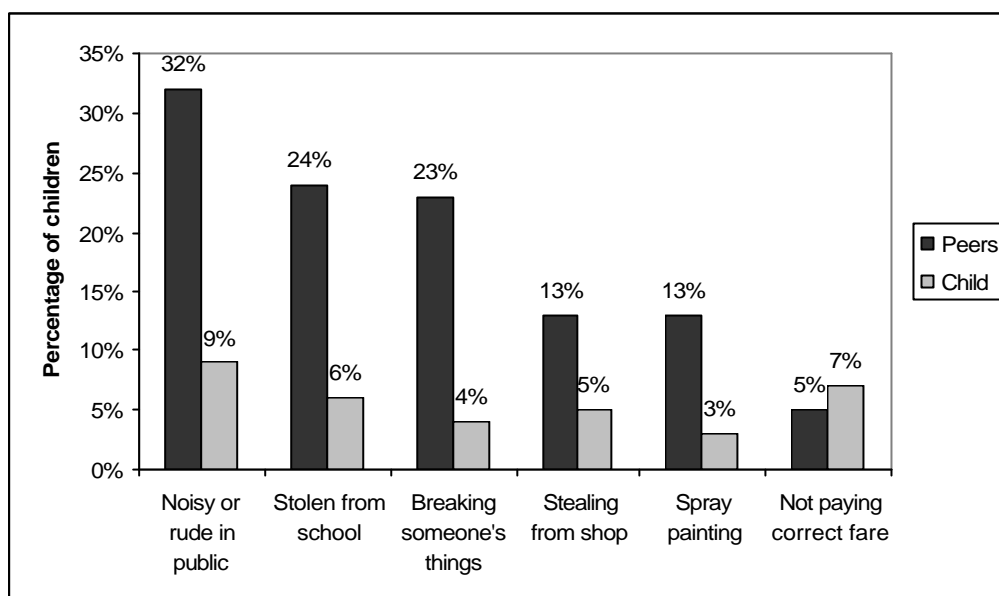
	Peers		Child	
	OT Area	OT user	OT Area	OT user
	%	%	%	%
Noisy or rude in public so people complained	32	28	9	13
Taken money or something else from school	24	31	6	8
Breaking someone's things on purpose	23	23	4	7
Taken something from a shop without paying for it	13	13	5	3
Written or sprayed paint on something shouldn't have	13	7	3	3
Tried to avoid paying correct fare on bus or train	5	7	6	3
Base (unweighted)	310	51	310	51

Base: primary school children in On Track areas and Booster sample who answered self-completion by themselves.

About a third of these younger children said that their friends were ever noisy or rude in public so that people complained. Just under a quarter said that friends had stolen from school or had broken someone's things on purpose. Stealing from a shop and spray painting were reported less frequently (by 13%). Fewer than 10% of primary school children said that they had done any of these things themselves in the last year. The most commonly admitted form of misbehaviour on this list was being noisy

or rude in public so that people complained, which 9% of children said that they had done in the last year.

Figure 3.14 Primary school children’s reports of anti-social behaviour and offending for their peers and for themselves



Base: Primary school children in On Track areas who answered self-completion by themselves (310)

Levels of anti-social behaviour amongst primary school children were similar for families who used On Track services compared to those who did not.

Table 3.59 compares primary school children in the OT user and Booster samples on the basis of the three most commonly admitted anti-social behaviours. The equivalent Booster sample figures were at roughly similar levels for being noisy or rude in public and breaking someone’s things on purposes, though lower for stealing from school.

Table 3.59 Comparison of most common anti-social behaviour for primary school children: OT area sample and Booster sample

	OT user sample	Booster sample
	%	%
Noisy or rude in public so people complained	13	11
Taken money or something else from school	8	2
Breaking someone's things on purpose	7	6
Base (unweighted)	51	84

Base: primary school children in On Track and Booster areas who answered self-completion by themselves

3.8.6 Involvement with the police

One-in-five secondary school children in On Track areas had had some involvement with the police (Table 3.61). (There were insufficient numbers in the On Track User sample for reliable results on this measure.) For most this was a matter of being told

off or told to move on (18%) or being stopped and questioned (7%). Five per cent had been picked up by the police and 4% had been given a formal warning or charged.

Table 3.61 Involvement with the police - Secondary school children

	OT Area
	%
Any involvement with the police	20
- Been told off or told to move by a police officer	18
- Been stopped by a police officer and asked questions about something that you did	7
- Been picked up by the police and taken to your parents or taken to a local police station	5
- Been given a formal warning at a police station or charged with committing a crime	4
Base (unweighted)	189

Base: secondary school children in On Track areas who answered self-completion by themselves.

3.8.7 Substance use by child and peers

The self-completion section of the questionnaire for secondary school children included a few questions about smoking, drinking and drug use. Information was collected on friends' use of these substances and the child's own use. Due to their sensitivity, these questions were not asked in interviews with primary school children.

Table 3.62 shows what level of substance use among friends was reported by the children. The proportions shown are likely to slightly understate the true levels as cases where children gave no answer have been retained within the base, in order to present a consistent base for the three questions.

Forty per cent of children reported that a friend smoked at least once a week including 7% who claimed that most of their friends smoked (Table 3.62). The proportion claiming that any friends drank without their parents knowing was fairly similar, at 36%, and 7% said that most of their friends did this. One-in-five children reported that a friend had taken illegal drugs but only 4% said that most friends did this.

Table 3.62 Secondary school children's peer's substance use

	Smoke at least once a week	Drink alcohol without their parents knowing	Have ever taken illegal drugs
	%	%	%
Any friends	40	36	20
- most or all friends	7	7	4
- some friends	33	29	16
No friends	43	47	67
Not stated	16	16	13
Base (unweighted)	189	189	189

Base: secondary school children in On Track areas who answered self-completion by themselves.

Reported figures for children's substance use should be treated with some caution as, although a self-completion method was used to collect the data, children's parents were often close by when the interview was completed and it is likely that some substance users will have under-reported their use. Findings are therefore compared with published data for the 2002 Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Survey (Boreham et al 2003) in which data were collected at school, allowing greater confidentiality for children.

Children reported fairly moderate levels of smoking and drinking (Table 3.63). Only 5% said that they smoked at least once a week and 2% said that they drank alcohol at least once a week. A quarter said that they had ever smoked and nearly two thirds said that they had ever drunk alcohol.

Table 3.63 Secondary school children's smoking and drinking

Smoking	%	Drinking alcohol	%
At least once a week	5	At least once a week	2
Less than once a week	2	Less than once a week	10
Have tried but don't now	18	Have tried but don't now / only on special occasions	52
Never	71	Never	33
Not stated	5	Not stated	3
Base (unweighted)	189		189

Base: secondary school children in On Track areas who answered self-completion by themselves.

The consumption levels for smoking appear to be broadly comparable with those reported for children of similar age (based on figures for children aged 12, which was the median age of secondary school children interviewed in On Track areas) in the 2002 Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Survey. In that survey, 27% of 12 year old children reported that they had ever smoked and 2% were classified as regular

smokers. 2% of secondary school children reported that they drank at least once a week, which was a little lower than the figure of 6% in the Smoking, Drinking and Drug User Survey.

There was a larger discrepancy in levels of drug use between the surveys. Three per cent of secondary school children reported ever having taken any drugs. By comparison, in the 2002 Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Survey, 15% of 12 year olds were found to have ever taken drugs and 4% were found to have taken them in the past month.

3.9 Summary: risk and protective factors in On Track areas

3.9.1 What were the levels of risk and protective factors in On Track areas?

Parents living in On Track areas reported experiencing some severe environmental and personal difficulties:

- They observed high levels of environmental and social problems in their local area, including vandalism, property crime, drugs and joy riding.
- They reported a large number of current problems in their lives, especially money problems, problems with their relationship, problems with their accommodation and problems with their children.
- They were found (through the Malaise Inventory) to have worse mental and emotional health than the general population.
- Their children were found (through the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire administered to the parent) to have above average incidence of behavioural and emotional difficulties.
- Their children also had a higher incidence of longstanding illness than the national average.

Interviews with children revealed some problematic attitudes and behaviour in relation to anti-social behaviour:

- About a quarter of those of secondary school age did not regard 'being noisy or rude in a public place so that people complained or you got into trouble' as a 'serious' problem. One-in-six did not regard hitting, punching or kicking someone to injure them as serious. One-in-seven did not regard damaging someone's property as serious.
- Secondary school children also reported that they had perpetrated anti-social behaviour in the past year: 7% said that they had been noisy or rude in a public place so that people complained while 14% said that a neighbour had complained about their behaviour. There was no evidence however that levels of anti-social behaviour were higher than the national average.

- One-in-five secondary school children reported having had some involvement with the police such as being told to move on or being stopped and questioned.

3.9.2 Were On Track users different to all households in the On Track areas?

- On Track users did show greater need than non-users on a number of indicators.
- Parents who used On Track services reported a higher incidence of current problems in their lives, in particular problems to do with their children or money problems.
- Children in such families had greater behavioural, emotional or relationship difficulties. In particular, hyperactivity problems were more common.
- Many On Track services are school-based and may well target children based on how they behave at school. Children in families who used On Track services were more likely:
 - to have been excluded.
 - to be assessed as performing 'below average' at school by their parents.
 - for their parents to have had discussions about them with school staff because of problems such as behaviour, schoolwork or attendance.
- There was an interesting relationship with parental involvement at school. While parents in families who used On Track services had greater contact with school staff because of their child's problems, they were also more likely to report getting involved in activities at their child's school and to report feeling involved in their child's school life. This could be partly because the use of On Track activities in themselves created stronger links between families and schools.
- On some indicators – which may define target groups for some types of On Track service – there did not appear to be much difference between On Track service users and non-users. These included:
 - specific factors to do with the parents, including their physical and mental health, and levels of anti-social behaviour;
 - aspects of parenting including measures of warmth and hostility, levels of monitoring and supervision and degree of shared family activities;
 - self-reported truancy by the child, and special educational needs.
- On Track services operated in areas of high material and environmental deprivation and dealt with families that experienced high levels of personal difficulties. On some – but not all – indicators, On Track services did appear to have reached families where problems with the family or child specifically were greater.

3.9.3 How did the Booster sample compare with the main sample of On Track users?

- The type of lower throughput services that the Booster sample aimed to cover may also involve more intensive, targeted interventions, so we might expect the Booster sample to demonstrate a greater level of need. The results here show that, compared to the On Track User sample, the Booster sample did display a

greater level of need on some – but not all - indicators.

