Enabling change: an assessment tool for adult offenders which operationalises RNR and desistance principles

ABSTRACT

This article examines the extent to which the risk needs responsivity (RNR) model and desistance principles have been integrated and operationalised in the development of the Enablers of Change assessment and sentence planning tool developed by a Community Rehabilitation Company provider in England. We consider the constructs which underpin the tool, identifying points of departure and similarity between RNR principles (Andrews and Bonta, 2017), the 'good lives' model (Ward and Maruna, 2007) and desistance principles (McNeil and Weaver, 2010) and their integration. We examine how these constructs have been operationalised in the tool which aims to assess needs, strengths, protective factors and provide additionality to existing risk assessment practice. Given the tool's innovation, this article is of international significance and will make an original contribution to the evidence base on operationalising desistance in the management of people with convictions in England and Wales and other jurisdictions.

INTRODUCTION

Operationalising desistance principles as an embedded part of probation needs assessment and sentence planning practice has proved elusive in the United Kingdom and other jurisdictions despite calls for their inclusion (Canton 2015, Council of Europe 2010). This reluctance is understandable, founded on reservations about shifting from the empirically evidenced Risk Need Responsivity (RNR) corrections model (Andrews and Bonta, 2017) to the less well evidenced the ‘good lives’ model GLM (Ward and Maruna 2007) and desistance principles (McNeill and Weaver 2010). Superficially it would seem that the maxim of “if it’s not broken – don’t fix it” has prevailed. However, the RNR corrections approach, although well evidenced, is not without limitations (Public Safety Canada, 2011, Polaschek, 2012). Integrating RNR with asset based desistance approaches is an important and welcome innovation (Horan 2015; Serin and Lloyd, 2017). This is the approach which is embodied in the Enablers of Change (EOC) assessment and sentence planning tool. Developed by Interserve, a Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) provider in England, the EOC tool aims to meet the enduring challenge that a responsive criminal justice process must start with

an effective and robust assessment that guides intervention planning and rehabilitation for people with convictions (Canton, 2015, Moore 2015, Council of Europe 2011).

This paper examines the theoretical underpinning for the EOC tool and the conceptual integration of desistance with the RNR and GLM models. It acts as a companion piece to a paper which provides an account of the development, early testing and formative evaluation of the EOC tool (Wong and Horan, 2019); and other papers which will examine the innovations intended by the tool: more effective offender engagement; and co-production. *In this paper*, we start by considering the rationale for desistance-based tools integrated with RNR and GLM; then examine how these models and principles have been incorporated into policy and practice in the UK and Europe. We follow this with an account of the *construct development* of the EOC tool; and how the tool is *intended to operationalise* RNR, GLM and desistance. We then discuss the *extent of this operationalisation* as evidenced by the formative evaluation of the tool and the practical challenges of using an assessment tool which aims for this theoretical integration.

Why integrate?

Debate abounds regarding RNR and desistance approaches, which are often pitted against each other (Horan, 2015). Drawing on an explicitly evidence-focused framework from its inception (Cullen, Myer, and Latessa, 2009), RNR principles have guided the assessment of offender risk and needs for over thirty years (in Canada, England and Wales and other jurisdictions in Europe). However, RNR approaches have been be criticised for being deficits based (Looman and Abracen, 2013). In contrast, desistance research, which focuses on 'why people stop committing crime' rather than 'why people commit crime' (Maruna 2017:291), seeks to identify and develop the strengths of people with convictions. However, desistance does not have the empirical support generated from extensive quantitative research and testing, as acknowledged by some of its leading proponents (McNeill and Weaver 2010, Maruna 2017), although an empirical evidence base is emerging (for example, see Savolainen, 2009, Skardhamar and Savolinen 2014).

Some commentators suggest that strengths-based approaches are in opposition with 'RNR and 'what works' research (Looman and Abracen, 2013), whilst others see strengths-based approaches as already presaged in much of the 'what works' literature (Andrews, Bonta, and Wormith, 2011). However, research does suggest that the outcomes of criminal justice case

management could be enhanced by the integration of strengths-based approaches with the more empirically evidenced RNR principles (Horan 2015; Serin and Lloyd, 2017). Although it should be acknowledged that their inappropriate integration could increase risks through the dilution of evidence-based risk management practice (Serin and Lloyd, 2017; Wong and Horan, 2019).

The EoC tool has been carefully formulated from a combination of an extensive literature review featuring studies by McNeill 2006; Morton 2009; McNeill 2009; Andrews and Bonta, 2017; McNeil and Weaver 2010; and evidence drawn from case work to operationalise such an undiluted, integrative approach. This integration aims to underpin a more personalised and co-productive approach to assessment and sentence plan development that identifies the needs and risks of people with convictions, and their strengths, aspirations, social and human and capital, which assist and equip individuals in their journey towards desistance (Canton 2015, McNeill and Weaver 2010 and Council of Europe, 2010).

OFFENDER ASSESSMENT POLICY AND PRACTICE

Risk, Need and Responsivity

Research evidence emphasises the centrality of RNR led assessment to improved outcomes in reduced reoffending (Andrews and Bonta, 2017). In England and Wales, the assessment of people with convictions has consequently seen a long-standing focus towards RNR manifested in cognitive behavioural intervention approaches and the development and mandated use of OASys (Offender Assessment System) for adult offenders (Moore 2015). The risk principle underpins identifying risk and matching the level of services to the individual's level of risk for reoffending (with greater risk requiring more intensive intervention) (Andrews and Bonta, 2017). The need principle supports the identification and treatment of changeable (dynamic) risk factors that are directly linked to offending and only factors directly associated with reoffending should be targeted in interventions (Andrews et al., 2011). The responsivity principle suggests that intervention programmes should be matched to the characteristics of the person with convictions (Craig, Dixon and Gannon, 2013). Many intervention programmes underpinned by this model have been found to have some level of effectiveness (See Hanson et al, 2009).

Despite the strong empirical base of the RNR model, it has suggested limitations. It has been criticised for over-emphasising risk factors at the expense of helping people with convictions to meet their basic human needs and live a more fulfilling life (Canton, 2015). Critics have also argued that RNR approaches have weighted the goals of the correctional system to the reduction of risk factors without enough attention being given to more positive and strength-based approaches, overvaluing accuracy and undervaluing relationships (Public Safety Canada, 2011, Council of Europe 2010). Porporino claims that we may have reached a glass ceiling in cognitive behavioural approaches and that any further benefits to be found may be limited (Porporino, 2010). Serin and Lloyd (2017) consequently raise the question of whether new content in assessment and programming is required for further advancement of the field. However, we must also be mindful that there are also unrealistic expectations and mistranslations of the model into practice which are likely contributing to concerns about its validity and utility (Polaschek, 2012).

Strengths led approaches

The GLM is suggested to address the limitations of the traditional risk management approach (Ward and Maruna 2007) by assuming that people (including people with convictions) are predisposed to seek certain human goods. Committing crimes represents either inappropriate attempts to secure such goods or that it arises as a collateral effect of their pursuit (Ward, Yates and Willis, 2012). The model suggests that interventions should aim to promote an individual's goods as well as to manage or reduce risk and rehabilitative work should take account of strengths, primary goods and relevant environments; and encourage and respect individual's capacities to make choices for themselves (Ward, Yates and Willis, 2012). Rehabilitative interventions must balance the promotion of personal goods (for the person with convictions) with the reduction of risk for society (McNeill, 2009). However, criticisms of the GLM suggest that it may neglect the importance of interventions around the familial and social contexts of offending and desistance, and also neglect work to develop legitimate opportunities for ex- offenders (McNeill, 2009). The GLM has been subject to less evaluative scrutiny than the RNR model and consequently has a weaker empirical basis (McNeill, 2009).