- The proportion of the Booster sample citing emotional and behavioural problems with children were higher, as were children's levels of limiting health conditions, special educational needs and exclusions. Self-reported anti-social behaviour was also higher for secondary school age children in the Booster sample. Parental involvement in education seemed to be lower, although the contrast in children's attitudes towards school was less clear. Booster sample children also seemed to be more isolated from their peers, although not necessarily from adults.
- However, with regard to the level of problems in the area, self-reported truancy and shared activities, the Booster sample did not show large differences from the main sample.

4 SERVICE USE BY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

4.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at parents' reports of which services for children and families they used and explores their and their child's views of them. The primary focus of this chapter is on the On Track Area and User samples, and how they compared with the Matched Area sample.

The services used by the Booster sample are not analysed in detail in this chapter, as they do not represent 'typical' usage of On Track services. The profile of their services was intended to be different from the main OT samples, as it picked up lower incidence (and possibly more intensive) On Track interventions. Fuller analysis of the services used by the Booster sample – concentrating on any changes in these services - will be conducted for the Wave Two report.

Measurement of service use was a particular challenge for the survey. We sought to identify the broad categories of services that families had used, so that we could see how patterns of service use in On Track areas differed from those in the Matched areas. We also sought to pinpoint which On Track services families had used so that the penetration of On Track services among the target population could be estimated. The next section explains the impact that these difficulties had upon the service use data.

4.2 The measurement of service use

Parents were asked about their or the selected child's use of services over the last 12 months. Respondents in On Track areas could answer about specific On Track services as well as generic service categories; those in Matched areas were only asked about the generic categories. Names and descriptions of the On Track services in each area were shown to respondents in On Track areas to prompt them for a fuller response. (A summary of the method of questioning is given in Chapter 1 of this report, with fuller detail given in Chapter 5 of the Technical and Methods Report.)

The showcards and questions used in the interview were the result of a considerable amount of development work. There were some difficulties with measuring service use, as some respondents found it difficult to identify which services they had used. Indeed, comparisons between the On Track service use recorded by the projects and that reported by respondents indicated some discrepancies. While some of this might have been due to inaccuracies in projects' records, there were likely to be implications for the study's measurement of service use:

- some services may have been forgotten or misidentified. It was found that detailed description of the services (including sometimes the names of key individuals who delivered them) could aid recognition and so the level of detail of these descriptions was increased for the main survey.
- A number of the services that were recalled had strong 'brand' names and it was hypothesised that services with clear identities were more likely to be recalled accurately.

- We also hypothesise that school-based services might have been less fully reported by parents since they may have had less personal involvement with them.
- In contrast, they would be less likely to fail to report more intensive services where they had more contact with service staff.

The Booster sample of recorded On Track service users derived from administrative records provides some evidence of possible measurement error. As it was selected directly from On Track project records – in theory – all respondents should have classed themselves as service users over the past year. However, a fifth of respondents in that sample did not report using an On Track service in the last year while 9% reported using no services for families and children. While some respondents may have been lapsed users, it is unlikely this can account for all the shortfall. On the other hand, if these figures are applied to the main sample, it does not suggest that under-reporting is so large as to invalidate the results.

Our conclusion is that our method of measuring service use was probably generally effective and would have been difficult to improve on within our interview methodology. The reader should note that some findings will have been affected by measurement error and this may have caused some net under-reporting of some categories of service.

4.3 Use of services

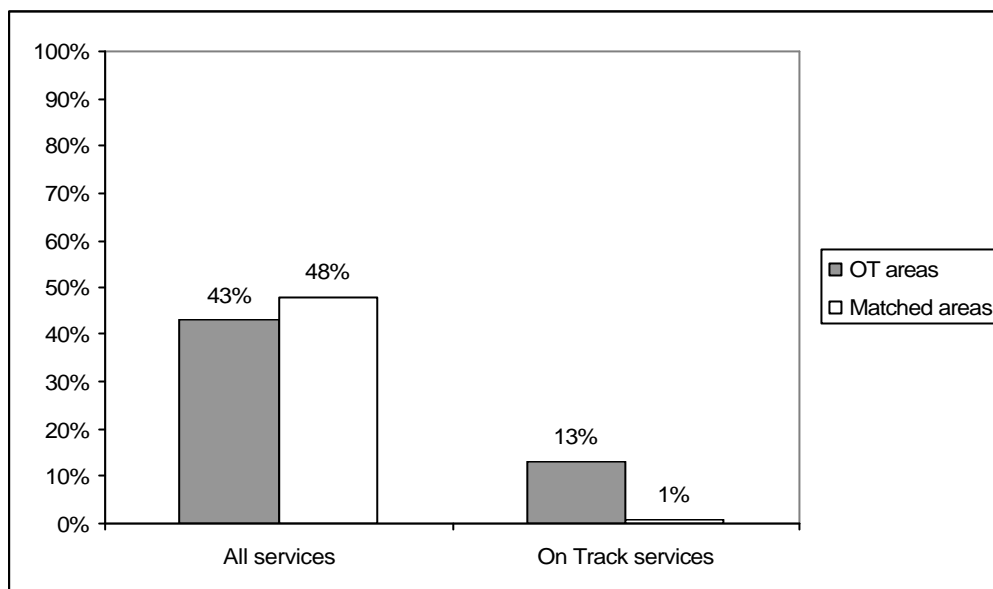
4.3.1 Overall incidence of service use

Forty-three per cent of families in On Track areas named at least one kind of service that they or their child had been involved with in the past year. The proportion in Matched areas was marginally higher, at 48%, though the difference was not significant. The overall picture is that the level of usage of services for families and children was comparable in On Track areas and Matched areas (Figure 4.2).

Thirteen per cent of parents in On Track areas reported that their family had used at least one of the individual On Track services in the past year. Thus, just under one-in-three of the families that reported using services for families and children, reported using an On Track service.

Respondents in Matched areas formed the control group in the study, and should not have received any On Track services. Figure 4.2 shows that this group did have some - though very limited - exposure to On Track services, with 1% saying that they had used On Track services. This could have been because they were located in the same local authorities and could have used services in a nearby area or that they may have misidentified a general service as being part of On Track, as these were often of similar types.

Figure 4.2 Incidence of service use in On Track and Matched areas



Base: parents in On Track areas (780) and Matched areas (736)

This level of usage of On Track services in On Track areas was lower than we had expected to find, though it should be noted that no reliable data about usage was available to guide the design of the study. For the reasons given in the previous section, we think that these figures may under-estimate service use somewhat, though probably not substantially. Because the incidence of self-reported On Track users was lower than expected, the potential to analyse the sample of On Track users is lower than had been hoped. Nonetheless, the sample of 109 users was adequate to be analysed as a separate sub-group.

The fact that service use in general was no higher in On Track areas compared to Matched areas was contrary to expectations since many On Track services would be additional to any existing service provision. Several hypotheses may be suggested to explain this finding though none is conclusive. Firstly, it is possible that use of services in On Track areas would have been significantly lower without the operation of On Track, due to particular difficulties in the area or the characteristics of families living there. However, this hypothesis is not supported by the findings presented elsewhere in this report which indicate that the characteristics of the areas and the families living in them were broadly comparable. Secondly, it is possible that other special programmes such as Children's Fund or SureStart operated in the Matched areas and increased the level of service use there. Thirdly, it may be that the operation of On Track involved substitution, reshaping or bringing together of existing services so that the nature of service provision was altered without the net level of service provision altering appreciably.¹⁸ Indeed, if more services were delivered through a single point of contact it would be possible that the number of services reported by parents could fall. Fourthly, it is likely that under-reporting would be a greater problem with school-based services, which are commonly part of On Track's work, because parents might have less contact with these than with other types of service.

¹⁸ The 'Tracking' Study report (Dinos, Tian and Solanki (forthcoming)) will enable us to comment more on these hypotheses.

4.3.2 Number of services used

Most service users had only used one or two services: a quarter of the sample in On Track areas had used one service overall, 11% had used two services and only 9% had used more than two (Table 4.1). A similar pattern was observed for service users in Matched areas.

The picture for On Track service users was similar, with 10% of respondents using one On Track service and only 3% using more than that.

Table 4.1 On Track and other service use

Number of services used	OT Area sample		Matched Area sample	
	On Track	All services#	On Track	All services#
	%	%	%	%
None	87	57	99	52
1	10	25	1	26
2	2	11	-	13
3	1	4	-	6
4	*	3	*	2
5	-	1	-	1
6	-	*	-	1
7	*	*	-	-
8	-	-	-	-
9	-	-	-	*
10	-	*	-	-
Base (unweighted)	780	780	736	736

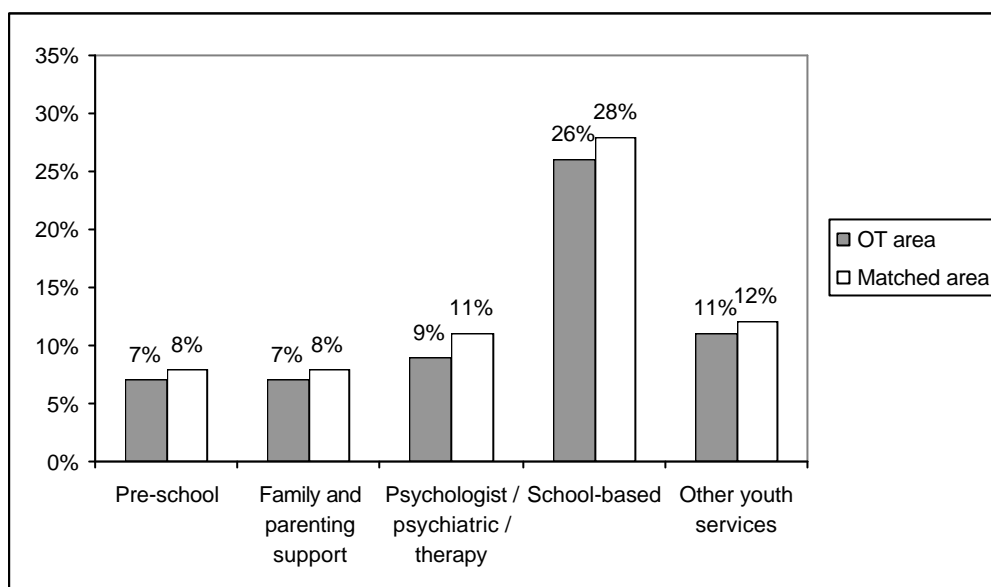
Base: services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services. '**' denotes less than 0.5%.