Desistance and the 'desistance paradigm' is beginning to contribute widely to European and British probation practice (NOMS 2014, Council of Europe 2010). McNeill (2014)

conceptualises desistance as a process of human development in social context; one that involves moving away from offending and into compliance with law and social norms. Desistance-focused perspectives seek to promote those things thought to be associated with desistance, such as strong social bonds, pro-social involvements and social capital (Farrall, 2004). McNeill (2006), neatly suggests that criminal justice case managers need to think of themselves less as providers of correctional treatment (that belongs to the expert) and more as supporters of desistance processes (that belong to the desister).

Integration?

Whilst debate continues - both approaches have received criticism, and both have clear strengths (empirical and practice led support respectively) - a position of accommodation has emerged. This is that RNR approaches are suggested to constitute a *necessary but not sufficient* framework for assisting people with convictions to refrain from offending and adopt prosocial lives in the community (Willis and Ward, 2014). Despite their apparent differences, RNR and desistance research strive toward the same goal - to assist individuals to cease offending behaviour (Serin and Lloyd, 2017). Therefore, the integration of strengths-based approaches with empirically evidenced RNR principles has a theoretical base and offers a way of achieving better rehabilitative outcomes for people with convictions (Horan, 2016; Serin and Lloyd, 2017). It follows therefore that the design of tools which assess the needs and risks of people with convictions (built on RNR empirical evidence) could also accommodate new directions in offender rehabilitation and assessment practice based on desistance-led approaches. However, it is essential to ensure that any tool adequately integrates RNR with the GLM and desistance approaches providing additionality while avoiding dilution.

Existing Practice

OASys is extensively used in England and Wales across prison and probation services and is the primary offender assessment tool for adults (18 plus years) (Moore, 2015). Based on the RNR model, it combines actuarial methods of prediction with structured professional judgement providing standardised assessments of offenders' risks and needs; and linking identified risks and needs to individualised sentence plans and risk management plans (Moore, 2015). OASys supports the RNR evidence base through the inclusion of predictors

of reoffending, risk factor assessment and also the assessment of positive factors to support the tool's responsivity. However, the advent of desistance and strengths-based approaches has seen an emerging critique of RNR based offender assessment tools, akin to those of the RNR model itself (Muir et al, 2006).

This debate has led to the review and development of other tools to assess the risks and needs of people with convictions and their oversight. The European Probation Rules guidance on assessment tool design include additional asset focused factors: strengths; aspirations; obstacles to desistance (including needs not directly 'criminogenic'); motivation; and, interventions / resources that might be made available.

In 2014, the AssetPlus assessment and planning interventions framework developed by the Youth Justice Board of England and Wales was introduced to replace the more RNR guided Asset assessment and its associated tools. AssetPlus reflects an integrative approach, with the view that assessment involves identifying risk and protective factors in a young person's life, but that it is not enough just to note their occurrence (Baker, 2014). As a consequence, the design and use of AssetPlus is informed by the GLM framework of offender rehabilitation (Willis and Ward, 2014) and desistance approaches (McNeill, 2014).

In the Netherlands, an RNR focused RISc tool, based on OASys has been used to assess people with convictions. However, growing dissatisfaction around its focus on static factors which is considered to deskill professionals and also its complexity, has resulted in probation officers not using the tool correctly (Van Essen et al., 2016). The new Integrated Risk Assessment Tool includes consideration of risk and protective factors, crime history, both criminogenic and protective factors, victim awareness and responsiveness (Van Essen et al., 2016) in a more holistic approach to assessment.

The Active Risk Management System (ARMS) provides a framework for working with male sexual offenders who are subject to statutory supervision in England and Wales. Though not in itself a risk assessment tool, it moves away from a focus on static risk factors to the assessment of dynamic risk and also protective factors, addressing some of the limitations of deficit focused assessments (NOMS, 2015). The tool intends to support and standardise professional judgement, taking account of both risk and protective factors to achieve a more balanced assessment of risk (College of Policing, 2018, Nicholls and Webster 2014, Kewley

and Blandford 2017). The usability of ARMS across a police force area is currently being evaluated (Policy Evaluation and Research Unit 2017).

Similarly, the SAPROF violence risk assessment tool has been specifically developed for the assessment of protective factors in adults with convictions. It contains 17 protective factors that are organised into three scales. The tool is intended to be used in addition to risk focused Structured Professional Judgment assessment tools, such as the HCR-20 or the HCR-20V3 and with actuarial tools (De Vries Robbé, and De Vogel, 2012).

THE ENABLERS OF CHANGE TOOL

Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs), created as part of the UK government's 'Transforming Rehabilitation' strategy (Ministry of Justice, 2013) manage low and medium risk of harm offenders subject in England and Wales who are subject to community sentences or who are released from prison under license. Interserve has responsibility for five CRCs and have developed an offender management model 'Interchange' which explicitly draws on emerging evidence of asset and strengths-based approaches to working with service users (Interserve 2016). The three 'cogs' of 'Interchange': Interact, Integrate and Intervene are intended to provide a shorthand mnemonic for radically changing the ethos of rehabilitation services. *What is delivered*, *the way* in which it is delivered and *the environment* in which it is delivered are all equally important. 'Interchange' is underpinned by six core modules: induction; assessment; plan; networks; review; and, exit. They provide a structured approach to a service user's journey and a platform that enables case managers and service users to adopt a strengths-based approach to address the whole person, which allows practitioners to address relevant issues associated with their offending behaviour. The foundation of 'Interchange' is a comprehensive and dynamic assessment of the risks and needs of a person who has offended (Interserve 2016).

Interserve have followed assessment tool developments and utilised contemporary theory in developing an assessment tool which extends OASys and other similar RNR orientated tools, integrating empirical evidence of the Risk Need Responsivity (RNR) principles together with emerging evidence from asset-based approaches including desistance. In parallel, Interserve have adhered to UK government guidance requirements (in the UK, this being NOMS guidance on the requirements for the development of risk assessment tools (NOMS 2015). The resultant EOC assessment and sentence planning tool is intended to operationalise these

constructs in an integrative tool that assesses offender risk and need with an overarching aim of avoiding dilution and providing additionality. Its inclusion of a future focussed part of the assessment developed from the concept of tertiary desistance is a particularly unique innovation.

Construct development

The tool considers all central eight risk factors (Andrews and Bonta, 2017). Evidence indicates that assessments that incorporate criminogenic needs effectively inform intervention strategies. As a consequence, all eight have been included within the tool to avoid dilution with desistance informed assessment practice providing additionality. The individual-level factors most predictive of recidivism (The Big Four) including (1) antisocial attitudes (attitudes supportive of crime), (2) antisocial associates (social support for crime), (3) criminal history, and (4) antisocial personality factors (e.g., impulsivity) are more predominant within the EOC constructs. The remaining four factors (5) substance abuse, (6) family factors, (7) employment/school, and (8) leisure/recreation are also included within the EOC constructs. The EOC development process also saw cross referencing with the Morton (2009) rapid evidence assessment of research evidence of the underlying the factors included in OASys. For example, the strongest attitudinal predictors of offending being pro-criminal attitudes and little motivation to change.

Serin and Lloyd (2017) highlight that at present, the empirical nod supports the RNR approach, but that the crime desistance agenda provides exciting additional constructs, albeit not well defined or measured, that may assist practitioners to achieve this goal. This has guided the development of the EOC tool. The RNR central eight factors are each included within constructs to ensure identification of primary risk factors. The Personal, Interpersonal, and Community Reinforcement (PIC-R) theory (Andrews & Bonta, 2010) provided an initial framework to build the EOC domains upon. This was supplemented by the assessment of individual engagement/motivation how an individual can best gain agency and begin to view themselves as capable to changing from their criminal identity (Serin and Lloyd, 2017) including social bonds, pro-social involvements and social capital.