4.3.3 Types of services used

Services were classified under five broad headings: pre-school, family and parenting support, psychologists, psychiatric and therapy, school-based and other youth services.¹⁹ The proportion of parents in each type of area who reported using each category of service is summarised in Figure 4.3. The proportions were very similar in On Track and Matched areas for each category of service. Thus, there is no indication from this overview that the presence of On Track has altered the overall profile of services used. School-based services were most commonly reported, by a little over a quarter of parents in each type of area. The other four categories of service were each claimed by between 7% and 12% of parents.

¹⁹ These categories mirrored how services had been grouped in the questionnaire, which aimed to make it easier for respondents to recall their use.

Figure 4.3 Types of services used in On Track and Matched areas



Base: parents in On Track areas (780) and Matched areas (736)

A more detailed breakdown of the types of services used is given in Table 4.2. The key findings are summarised below:

- ‘After-school club, homework club or breakfast club’ was by far the most common category of service. One-in-six parents (17%) in On Track areas reported that a child was using one of these services and of these, nearly a third said this was an On Track service of this type. This was also the most commonly used service in Matched areas (21%).
- ‘Out of school activities for young people’, mentioned by 9% of respondents in each type of area, was the second most frequently used type of service. A third of respondents who used these services in On Track areas (3% out of 9%) reported using an On Track service of this type.
- The next most commonly-used services in On Track areas were ‘speech and language therapy’ (6%), ‘health visiting service’ (5%) and ‘youth club or youth service’ (5%). There were few On Track services in these categories.
- ‘Activities to help children’s and young people’s behaviour or their personal development’ were reported by 3% of parents in On Track areas (including 2% who reported using specific On Track services). This proportion was higher than in Matched areas (1%).
- The next most commonly claimed On Track services were family centres, family therapy services, parenting classes, parenting support, home-school partnerships and services to promote better health for children and families. On Track services in each of these categories were reported by approximately 1% of parents in On Track areas.

Table 4.2 Types of services used (part 1)

Type of service	OT Area		Matched areas
	OT services %##	All services# %##	All services %##
No service used	87	58	53
All pre-school services	*	7	8
- Antenatal classes	-	1	1
- Health visiting service	*	5	7
- Parent and baby group	-	1	*
- Parent and toddler group	-	2	3
- Playgroup or other pre-school activity	-	-	-
- Toy library	-	-	-
- Nursery, daycare or crèche for pre-school children	-	-	-
All family and parenting support	3	7	8
- Social Service Department or Social Work Service	*	3	4
- Family Centre, Parents' Centre, Children's Centre or Family Support Unit	1	2	1
- Family Therapy Service	1	1	1
- Services for parents of children with disabilities	*	1	1
- Befriending or home visiting service for parents	*	*	*
- Parenting classes, parent support group or parenting discussion group	1	1	2
- Parenting support (e.g. one to one support or counselling, telephone helpline)	1	1	1
All psychologist/psychiatric/therapy services	2	9	11
- Child psychologist or psychiatrist/ child guidance/ educational psychologist/ child psychotherapy/ other counselling for children	*	3	7
- Educational Welfare Officer or Educational Social Work Service	-	1	2
- Speech and language therapy	1	6	4
- Play therapy or other kind of activity to help children through play	*	1	1

Table 4.2 Types of services used (part 2)

Type of service	OT Area		Matched areas
	OT services %##	All services# %##	All services %##
All school-based services	10	26	28
- Home-school partnership (activities to improve links between parents, families and schools)	1	1	2
- After-school club, homework club or breakfast club	5	17	21
- Out of school activities for young people	3	9	9
- Activities to help children's and young people's behaviour, or their personal development	2	3	1
- Services providing extra help with school work or learning for children/ young people	*	1	2
- Personal advisor or mentor who advises or befriends young people	*	2	2
- School counselling service, youth advice service, other advice or support service for young people	*	1	1
All other youth services	2	11	12
- Youth club or Youth Service	-	5	5
- Drugs/alcohol advice or counselling service	*	1	*
- Services for young people in trouble	*	*	*
- Activities to help children with 'transitions' at school	*	2	1
- Services to promote better health for children or families	1	2	1
- Other types of services	*	1	2
Base (unweighted)	780	780	736

Base: parents in On Track and Matched areas

including OT services.

per cent of respondents. Adds up to more than 100% because of multiple responses

('*' denotes less than 0.5%.

4.3.4 The profile of services

The previous section has looked at levels of take-up by families of different types of service. We now look at the actual mix of services that were used, broken down by the broad 5-category grouping described above.

By looking at the characteristics of the services selected for in-depth questions we can see how the profile of On Track services differed from that of services as a whole in On Track and Matched areas (Table 4.3). The main difference was that school-based services were predominant for On Track. Sixty-two per cent of reported On Track services were of this type compared with 46% of services overall in On Track areas.

Family and parenting support services were also of greater importance among the On Track services where they represented 17% of services compared to only 10% of services as a whole in On Track areas. As we would expect given On Track's focus on children aged four and upwards, there were hardly any On Track services in the pre-school category which accounted for 16% of services overall.

The profiles of *all* services used in On Track and Matched areas according to this five-group classification were extremely similar. From this overview, there is no indication that the presence of On Track projects altered the mix of services used by families and children in On Track areas by comparison with their Matched areas.

Table 4.3 Profile of service type

	OT areas		Matched areas	Booster sample	
	OT services	All services#	All services	OT services	All services#
	%	%	%	%	%
Pre-school services	1	16	15	1	6
Family and parenting support	17	10	10	40	33
Psychiatric/therapeutic	9	12	15	11	15
School-based services	62	46	45	44	40
Other youth services	12	16	16	4	6
Base (unweighted)	136	554	640	345	574

Base: services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services

Table 4.3 also shows the profile of On Track services used by the Booster sample. As might be expected, the profile of On Track services used by the Booster sample differs somewhat from those used by the On Track User sample. The selection criteria for the Booster sample specifically excluded those respondents only receiving home-school partnerships, resulting in a lower observed proportion of school-based On Track services for the Booster sample.

4.3.5 How services were accessed by families

Parents were asked if they got involved with the service as a result of a referral or recommendation by a person or organisation or because they chose to do so themselves. As Table 4.4 shows, On Track services were more likely to have been recommended or referred to than services overall in On Track areas or services in Matched areas (54% compared to 46% and 39%). However, these differences were not significant.

Table 4.4 How did involvement with service come about?

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
Referral / recommendation	54	46	39
Family decided / chose to get involved	46	54	61
Base (unweighted)	134	565	649

Base: services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services

4.3.6 Where services were located

Services for children and their families may be offered in different places - at home, at school, somewhere else or a mixture of these. As indicated by findings earlier, in On Track areas, significantly more On Track services than services as a whole took place at school (57% of On Track and 47% of all services; Table 4.5). This probably reflects the importance and utility of schools as points of initial identification or operation in the On Track programme. A substantial proportion (37%) of On Track services were still based at places other than home or school, although this was lower than the proportion of services as a whole (44%).

Very few (4%) On Track services were reported to be offered in the families' home. Overall, there were slightly fewer services delivered in homes in On Track areas than in Matched areas (7% compared with 11%). Aside from this, the location of service provision in the two types of area did not differ notably.

Table 4.5 Location of service provision

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
At home	4	7	11
At school	57	47	44
Somewhere else	37	44	42
A mixture	2	2	3
Base (unweighted)	134	566	648

Base: services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services

4.4 Characteristics of children and families who used services

In this section, the characteristics of families in On Track areas who used services in general and On Track services in particular are investigated. Users are profiled according to the sex and age of the child, the family structure, the languages spoken by the family, the extent of background problems experienced by the parent and the Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ) score of the child²⁰.

²⁰ See Section 3.4.1 for details of the Current Problems Questionnaire and Section 3.7.1 for details of the SDQ score.

A slightly higher proportion of boys than girls used On Track services (Table 4.6), although the difference was not significant.

Table 4.6 Use of services in On Track areas by child's sex

Number of services Used	On Track services		All services#	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
	%	%	%	%
No services used	86	89	57	57
Any services used	14	11	43	43
1	11	9	25	24
2 or more	4	2	18	19
Base (unweighted)	402	378	402	378

Base: parents in On Track areas; # including OT services

Use of services in general, and for On Track Services in particular, was strongly related to age: the younger the child, the more likely parents were to report using services (Table 4.7). This reflects the targeting of many On Track services towards younger age groups. Children aged five or six were most likely to use On Track services (52%), followed by primary school children (44%), with the lowest levels of service use amongst secondary school children (34%). The same pattern held for all services used in On Track areas.

Table 4.7 Use of services in On Track areas by child's age

Number of services Used	On Track services			All services#		
	5-6 years	Primary	Sec'dary	5-6 years	Primary	Sec'dary
	%	%	%	%	%	%
No services used	83	86	92	48	56	66
Any services used	17	14	8	52	44	34
1	15	10	6	27	26	21
2 or more	2	4	2	24	18	13
Base (unweighted)	159	399	222	159	399	222

Base: parents in On Track areas; # including OT services

Lone parents' usage of services in general and of On Track services in particular was similar to that for other parents in On Track areas (45% compared to 42% for all services, 12% compared to 13% for On Track services; Table 4.8).

Table 4.8 Use of services in On Track areas by family composition

Number of services Used	On Track services		All services#	
	Lone parent families	Two parent/ other families	Lone parent families	Two parent families
	%	%	%	%
No services used	88	87	55	58
Any services used	12	13	45	42
1	8	11	24	25
2 or more	3	3	21	16
Base (unweighted)	266	526	266	526

Base: parents in On Track areas; # including OT services

The use of services by families that had English (or Welsh) as the main language was significantly higher than that by families that had other main languages (45% compared to 32%; Table 4.9). The differences in the amount of On Track service use were less pronounced, but still significant. Fourteen per cent of families that had English (or Welsh) as the main language used On Track services compared with just 8% of families with other main languages.

Table 4.9 Use of services in On Track areas by family language

Number of services Used	On Track services		All services#	
	English / Welsh	Others	English / Welsh	Others
	%	%	%	%
No services used	86	92	55	68
Any services used	14	8	45	32
1	11	6	26	21
2 or more	3	2	19	11
Base (unweighted)	656	124	656	124

Base: parents in On Track areas; # including OT services

We would expect that those with greater personal difficulties should be targeted more by services that support children and families and so should be more likely to report service use. We would also expect that such families would be more likely to report multiple as opposed to single service use. Analysis of service use according to the number of current problems reported by the parent (in the Current Problems questionnaire) and the Strengths and Difficulties score of the child supports this hypothesis.

Parents who reported three or more current problems were significantly more likely to use services for families and children in general and On Track services in particular than parents who reported no or only one or two current problems (Table 4.10). Eighteen per cent of families with three or more problems said they had used an On Track service, compared to 11% of families with fewer than three problems reported. Such families were also more likely to be multiple users of general types of services.

Table 4.10 Use of services in On Track areas by number of current problems in current problems questionnaire

Number of services Used	On Track services			All services#		
	No problems	1-2 problems	3 or more problems	No problems	1-2 problems	3 or more problems
	%	%	%	%	%	%
No services used	89	89	82	62	62	45
Any services used	11	11	18	38	38	55
1	10	8	14	24	22	30
2 or more	2	3	5	14	16	25
Base (unweighted)	213	337	208	213	337	208

Base: parents in On Track areas; # including OT services

Similarly, children who were classified as having an abnormal Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) score (based on their parent's reports) were significantly more likely to use services for families and children in general, and On Track services in particular, than children who were classified as having a normal score (Table 4.11). Use of services in general seemed to be higher for those with borderline and abnormal SDQ scores, but On Track seemed to be particularly effective at reaching those children with abnormal SDQ scores: a fifth of such children used On Track services compared to 12% of those with normal or borderline SDQ scores.

Table 4.11 Use of services in On Track areas by child's strength and difficulties score (as reported by parent)

Number of services Used	On Track services			All services#		
	Normal SDQ score	Border-line SDQ score	Abnormal SDQ score	Normal SDQ score	Border-line SDQ score	Abnormal SDQ score
	%	%	%	%	%	%
No services used	88	88	80	61	50	48
Any services used	12	12	20	39	50	52
1	10	9	12	24	32	23
2 or more	2	3	7	15	18	29
Base (unweighted)	549	81	127	549	81	127

Base: parents in On Track areas; # including OT services

4.5 Parents' views of services

The interview for the main parent or guardian contained a number of questions designed to collect their perceptions of the services that they had used. This section presents parents' perceptions of the aims of their services, their views of the convenience of the service and the quality of its staff, and their assessment of the impact of the service on them and their child²¹. Children's views of the services they

²¹ The base numbers vary slightly for the different items presented in this section as some respondents felt that particular questions did not apply to their situation or they did not have enough information themselves to answer. The services of these respondents are consequently not listed in the respective tables.

used are presented in the next section. Please note that the bases for all tables in the section are services. If more than one service was mentioned by the main parent, questions covering perceptions of services were repeated for each service used (up to a maximum of three).

4.5.1 Perceived aims of services

Parents were shown the showcard reproduced in Figure 4.4 below and asked to indicate which of these possible aims of a service their service tried to achieve. It was possible to mention additional aims, which were coded into categories during the edit stage of the research. Since it seemed most interesting to find out how many respondents reported that their service was aimed at the child only, their family as a whole and the parent, the data were subsequently divided into these three groups at the analysis stage.

Figure 4.4 Showcard of aim of service

- SHOWCARD Y

 1. Your child's learning or school work
 2. Your child's attendance at school
 3. Your child's behaviour in school
 4. Your child's behaviour at home
 5. Your child's physical health
 6. Your child's relationships and friendships
 7. Your child's anti-social or offending behaviour
 8. The behaviour of other children in the family
 9. Your family's practical circumstances (e.g. housing, benefits)
 10. Coping with being a parent
 11. Your confidence in yourself as a person
 12. Your relationship with a partner (if relevant)
 13. Your partner's behaviour towards you (if relevant)
 14. Your ability to solve problems with your child
 15. Your ability to solve problems with other children in the family
 16. Other

Parents' perceptions of who the services they used were aiming to help did not differ significantly between On Track services and all services in On Track areas, or between services in On Track areas and those in Matched areas. In On Track areas 73% of On Track services and 75% of services in general were perceived to be aimed directly at the child, which compared with 70% of services in the Matched areas (Table 4.12). Most other services were perceived to be aimed at the parent (between

20% and 23% of each group) rather than at the family as a whole (between 3% and 8% of each group).²²

Table 4.12 Parents' perception of whom services were aiming to help

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
The child	73	75	70
The family	3	5	8
The parent	24	20	22
Base (unweighted)	105	436	474

Base: selected services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services

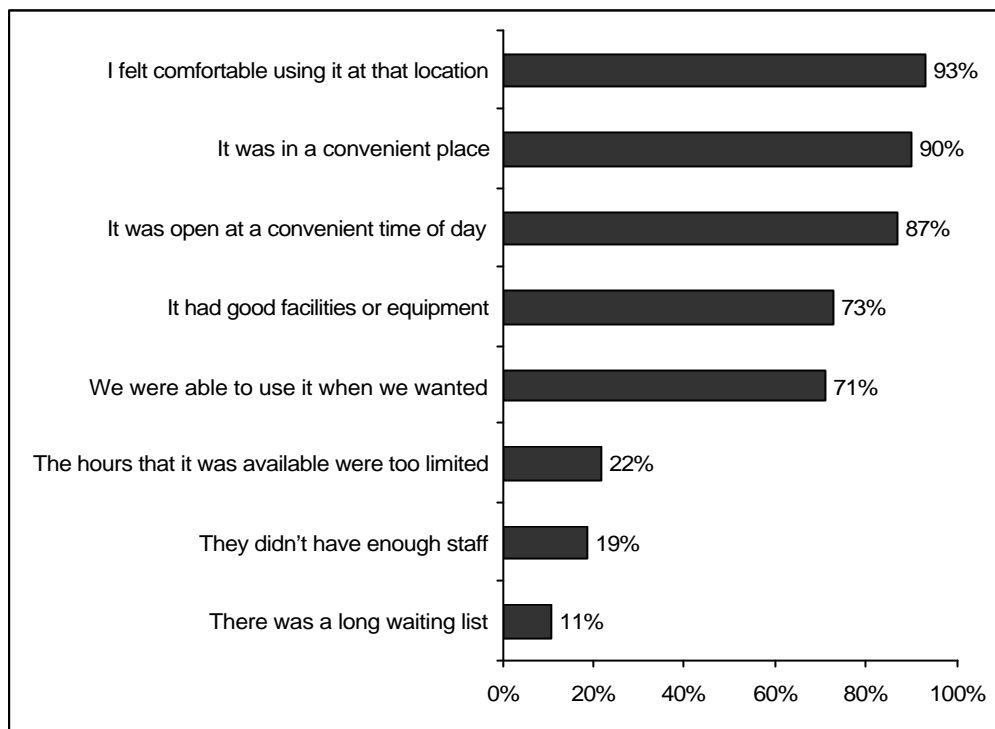
4.5.2 Views of the convenience and quality of the service

Parents who had personally been in contact with On Track services were asked a series of questions about their views of the convenience and quality of the service. The answers are presented in descending order of mentions on Figure 4.5.

Parents had generally positive views of the On Track services they had used. Nearly all said that they felt comfortable using the service and considered that it was located in a convenient place and was delivered at a convenient time of the day. Most also felt that the service had good facilities or equipment and that they were able to use it when they wanted. However, about one-in-five parents agreed with the negative statements that the hours the service was available were too limited or that the service didn't have enough staff. One -in-ten agreed that the service's waiting list was too long.

²² Unsurprisingly, the perceived target of the service varied according to the type of service. Family and parenting support services were distinctive in being perceived by the majority of parents who used them as aimed at themselves rather than their children.

Figure 4.5 Parental perceptions of practicalities of service provision

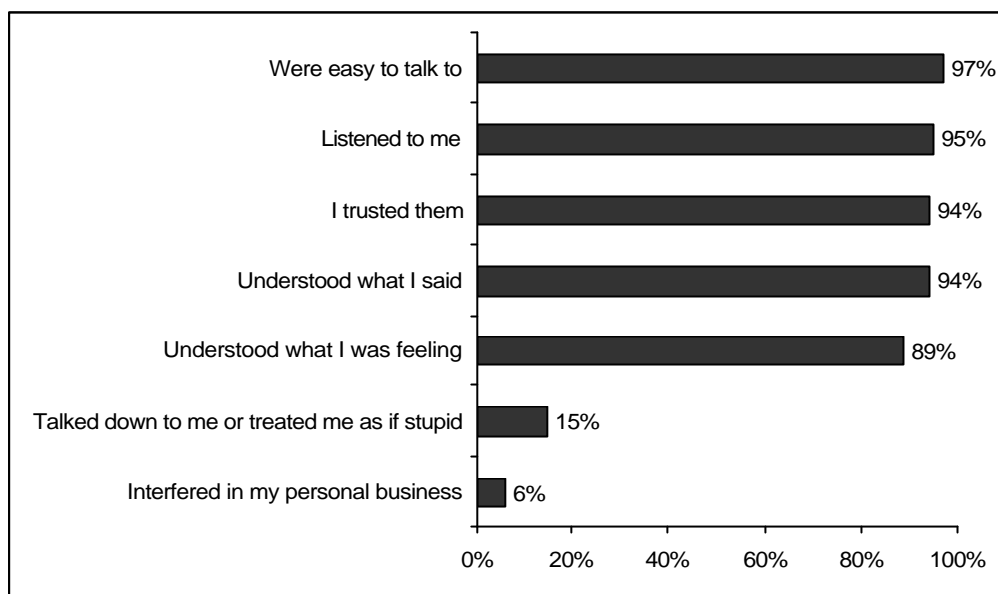


Base: On Track services that parent had been in contact with (range of 43 to 45 cases for these eight statements)

4.5.3 Views of Service Staff

Parents who had personally been in contact with On Track services had extremely positive views of the staff (Figure 4.6). In response to a series of attitude statements, nearly all parents agreed that On Track staff were easy to talk to (97%), listened to them (95%), could be trusted (94%), understood what was said to them (94%) and understood how they (the parents) were feeling (89%). Few agreed with either of the two negative statements: only 15% of parents felt that On Track staff talked down to them or treated them as if they were stupid while only 6% of parents felt that they interfered in their personal business.

Figure 4.6 Parents' perceptions of On Track service staff



Base: On Track services that parents had been in contact with (range of 40 to 44 cases for these seven statements)

4.5.4 Parents' perceptions of impact on themselves

This section reports parents' answers to questions about how the services they used helped them and what the services' impact on them was. The following sections cover parents' perceptions of the impact of services on their children. It should be noted that such subjective measures, while providing useful insight into the attitudes of service users, cannot tell us how much actual impact services may have had on families.