Construct development involved the appraisal of relevant desistance literature, particularly the work of McNeil and Weaver (2010) and Ward and Maruna (2007). Existing ‘strengths-

based' tools, namely AssetPlus (Youth Justice Board 2014), Structured Assessment of Protective Factors for Violence Risk (SAPROF, Abbiati et al DATE) and the Service Planning Instrument (SPIN, Jones et al, 2015) were also reviewed. The EOC sought to reflect desistance literature understanding that moving away from criminal activity is a process that occurs over time (as opposed to an 'event') and theories of desistance that revolve around identity formation, cognitive transformation and self-determination. Research has developed theories around the need for the individual to be active in the maturation process; consciously take responsibility for their own path (Bottoms & Shapland, 2016), develop self-efficacy and self-determination (McNeill, 2016) and, perhaps most importantly, a desire to change (Giordano, 2016).

After an initial pilot of the first iteration of the tool, a second iteration was formulated. Construct development was conducted with a small team of probation officers, CRC senior staff and a researcher with expertise in desistance approaches. With a clearer understanding of desistance theory the team then appraised the RNR guided approaches, particularly Morton's overview of the current evidence base for offender-related risk factors (Debedin, 2009). The 12 sections of the structured risk assessment tool (OASys) that is used in England and Wales (Ministry of Justice, 2009) were mapped onto the enabling concepts that evolved from desistance principles. From these, three key enabling areas emerged, two of which covered the 12 sections of Morton's report and the third provided an additional, desistance focused dimension of a prosocial lifestyle.

The tool's development was also guided by primary, secondary and tertiary desistance theory: how primary desistance (any lull or crime-free gap in the course of a criminal career), is distinguished from secondary desistance (defined as the movement from the behaviour of non-offending to the assumption of a role or identity of a non-offender or 'changed person) (Weaver and McNeill, 2007). Then how tertiary desistance recognises the social as well as a personal process beyond shifts in behaviour or identity to one's sense of belonging to a (moral) community Mc Neill (2014). These have been re-emphasised by Nugent and Schinkel 2016 who have also proposed a refinement, in part to emphasise the non-linearity of these processes (which the terminology could suggest) and also to more functionally describe the processes as: act desistance (primary); identity desistance (secondary); and relational desistance (tertiary). These three hypothesised processes have provided a helpful structure for

framing the second iteration of the EOC constructs into its three domains. The EOC three enabling areas corresponded directly to 'primary', 'secondary' and 'tertiary' desistance.

The EOC tool also addresses the suggestions that assessment should focus on exploring issues such as "an individual's developing maturity (not necessarily indexed by age), the strength and salience (to them) of their (licit or positive) social bonds, their aspirations and approach goals (as outlined in the GLM) and their cognitive openness to and readiness for change." (McNeill and Weaver 2010). The EOC tool consequently includes exploration of cognitive dissonance and whether short-term behaviours are out of kilter with long term goals in assessing readiness for change (McNeil and Weaver, 2010).

In summary, the EOC integration of theory aims to underpin a more personalised and co-productive approach to assessment and sentence plan development that: identifies the needs and risks of offenders and identifies their strengths, aspirations and capital to support an individual's processes of primary, secondary and tertiary desistance (McNeil and Weaver 2010, McNeil 2016, Nugent and Schinkel 2016).

Operationalising risk needs and responsivity with desistance

The EOC tool has been designed to replace sections 2-13 of OASys with the *additionality* of collecting information on strengths, social capital and community networks. The tool also addresses the requirement to manage risk and it does so by facilitating the collection of information which case managers can use to inform the risk sections of OASys. The way in which risk is assessed therefore remains unchanged from the OASys tool – the EOC provides additional information towards risk assessment and does not replace existing practice.

The development of the EOC was mindful of striking a good balance between technical performance and fitness for purpose within offender assessment (Merrington, 2004). The desirable characteristics of an assessment tool from a practitioner perspective (Moore, 2015) together with the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) (HMPPS) guidance regarding Risk Assessment Approval Criteria (NOMS, 2015) and the necessary attributes of a tool were key guidance documents.