Results are presented separately for On Track services, services in On Track areas as a whole and services in Matched areas. Bases for these tables vary considerably because respondents who felt that the question was not applicable to them have been excluded. The proportions who gave this 'not applicable' answer ranged between 24% and 88% of those asked the question overall, although for most services and items the range was between 30% and 40%. However, parents who answered one of these questions with a mid-point category (for example 'Neither helpful nor unhelpful' or 'Didn't change anything') have been retained in the base.

Almost half of the services were rated by parents as 'very helpful' to themselves (47% On Track services, 48% all services in On Track areas and 46% of services in Matched areas; Table 4.13). Between a quarter and a third of parents using each type of service cent rated them as 'fairly helpful' (Table 4.13). Only 7% of services in On Track areas and 6% of services in Matched areas were rated as 'not very helpful' or 'not at all helpful'.

Table 4.13 Helpfulness for parent

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
Very helpful	47	48	46
Fairly helpful	27	29	31
Neither helpful or unhelpful	18	16	17
Not very helpful	3	3	4
Not at all helpful	4	4	2
Base (unweighted)	125	515	609

Base: selected services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services

In relation to the impact of services on various aspects of parents' perceptions of themselves, around one in six services were described by parents as having greatly improved their sense of coping with parenthood (Table 4.14). Between a fifth and third also said that things had improved 'a bit' in this respect as a result of using services. On Track services were not rated differently from other services in On Track areas on this measure. However, services in Matched areas were significantly more likely than services in On Track areas to be perceived as having made coping with being a parent better (45% compared with 35%).

Table 4.14 Impact on Parent: Coping with being a parent

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
Made things a lot better	15	14	14
Made things a bit better	18	21	31
Didn't change anything	67	64	55
Made things a bit worse	-	*	-
Made things a lot worse	-	-	*
Base (unweighted)	92	392	499

Base: selected services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services. '*' denotes less than 0.5%.

Many parents felt that the services they used had improved their confidence (Table 4.15). Services were felt to have made parents' confidence a lot better in 9% to 12% of cases and a bit better in 12% to 21% of cases. Services in Matched areas were slightly more likely to have a positive impact on parents' confidence than services in On Track areas (33% compared to 27%). Moreover, the rating for On Track services on this measure was lower than the average for all services in On Track areas.

Table 4.15 Impact on Parent: Confidence as a parent

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
Made things a lot better	11	9	12
Made things a bit better	12	18	21
Didn't change anything	77	72	66
Made things a bit worse	-	*	1
Made things a lot worse	-	-	-
Base (unweighted)	90	379	467

Base: selected services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services. '*' denotes less than 0.5%.

Parents also rated their services favourably for improving their ability to communicate with their child (Table 4.16). Services were reported to have made this a lot better in nine or 10% of cases and a bit better in 15% to 21% of cases. Ratings of the different categories of service did not differ significantly.

Table 4.16 Impact on Parent: Ability to communicate with the child

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
Made things a lot better	9	9	10
Made things a bit better	15	18	21
Didn't change anything	76	73	69
Made things a bit worse	-	-	-
Made things a lot worse	-	-	-
Base (unweighted)	92	383	466

Base: selected services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services

A number of parents reported that a service had made them feel better about themselves as a person (Table 4.17). Between 5% and 6% of services were rated as making things a lot better and a further 13% to 17% were rated as making things a bit better in this respect. No significant differences were found between the three groups of services on this measure.

Table 4.17 Impact on Parent: How parents feel about themselves as a person

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
Made things a lot better	5	6	6
Made things a bit better	13	16	17
Didn't change anything	78	76	76
Made things a bit worse	5	1	*
Made things a lot worse	-	*	*
Base (unweighted)	88	369	458

Base: selected services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services. '*' denotes less than 0.5%.

Respondents were further asked how much difference going to the service had made to their relationship with their partner. A large number of respondents felt that this question was not applicable to them. As a consequence, 62% of parents did not respond to this question. In the remaining cases, between 9% and 15% of services were judged to have had a positive influence on the respondent's relationship with a partner. Between 84% and 90% of these parents reported that the service had not changed anything.

For each aspect shown in Tables 4.13-4.17, the majority of On Track users reported that the service had not changed anything. The impact of On Track services was on some indicators significantly less than for services in the Matched areas. These findings should be seen in the context of the type of users that On Track services worked with, who on some indicators had more problems and needs than service users in general.

In addition, some of the services may not have been intended to affect some of these aspects asked about. Some insight into this can be gleaned by looking at perceived impacts by the type of service that was used. Table 4.18 summarises the proportions of positive answers (that is making things a lot better or a bit better) on four measures for five different types of service. As sample numbers were too small for On Track services, results are shown for all services in On Track areas. Some small variations were observed in the answers given for different categories.

- Pre-school services were most favourably rated overall for their benefits to parents. In particular, they were highly rated for helping parents to cope with being a parent and having confidence as a parent. Indeed, all five types of service were rated fairly positively for their impact on coping as a parent.
- Family or parenting support services were also rated positively for helping respondents' confidence as a parent.
- Psychologist, psychiatric or therapy services were distinctive in being most positively rated for helping parents' ability to communicate with their child.
- School-based services were less likely than the other services to be seen as having benefits for parents themselves.

Table 4.18 Proportion of services with positive impact on parent by type of service: services used in On Track areas

	On Track Area sample					All
	Pre-school	Family/parenting	Psych/therapy	School-based	Other youth	
Proportion of services making things a lot or a bit better for parent's:	%	%	%	%	%	%
Coping with being a parent	51	37	37	29	33	35
Confidence as a parent	44	43	33	17	25	28
Ability to communicate with child	37	32	48	17	28	27
Feelings about themselves as a person	27	33	25	16	23	22
Base (unweighted)	61	39	44	157	59	361

Base: selected services in On Track areas. Minimum base shown for percentages quoted.

4.5.5 Parents' perceptions of impact on their children

Parents' ratings of services impacts on their children were generally even more positive than their ratings of the impacts on themselves. Ninety-four per cent of On Track services were rated by the parent to be very helpful or fairly helpful to the child (Table 4.19). This compares to 88% of all services in On Track areas and 81% of services in Matched areas. On Track services were rated as significantly more helpful for children than services in Matched areas.

Table 4.19 Helpfulness for child

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
Very helpful	51	53	48
Fairly helpful	43	35	33
Neither helpful or unhelpful	3	8	12
Not very helpful	2	2	4
Not at all helpful	1	2	2
Base (unweighted)	125	509	583

Base: selected services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services

On Track services were very diverse and the overall rating of helpfulness shown above does not tell us in which particular way services had an impact. To look at this, parents were also asked a series of questions about the whole range of different types of impacts that the services might have had on their child's physical, educational and behavioural development. As with the findings about impacts on the parents themselves, bases varied considerably because respondents who felt that the question was not applicable to their child have been excluded.

Many parents felt that services had had an impact on their child's physical health (Table 4.20). Between 13% and 17% of services were reported to have made the child's physical health a lot better and a further 22% to 26% to have made it a bit better. Ratings for On Track services on this measure were no different from those of services in On Track areas as a whole or services in Matched areas.

Fewer parents perceived that services had brought improvements in the child's speech or language and relatively few parents answered this question (60% judged that it was not applicable). Where the question was answered, between 8% and 13% of services were perceived to have made the child's speech or language a lot better and between 16% and 20% were perceived to have made it a bit better (Table 4.21). Ratings for On Track services on this measure were no different from those of services in On Track areas as a whole or services in Matched areas.

A comparatively large number of services were perceived by parents to have made the child's learning or schoolwork a lot better (14% to 16%) or a bit better (23% to 31%). There were no significant differences between the ratings of On Track services, services in On Track areas as a whole and services in Matched areas for this measure.

Table 4.20 Impact on Child: Child's physical health

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
Made things a lot better	13	16	17
Made things a bit better	24	22	26
Didn't change anything	63	62	57
Made things a bit worse	-	-	-
Made things a lot worse	-	*	-
Base (unweighted)	103	392	422

Base: selected services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services. '*' denotes less than 0.5%.

Table 4.21 Impact on Child: Child's speech or language

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
Made things a lot better	8	13	11
Made things a bit better	20	16	16
Didn't change anything	72	71	72
Made things a bit worse	-	-	-
Made things a lot worse	-	-	*
Base (unweighted)	90	354	381

Base: selected services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services. '*' denotes less than 0.5%.

Table 4.22 Impact on Child: Learning or schoolwork

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
Made things a lot better	15	16	14
Made things a bit better	23	27	31
Didn't change anything	62	57	55
Made things a bit worse	-	-	-
Made things a lot worse	-	-	*
Base (unweighted)	95	393	438

Base: selected services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services. '*' denotes less than 0.5%.

Table 4.23 Impact on Child: Attendance at school

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
Made things a lot better	4	4	7
Made things a bit better	8	7	10
Didn't change anything	88	88	83
Made things a bit worse	-	-	*
Made things a lot worse	-	-	-
Base (unweighted)	86	342	381

Base: selected services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services. '*' denotes less than 0.5%.

Table 4.24 Impact on Child: Behaviour at school

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
Made things a lot better	6	8	8
Made things a bit better	14	15	20
Didn't change anything	80	77	71
Made things a bit worse	-	-	1
Made things a lot worse	-	-	1
Base (unweighted)	90	352	415

Base: selected services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services

Table 4.25 Impact on Child: Behaviour at home

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
Made things a lot better	5	6	8
Made things a bit better	14	15	22
Didn't change anything	82	78	68
Made things a bit worse	-	*	1
Made things a lot worse	-	-	1
Base (unweighted)	94	377	430

Base: selected services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services. '*' denotes less than 0.5%.

Table 4.26 Impact on Child: Antisocial or offending behaviour

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
Made things a lot better	[-]	2	6
Made things a bit better	[29]	16	23
Didn't change anything	[71]	82	71
Made things a bit worse	[-]	-	-
Made things a lot worse	[-]	-	-
Base (unweighted)	15	58	87

Base: selected services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services
Percentages in square brackets based on n=15.

Table 4.27 Impact on Child: Friendships

	OT areas		Matched areas
	OT services	All services#	All services
	%	%	%
Made things a lot better	11	13	13
Made things a bit better	29	33	40
Didn't change anything	60	54	47
Made things a bit worse	-	*	-
Made things a lot worse	-	-	-
Base (unweighted)	102	428	498

Base: selected services in On Track and Matched areas; # including OT services. '*' denotes less than 0.5%.

Few parents perceived that attendance at school was influenced by the services. Only between 12% and 17% of services were rated by respondents as having made attendance at school better (Table 4.23).