The first iteration of the EOC included six enabling areas: personal relationships and support networks; health and wellbeing; thinking, skills, attitudes and behaviour; education and work; home and money; and, friends, support and activities. The initial formative evaluation of the tool's operability (Wong and Horan, 2019) included extensive interviews with practitioners and service users who experienced the EOC tool and observation of its use. The evaluation indicated some positives: that the underlying principles of a strength-based approach were well received; that case managers understood and embraced the motivation behind a change in the tool; and that the people who were assessed generally experienced the process positively. However, practitioners and service users did experience limitations in the first iteration of the EOC tool which informed the first evaluation's conclusion that the tool did not have face validity and that a number of steps were necessary to improve the tool. Recommendations that were actioned by Interserve in developing the second iteration of the tool included: a review of the operationalisation of the theoretical underpinnings and rationale of the EOC; a break-down of the constructs to ensure that each area measured only one thing; ensuring the scoring system was uniform across and within the constructs; improved reflection of a strengths-based focus of the tool by removing deficit focused scales; the incorporation of processes to collect information on risk; ensuring that the ratings on the self-assessment form (completed by service users before their assessment) were in the same direction as those on the EOC; improved training and guidance; and a review of the appropriateness of language for the participants (Wong and Horan, 2019). This sought to ensure that the EOC tool balances technical performance with fitness for purpose (Merrington 2004) and includes practitioner perspectives of the desired characteristics of a risk and needs assessment tool (Moore 2015): practitioners indicated clarity as to why each item is included; definitions of the items were experienced as clear and less ambiguous; scoring systems were experienced as simple to follow; evidence boxes are available for expansion; service users are offered the opportunity to input into their assessment; the tool is useable within limited time constraints; and it was experienced to complement current practice.

These steps enabled the tool's development towards its second iteration, described in the present article. Importantly, the initial evaluation highlighted the importance of thinking regarding stages of desistance within assessment and their improved integration within the EOC tool. The fundamental structure of its second iteration is thus framed around integrated RNR theory and suggested processes of desistance, a refined integration of (PIC-R) theory (Andrews & Bonta, 2010) and stages of desistance (McNeil and Weaver 2010, McNeil 2016,

formulated into three enabling areas: Stable Lifestyle; Healthy Lifestyle; and, Pro Social Lifestyle. The questions which relate to those constructs assist in measuring an overall journey towards desistance. Risk with regards to static, dynamic and protective factors are explored within each construct in order to collect information to inform the risk sections of OASys. The enabling constructs are outlined in figure 1.

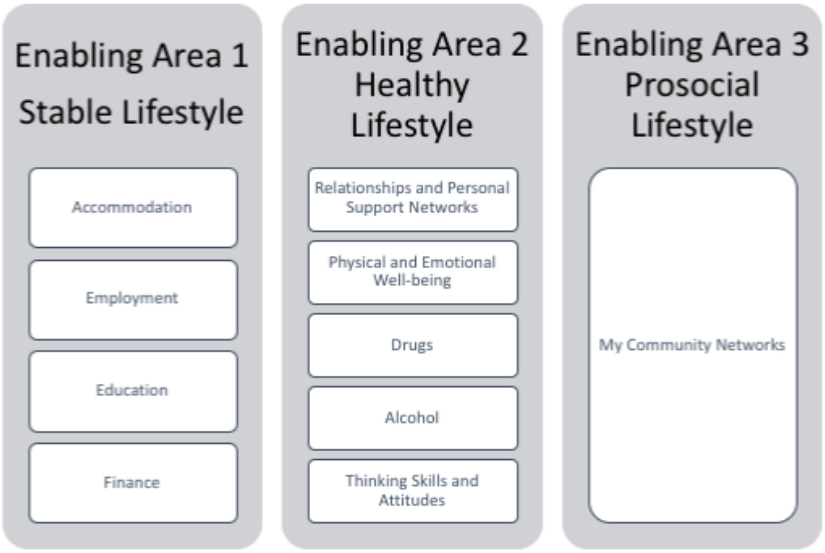

Figure 1: Enabling Constructs

Enabling Area 1 – Stable Lifestyle

Enabling Area 1 links to primary desistance and includes relevant central eight risk factors (e.g. school / work). This corresponds to OASys in terms of sections 2-4. The construct consequently explores behaviours as opposed to shifts in attitudes or identities (see McNeil and Weaver, 2010). It is framed in terms of a stable lifestyle and it examines acute concerns in the service user's lifestyle such as accommodation, employment, and finance. A stable lifestyle corresponds to key basic practical needs that service users will need addressed in order that they can then focus on their behaviours linked to offending.