However, behaviour at school was perceived to show a slight improvement because of services used (Table 4.24). Between 6% and 8% of services were reported to have made things a lot better and between 14% and 20% to have made things a bit better. Ratings for On Track services for this measure did not differ significantly from those for services in On Track areas as a whole and those for services in Matched areas.

A similar proportion of parents perceived that their child's behaviour at home had improved as had perceived that the child's behaviour at school had improved (Table 4.25). Between 4% and 8% of services were reported to have made the child's behaviour at home a lot better and between 14% and 22% to have made it a bit better. Significantly more parents in Matched areas than in On Track areas perceived that their services had improved their child's behaviour at home (30% compared with 21%).

Parents were also asked to comment on the impact of services on their child's antisocial or offending behaviour, where this was relevant. Because base rates of children considered by their parents to have problems with antisocial behaviour were low, especially in the On Track service user group (n=15), percentages must be treated with caution and are shown in square brackets in Table 4.26. As can be seen, parents who responded to the question rated the impact of services as either neutral or partially positive.

In contrast, parents generally felt that a question about a service's impacts on their child's friendships and how he or she got on with other children was applicable to their child. Between 11% and 13% of services were reported to have made things a lot better and another 29% to 40% to have made things a bit better (Table 4.27). Services in Matched areas were slightly more likely to be perceived as having a positive impact on a child's friendships than services in On Track areas in general and On Track services in particular (53% compared with 45% and 40% respectively).

Parents' answers given to these questions about the impacts of services on their children varied a little according to the type of service that was used. This is shown on Table 4.28 which summarises the proportions of positive answers (that is making things a lot better or a bit better) on eight measures for five different types of service. As sample numbers were too small for On Track services, results are shown for all services in On Track areas. Percentage results are not shown when bases were lower than 20, and are given in square brackets for those based on 21-30 cases.

Although the rating for different services were broadly similar, particular services were associated with some benefits more than others.

- Pre-school services were associated with a range of positive impacts, particularly to the child's friendships, physical health and speech or language.
- Psychologist, psychiatric or therapy services were most positively rated for helping children's learning or schoolwork and speech or language.
- School-based services were most positively rated for improving children's friendships and their behaviour at school.
- Other youth services were also most positively rated for improving children's friendships.

Table 4.28 Proportion of services with positive impact on child by type of service: services used in On Track areas

	On Track Area sample					
	Pre-school	Family/p arent-ing	Psych/ therapy	School- based	Other youth	All
Proportion of services making things a lot or a bit better for child's:	%	%	%	%	%	%
Physical health	42	[14]	34	40	38	37
Speech or language	40	[17]	55	23	21	29
Learning or schoolwork	36	[20]	59	48	29	43
Behaviour at school	35	16	30	19	20	22
Attendance at school	20	[4]	9	10	12	11
Friendships	44	15	43	50	49	45
Behaviour at home	28	29	22	16	28	21
Anti-social behaviour or offending	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	17
Base (unweighted)	45	24	44	162	54	332

Base: selected services in On Track areas. Minimum base shown for percentages quoted.

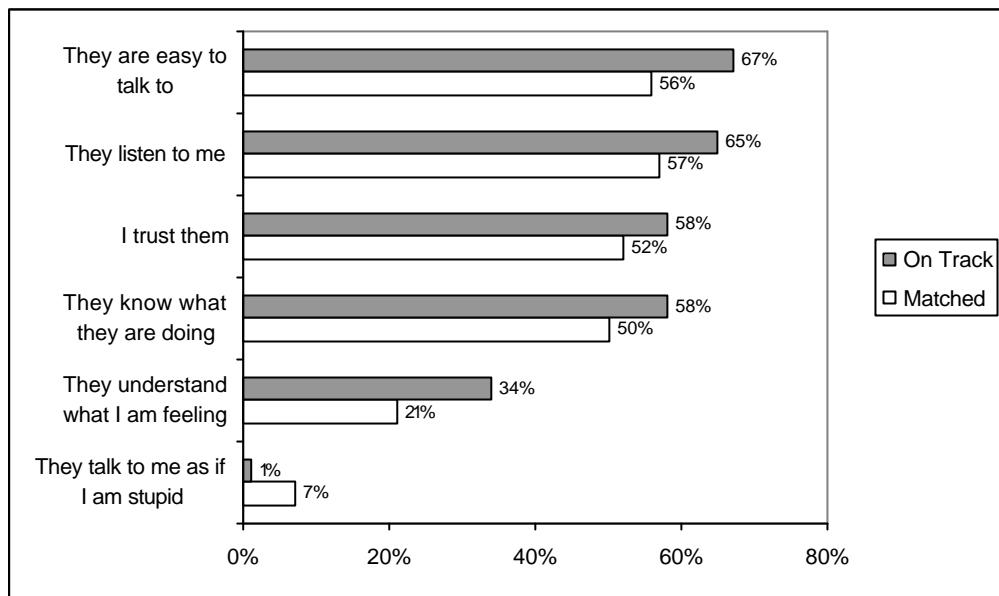
Percentages not shown for cells with bases < 20 (indicated by 'n.s.'). Percentages in square brackets based on less than 30.

4.6 Children's views of services

Secondary school children were asked a series of questions to explore their views of services that their parent had reported that they had had contact with. The questions had a different format from the ones used for parents and so the data cannot be directly compared. The method of questioning was to present the child with showcards listing some possible views they might have and to ask which of the statements they would say themselves. An initial showcard covered the service staff and was shown only where children said that none of the people who organised the service were teachers (this was to avoid confusion between internal and external staff in the answers). Children were next asked to explain in their own words what they had got out of the service. Finally, children were asked to select statements from two further cards that covered how they felt about the service and how it had helped them. The findings are presented in Figures 3.9 to 3.12 below. Due to low bases for On Track services (below 20), figures are only shown for services in On Track areas as a whole.

Figure 4.7 shows the statements children selected as describing how they felt about the people who ran the service (items are presented in descending order of mentions). Four positive statements were selected by between half and two thirds of children in both On Track and Matched area. These statements were that the people at the service were easy to talk to, listened to the child, were trusted by the child and were perceived to know what they were doing. A third of children in On Track areas selected the statement 'they understand what I am feeling'. Hardly any children chose the only negative statement on the card 'They talk to me as if I am stupid'.

Figure 4.7 Secondary school children's perceptions of service staff in On Track areas

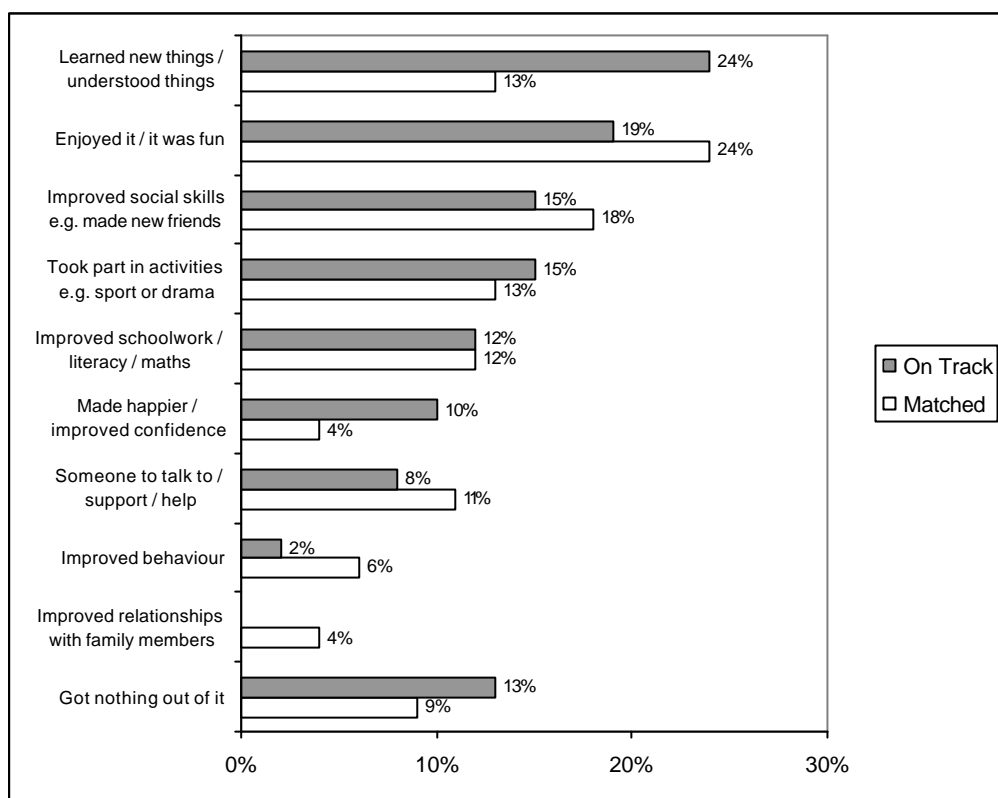


Base: services in On Track areas (58) and Matched areas (74) that secondary school children had been in contact with and where no staff were teachers

The ratings were consistently higher in On Track areas, though the differences were not significant in item-by-item analyses. (The numbers of children involved in these comparisons were also fairly small.)

Figure 4.8 shows children's answers to a question about what they got out of the service. The answer categories shown have been coded from children's own words. The answers reveal a wide range of perceived benefits including learning new things, improving their schoolwork, taking part in new activities, enjoying themselves, making new friends and feeling happier. Only about one-in-ten children said that they got nothing out of their involvement with the service. The answers given by children in the two types of area were broadly similar.

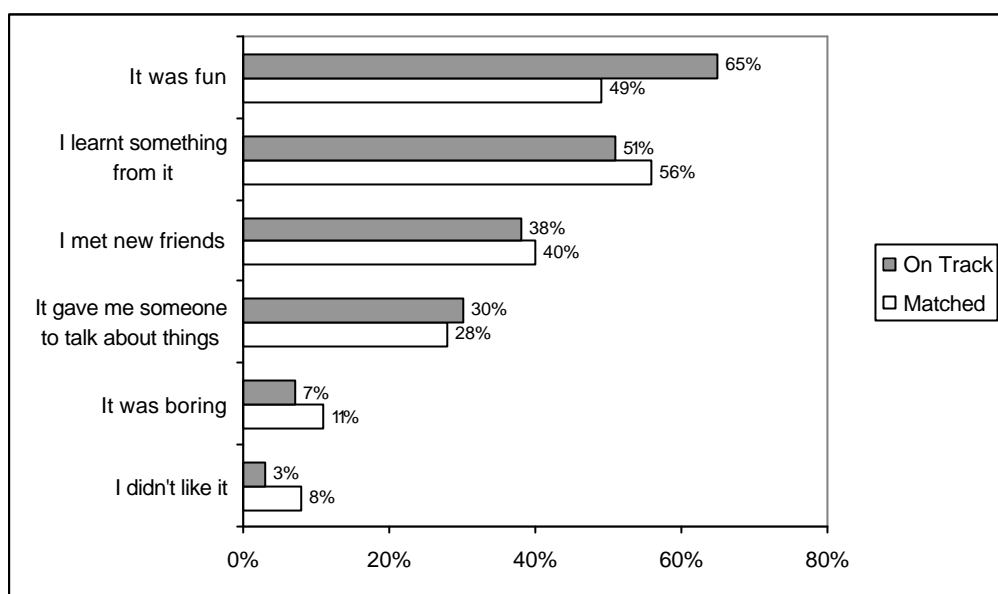
Figure 4.8 Secondary school children's comments about what they got out of the service



Base: services in On Track areas (97) and Matched areas (114) that secondary school children had been in contact with

Figure 4.9 shows the statements that children picked out from a showcard to show how they felt about the service they had used. Nearly two thirds of children in On Track areas said that 'it was fun' while about half said that they had learned something from it, more than a third reported that they had met new friends and just under a third said that it gave them someone to talk to about things. Fewer than one-in-ten children selected either of the negative statements that were available. The answers given by children in Matched areas were very similar to those of children in On Track areas.

Figure 4.9 Secondary school children's perceptions of services in On Track areas

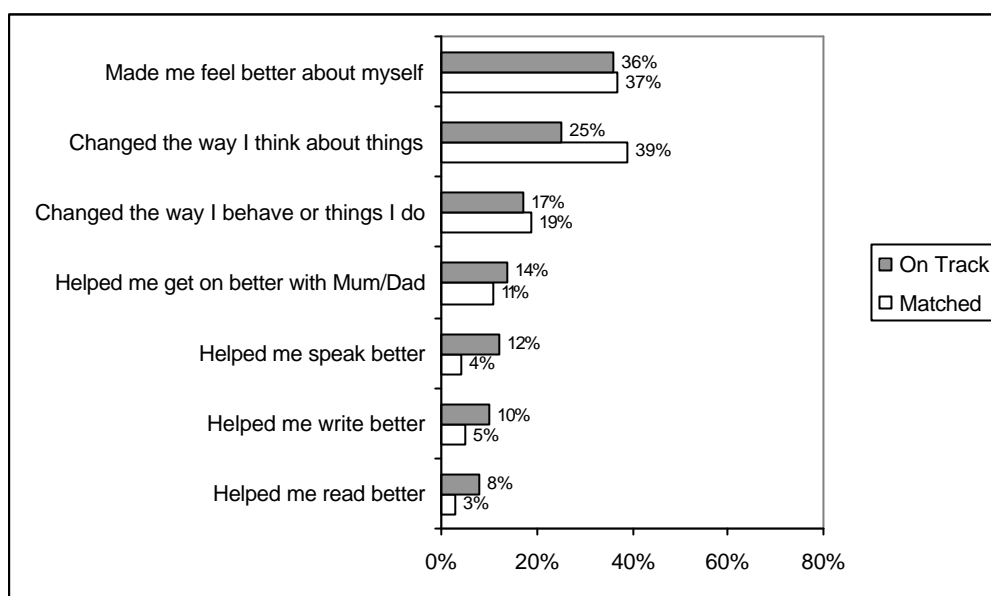


Base: services in On Track areas (97) and Matched areas (126) that that secondary school children had been in contact with

Children's perceptions of what impact the service had made on them were collected from a further showcard. Two thirds of children selected one of the seven positive statements presented on the card. The most common choices were that the service had made the child feel better about him or herself (mentioned by just over a third of children in On Track areas) and that it had changed the way they thought about things (mentioned by a quarter; Figure 4.10). Approximately one-in-six children said that the service had changed the way they behaved and a similar proportion said that it had helped them get on better with their parents. Improved speaking, writing and reading were each mentioned by approximately one-in-ten secondary school children in On Track areas. The answers given by children in Matched areas were very similar to those of children in On Track areas.

Overall, secondary school children's answers in this section of the interview indicated very positive views of the services that they had been involved with.

Figure 4.10 Secondary school children’s perceived impact of services on themselves



Base: services in On Track areas (97) and Matched areas (126) that that secondary school children had been in contact with

4.7 Summary: service use by children and families

4.7.1 How accurate is the survey measurement of service use?

- The questions recording service use required much development, and it was difficult for respondents to name all the services they used.
- It is likely that some types of service – those with a strong branding or more intensive interventions – will be easier to recall. Others – such as school-based services where the parent has less involvement – may be more likely to be omitted.
- Results from the Booster sample indicate that the level of under-reporting of On Track users was around 20%.
- Our conclusion is that the method of measuring service use was generally effective and would have been difficult to improve on within the interview methodology. Measurement error should be borne in mind when looking at findings on service use.

4.7.2 What was the level of service use?

- Forty-three per cent of families in On Track areas named at least one kind of service that they had used in the past year. This was comparable with the level found in Matched areas, so it was not apparent that the presence of On Track had increased the level of service use in the areas where it operated. However, we had no measurement of the level of service use before the introduction of On Track so it is not possible to judge whether this is because there was lower service use

before, because On Track services were substituted for existing services, or for some other reason.

- Thirteen per cent of parents in On Track areas reported that they or their child had used an On Track service in the past year, that is just under one-in-three of those who had used any service. This was lower than previous data had indicated, even accounting for under-reporting in the current study.
- Most families who accessed On Track (or non-On Track services) only reported using one service in the last year.

4.7.3 What types of services were used?

- Services were classified into five categories: school-based, pre-school, family and parenting support, psychologist or psychiatric or therapy, and other youth services.
- The most common type of service – whether On Track or not – was school-based services. Nearly half (46%) of all services used in the On Track areas were school-based. The other categories of services each constituted between 10-16% of all services. The profile of all services was very similar for On Track and matched areas.
- On Track services had a rather distinctive profile. About two-thirds of On Track services were school-based. These were most often ‘after-school clubs, homework clubs or breakfast clubs’ and ‘other out of school activities for young people’. Family and parenting support services were also relatively prominent among On Track services (17% of reported services were of this type).
- Most parents who used On Track services (54%) got involved as a result of a referral, which was not significantly different from non-On Track services. On Track services were generally perceived by parents to be aimed at helping the child (73%) rather than the parent (23%) or the family as a whole (3%).

4.7.4 Who used On Track services?

Several characteristics were found to be associated with use of On Track services:

- Service use was greatest when the child was youngest: 17% of children aged five or six used On Track services compared with 14% of older primary school children and 8% of secondary school children (the same trend was observed for service use as a whole).
- Boys were slightly more likely to use On Track services than girls (14% compared to 11%). This contrasted with the overall level of service use which was the same for boys and girls).
- Families that had English (or Welsh) as their main or sole language were more likely to use On Track services (14%) - and services overall - than families that spoke other languages (8%).
- Use of On Track services was higher among parents who reported three or more current problems in the family (18% compared to 11% among those with less than

three problems).

- On Track service use was also higher among children who were reported to have high levels of difficulties (20% of those with abnormal Strengths and Difficulties scores compared to 12% of those with normal/borderline scores).

4.7.5 How did parents and children rate On Track services?

- Parents generally had very positive views about On Track services that they had used:
 - For about nine in ten services, users agreed that they were comfortable using the service where it was held, and that the location and times of the service were convenient. About three quarters of services were rated as having good facilities and being available for users when they wanted.
 - Staff in around nine in ten services users were rated as easy to talk to, listening to parents, trustworthy, and understanding of what was said to them or how parents were feeling. About the same proportion disagreed that staff were interfering or talked down to parents.
 - Most On Track services were perceived to be helpful to parents (74% of services were rated as very or fairly helpful) and to children (93% were rated as very or fairly helpful).
 - Services were also rated as to their impact on a number of different aspects to do with themselves and their child. While the majority of users did not think much had changed on any one individual dimension, there were positive impacts reported by a considerable number of users, particularly for the children. These were impacts on the child's friendships (40%), learning or schoolwork (38%) and physical health (37%), as well as helping parents cope with parenting (31%).
- Secondary school children were asked to rate the services they had received: results can only be shown for all services. The findings for services as a whole in On Track areas indicated that children's views were also generally positive. Staff were rated positively. For most services, children felt that they had got some benefit from their involvement with services. This could be through learning something, making them feel better about themselves, helping them to talk about problems, helping them to make new friends or simply having fun.
- These positive views about On Track services or services in On Track areas were similar to those held by service users in Matched areas, although Matched area services were sometimes rated more favourably. The overall impression from parents and children's answers is that On Track services were highly appreciated and met important developmental needs for the recipients but were not perceived as being qualitatively different from services that were not run through On Track.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter draws out the main themes from the Wave One results and then looks ahead to the Wave Two analysis.

5.1 What does Wave One tell us so far?

Detailed summaries are given for each chapter, but here we would like to draw out the main themes arising from the Wave One report.

5.1.1 Wave One confirms the picture of On Track areas as those featuring greater difficulties or risk than areas in general.

The On Track pilot areas were selected to take part in the scheme because they were relatively deprived within the local areas and deemed at need of such services. Such areas will almost certainly rate as deprived on local statistics of relevant factors such as health, crime, employment or education. This study confirms that these areas can also be seen as more in need of such services, when looking at its measures which were directly reported by parents and children. Compared to the national picture, the main differences were:

- Living in a lone-parent family seemed to be more common (Section 2.2). The proportion of ethnic minorities in On Track areas was generally higher than in the population as a whole (Section 2.3). Children lived in relatively deprived families, with more households heads out of work or in a manual occupation, and more renters (Sections 2.6, 2.8).
- Parents were found to have higher than average levels of mental and emotional difficulties (Section 3.4.3). Their children were found to have above average incidence of behavioural and emotional difficulties (Section 3.7.1), and also had a higher incidence of longstanding illness than the national average (Section 3.5.3)

5.1.2 On Track services are reaching some of the more needy families.

The current study can only give a broad indication of how well On Track services are targeting those families and children most in need. This is mainly because there was a great variety of services delivered under the On Track banner. Some On Track interventions may have been targetted towards very specific groups, with particular referral or entry criteria. However, other services were universal e.g. a school-based service available to all pupils. Areas with more universal services may well show less contrast between users and non-users, reflecting their particular mix of delivery.