Enabling Area 2 – Healthy Lifestyle

This construct links into secondary desistance or identity related desistance - a shift in self-identity and the maintenance of desistance efforts (McNeill and Weaver 2010, Nugent and Schinkel 2016) and maps to pertinent central 8 risk factors (e.g. family / marital relationships) This corresponds to areas 5 -11 in OASys.

This construct measures aspects of individual's attitudes as opposed to behaviour to enable intervention to foster agency and build human capital. Thinking skills, attitudes and self-efficacy are each areas of human capital that are explored within the construct. Making positive choices is framed in a strengths-based way. For example, improving behaviour and how service users feel in intimate family relationships could be linked to reduced drug and alcohol misuse. Another example is how improving emotional and mental health could be linked to reducing substance misuse and achieving improved user engagement in services. Thinking skills, Attitudes and Self Efficacy are areas that support a service user moving from a place where how they think about themselves, their lives and how this translates into offending is moved into how their perception of themselves supports behaviour change in a positive way.

Enabling Area 3 – Pro Social Lifestyle

Enabling Area 3 is a future focussed part of the assessment with a focus towards tertiary (relational) desistance which refers to shifts in one's sense of belonging to a moral community (McNeil, 2016, Nugent and Schinkel 2016) and movement towards successful social integration, citizenship and participation. Also important are relevant central eight risk factors particularly, prosocial recreational activities. The outcome of the assessment of Enabling Area 3 is viewed as enabling the supported development of social as well as human capital.

Enabling Area 3 seeks to assess and facilitate sustained rehabilitation- for which SUs need:

- to feel and are connected to local services,
- a support network that shifts them way from a previous negative offending identity
- resilience to manage without the support of probation.

There is no hierarchy of importance between each of the 3 enabling areas. This is because all contribute to protective and risk management depending on the individual, and all will link to the construction of the ROSH.

While the EOC tool is used to inform decisions regarding case management. A self-report assessment (to be completed by service users) has been developed to further inform the EOC assessment, ensuring that the views of the person with convictions are comprehensively

included in their assessment process. Information from the assessment is used to co-produce a sentence plan, which is intended to be dynamic and personalised to each individual. The EOC tool is intended to inform conclusions about: future offending and risk of harm; nature of previous offending; the strengths of the person being assessed; capture sufficient information to develop a series of interventions; and, to understand any requirements around protected characteristics. It is important to note that the EOC does not seek to measure risk and replace existing risk assessment frameworks, but to inform existing risk assessment practice (OASyS risk assessment frameworks).

DISCUSSION

The EOC has faced the inevitable challenges posed to a new, innovative and developing assessment tool and process and it has incorporated significant learning in shaping and refining its approach. In its current format, it is a tool that appears to integrate empirical evidence of Risk Need Responsivity (RNR) principles (Andrews and Bonta, 2017) together with asset-based approaches and emerging evidence drawn from the 'good lives' model (Ward and Maruna, 2007) and desistance principles (McNeil and Weaver, 2010). Its evaluation is ongoing but emerging results indicate that the EOC appears to be an operable assessment tool for people with convictions and perhaps first to frame RNR assessment within the desistance paradigm. The tool assesses the needs and risks of people with convictions and considers their strengths, aspirations and capital. The tool has undergone two phases of evaluation which provide support towards its face and content validity and also its operability (for a detailed account see Wong and Horan, 2019). Whether it adequately integrates RNR with the GLM and desistance approaches, avoiding dilution in order to provide additionality requires further testing. Proposals for assessing this along with a larger scale quantitative evaluation of the tool have been submitted to Interserve and the MoJ and are summarised in Wong and Horan (2019). Until this is undertaken it will not be possible to conclude whether it provides an effective and robust assessment that guides effective intervention planning and rehabilitative approach.