That said, there were some overall differences between users and non-users:

- Younger children and boys were more likely to use On Track services (but otherwise there were few demographic differences between users and non-users – Chapter 2).

- Parents who used On Track services reported a higher incidence of current problems in their lives (Section 3.4.1) and children in such families had greater behavioural, emotional or relationship difficulties (Section 3.7.1). Service use was higher amongst families who had more of these problems or difficulties (Sections 4.4).
- Children in families who used On Track services had more difficulties at school, in terms of exclusions, overall performance and problems requiring parental discussion with teachers (Sections 3.8.1, 3.8.2).

Specific areas where there was not much difference between On Track service users and non-users included parental factors such as their physical and mental health (Section 3.4.3), aspects of parenting including levels of monitoring and supervision (Section 3.6.1) and self-reported truancy by the child (Section 3.8.2).

5.1.3 Use of On Track services is lower than anticipated, as measured by the study.

The information available before the study was carried out gave indications that On Track service use would be considerably higher than the levels found in this study. We found that 13% of parents in On Track areas reported that they or their child had used an On Track service in the past year – this was just under a third of those who had used any service (Section 4.3.1).

Even though there will be some under-reporting of service use in the study, results from the Booster sample indicated that this was unlikely to account for all of the mismatch between current and previous estimates (Section 4.2).

5.1.4 On Track services form a distinctive set of services, compared to those generally available.

On Track services were different to non-On Track services that were used by families. A higher proportion were school-based services, or delivered family and parenting support (Section 4.3.3).

5.1.5 On Track services are positively viewed by parents and children, although this is also true for services in general.

Parents and children generally had very positive views about On Track services that they had used, in terms of the delivery of the service, the staff and its overall helpfulness (Sections 4.5.2, 4.5.3, 4.6).

Many parents and children also mentioned positive benefits that they thought the service had had on them so far (Sections 4.5.4, 4.5.5, 4.6), but the Wave One data in itself can tell us very little about the impact of services on users.

5.1.6 The Booster sample will help us look at the experiences of those On Track users with particularly high levels of problems and difficulties.

The Booster sample was a supplementary sample of users of lower throughput, higher intensity On Track interventions, identified via On Track project records. Although we cannot combine the Booster and main samples for analysis as originally envisaged, separate analyses of the Booster sample will still be useful as it provides a sample of On Track users at the higher end of the scale of problems and difficulties. The Booster sample differed from the main sample of On Track users as follows:

- There was a particularly high proportion of boys (Section 2.2) but fewer children of Asian origin (Section 2.3). There was also a higher proportion of lone-parent families (Section 2.2). The Booster sample appeared to be less affluent than On Track users as a whole, with fewer heads of household in work, lower household incomes and fewer owner-occupiers (Section 2.6, 2.7, 2.8).
- The proportion of the sample citing emotional and behavioural problems with children were higher (Section 3.7), as were children's levels of limiting health conditions (Section 3.5.3), special educational needs (Section 3.5.4), children's isolation from peers (Section 3.7.4) and exclusions (Section 3.8.2). Self-reported anti-social behaviour was also higher for secondary school age children in the Booster sample (Section 3.8.5). Parental involvement in education may also have been lower for the Booster sample (Section 3.6.2).
- However, with regard to the level of problems in the area, self-reported truancy and shared activities, the Booster sample did not show large differences from the main sample.

5.2 Looking ahead to Wave Two

The Wave One report has given a description of the main samples – and how they contrasted with each other – as they were at the outset of the study. The Wave Two report will cover the second wave of interviews, and look at how the samples have changed between the two interviews.

All of the caveats that we have placed on the Wave One report and analysis apply equally to the Wave Two results. Some may affect the Wave Two results even more, as they involve an additional stage of fieldwork, which repeats some of the problems that arose at Wave One. In particular, the lower than anticipated number of On Track service users does limit the scope of analysis at Wave One and Wave Two, compared to the original aims. This affects the Wave Two analysis in a number of ways, which we shall discuss in the remainder of this section.

5.2.1 What are the limitations on the Wave Two analysis?

There are a number of limitations arising for the Wave Two analysis, of which readers should be aware. Some of these have been touched on in the current report (as they also affect the Wave One analyses), but they can be summarised as follows:

- *the statistical significance of differences* - the reduced sample size in Wave One means that only relatively large differences can be determined as statistically significant (see Section 1.4.2). The problem is that we may not expect schemes such as On Track to generate a very large impact, hence very few analyses may be expected to reach significant differences. This may not be because schemes are not having an impact, but that the analysis is not sensitive enough to deem their expected level of impact as statistically significant. Chapter 1 of this report

gives some indication of the size of differences that are detectable as significant but this problem will be heightened in Wave Two as some households will drop out of the study in the second interview, further reducing the sample size.

- *individual interventions* – the original aim of the analysis to look at individual types of intervention cannot now be met. Rather, we must look at On Track services as a package of interventions. This concept of a batch of interventions is meaningful, as it mirrors the set-up of On Track within specific areas. However, the variety of services provided under the On Track banner was great, and covered an even wider range of service characteristics such as different methods of delivery, frequency and levels of intervention. It is also likely that areas differed in how (nominally similar) services were delivered. The analyses will not be able to look at these individual features, or identify if any had a greater impact on families than others.
- *the timing of effects* – the design of the study was only intended to measure short-term effects of the schemes, i.e. those occurring over approximately a two-year period.

5.2.2 How does the Wave Two data add to the analysis?

The Wave Two data gives us a second round of observations for most of the families covered at Wave One and allows us to see how different groups may have changed in the intervening twelve months. The inclusion of the Wave Two data will contribute thus to the evaluation:

- the sample size should allow us to look at trends in overall and On Track service usage in On Track areas.
- we can look at whether On Track and Matched areas have changed in the same way since the Wave One. In other words, has On Track had any *area effects* where it has been operating. This could include levels of general service. However, the strength of any area analysis is affected by the limitations mentioned above.
- analysis looking at the direct impact on On Track users is of course limited (that is, any comparisons between On Track service users and other groups). Such comparisons can (and will) be made, but we cannot attach statistical significance to any but the largest differences. However, systematic patterns indicating positive or negative impacts of services – particularly in the light of other research – will be drawn to readers' attention.

APPENDIX A SAMPLE COUNTS BY ON TRACK AREA

Table A.1 Counts of interviews by sample group and area

AREA	ON TRACK AREAS				MATCHED AREAS			BOOST Parent
	Parent	Primary school child	Sec'dary school child	OT service user	Parent	Primary school child	Sec'dary school child	
Bradford	60	23	9	6	51	17	11	15
Brent	29	12	5	1	22	6	8	-
Bridgend	28	16	5	15	21	7	6	35
Brighton	29	13	6	5	22	10	7	20
Bristol	32	21	4	4	24	11	5	-
Easington	43	19	14	5	21	7	7	-
Greenwich	42	12	16	2	44	17	10	-
Haringey	35	13	7	9	29	10	7	33
Haverhill	32	18	10	6	46	18	19	68
Kerrier	24	14	3	10	43	20	10	42
Luton	31	13	6	2	31	10	16	-
Manchester	32	13	7	4	22	11	6	26
Northampton	37	16	13	5	35	17	11	-
Oldham	20	10	4	4	37	17	7	-
Portsmouth	32	14	6	3	25	12	6	-
Rhondda	21	12	5	3	22	11	4	-
Rochdale	23	7	7	3	26	13	8	-
Sandwell	26	14	8	1	25	12	5	-
Scarborough	53	28	14	1	49	20	15	7
Sheffield###	24	11	7	-	41	11	12	-
Solihull	59	24	23	6	24	11	8	10
Southwark	14	5	1	2	16	8	2	34
Sunderland	37	13	10	7	32	6	11	-
Wirral	17	5	5	3	28	8	8	24
Total	780	346	195	107	736	290	209	314

APPENDIX B SERVICE USE SHOW CARDS

Figure B.1 The generic service categories presented on the showcards

<i>Card U1</i>	
1100	<i>Ante-natal classes (for mothers and fathers to be)</i>
1200	<i>Health Visiting service</i>
1300	<i>Parent and Baby group (e.g. baby massage)</i>
1400	<i>Parent and toddler group</i>
1500	<i>Playgroup or other pre-school activity</i>
1600	<i>Toy Library</i>
1700	<i>Nursery, daycare or crèche for pre-school children (not including private nurseries that you pay for)</i>
<i>Card U2</i>	
2100	<i>Social Service Department or Social Work Service (including Family Aides)</i>
2200	<i>Family Centre, Parents' Centre, Children's Centre or Family Support Unit</i>
2300	<i>Family Therapy service</i>
2400	<i>Services for parents of children with disabilities (e.g. Contact-a-Family)</i>
2500	<i>Befriending and support service for parents, or Home Visiting (e.g. HomeStart, NewPin)</i>
2600	<i>Parenting classes, parent support group or parenting discussion group</i>
2700	<i>Other kind of parenting support (e.g. one to one support or counselling, telephone helpline)</i>
<i>Card U3</i>	
3100	<i>Child psychologist or psychiatrist/child guidance/educational psychologist/child psychotherapy/ other counselling for children or young people</i>
3200	<i>Educational Welfare Officer or Educational Social Work service</i>
3300	<i>Speech and language therapy</i>
3400	<i>Play therapy or other kind of activity to help children through play (including art therapy, drama therapy)</i>
3500	<i>Home-school partnership (activities to improve links between parents, families and schools)</i>
3600	<i>After-school club, homework club or breakfast club</i>
3700	<i>Out of school activities for young people (e.g. YIP, SPLASH summer or holiday playscheme)</i>
3800	<i>Activities to help children's and young people's behaviour, or their personal development (e.g. confidence, attitudes, social skills)</i>
3900	<i>Services providing extra help with school work or learning for children/young people</i>
<i>Card U4</i>	
4100	<i>Personal Adviser or mentor who advises or befriends young people</i>
4200	<i>School counselling service, or youth advice and information service , or other advice or support service for young people</i>
4300	<i>Youth club or Youth Service</i>
4400	<i>Drugs/alcohol advice or counselling service (e.g. Drug Action Team)</i>
4500	<i>Services for young people in trouble (e.g. service run by a Youth Offending Team)</i>
4600	<i>Activities to help children with 'transitions' at school (e.g. starting school for the first time, starting secondary school)</i>
4700	<i>Services to promote better health for children or families</i>
4800	<i>Other types of services</i>

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