However, our review has enabled some observations of the extent to which the EOC assesses both factors that predict criminal behaviour and factors that predict desistance which enables further contribution to the tool's face validity. The tool is an important first step towards the empirical testing of an operationalised integrative approach to the assessment of the risks and

needs of people with convictions and it has many strengths: it is not observed as oppositional in its integrative approach; the tool includes both factors that predict criminal behaviour and factors that predict desistance; and, its framework around the three stages of desistance provides exploration of human and social capital with specific reference to community and social networks of support.

However, some constructive observations are made that could be included in further refinements of the tool. Desistance thinking is clear that the focus of the approach should be upon those who are relatively persistent and/or serious offenders with relatively established criminal identities (McNeill and Weaver, 2010). Where such identities are not yet established, it is suggested that no complex and costly re-construction of attitudes, identities and behaviours is required or merited. For those cases, the emphasis should perhaps be on 'light-touch' interventions that are designed to prevent the development of criminal identities and to prevent social and personal dis-integration (McNeill and Weaver, 2010).

It is important to note that Interserve case work is drawn primarily from low and medium risk of harm adults with convictions. Should risk escalate the EOC must be used to assess high risk of harm case evidence. It could be suggested that the desistance and asset-based content of the EOC tool could only be useful for high and medium cases and not low risk cases with whom Interserve case manage. However, it is still necessary to undertake assessments of low risk cases to guide appropriate intervention, so should these assessments be more RNR orientated? However, how would an assessor be able to predict risk without undertaking a risk assessment in the first place? Perhaps there could be discretion available to an assessor in the level of detail required during an assessment.

Clearly the EOC is currently able to explore biological, psychological and cultural elements of desistance but is perhaps more limited in its assessment of their interplay and process of identity as individuals grow into, through and out of offending and connect their internal worlds with the social worlds they live in. In its current format, the EOC focus towards integration of asset based and RNR theory, excludes identity theory (See Erikson, 1968) which could be an important element of comprehensive case management and intervention. Many factors can influence how identity changes and develops and understanding these is important if intervention is to facilitate change (See Waterman, 1993). Some additional areas that the EOC could further explore include identification with parents, the presence of role-

models, social expectations, exposure to alternative possibilities and an individual's capacity to tolerate and cope with identity issues.

The EOC tool could also consider Paternoster and Bushway's (2009) identity theory of desistance (ITD) - an "internalist" model of rational choice wherein preferences and behaviours are shaped by actor's strong reasons or their ultimate concerns, which include one's self-identity. ITD suggests that human agency is critically involved in the desistance process, as well as individual cognitive processes. Exploring changes in identity over the course of people with conviction's involvement with criminal justice agencies, could better inform the prediction and support of potential declines in criminal behaviour. Particular reference could be made to exploring prospective and retrospective assessment of individual's identity along with new and potential changes to social networks, preferences, and other connections that enable a person with convictions to fit a more conventional life (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009).

It is also important to acknowledge that the factors which make people desist are not always the same as those which make them offend (Laub et al, 1998). It could be assumed that a desistance led assessment may seek to identify the circumstances that make people choose not to offend, in order to facilitate these processes through intervention. The EOC focus towards what makes individuals commit offences is suggested to limit its exploration of the opportunities for people to begin or maintain their desistance journeys; and, how individuals could sustain this commitment without turning back to crime. Whether these elements need to be considered within a single assessment however should be considered within onwards phases of the tool's evaluation.

Importantly, the evaluations (Wong and Horan 2019) provide some indications that the central eight risk factors (Andrews and Bonta, 2017) are each mapped to the EOC constructs. All eight factors are described as being implicitly included within the EOC constructs. It will be important to delineate this mapping in order to conclusively assure additionality and rule out dilution.

The EOC provides a framework to assess the needs, strengths, protective factors and contribute to existing risk assessment practice of people with convictions. It is an important contribution to the limited evidence base available about operationalising desistance in the

assessment and case management of people with convictions in the UK and other jurisdictions. Ongoing evaluation of the tool will need to carefully explore and ensure that its integration of principles does not increase the risk that criminal justice practice aims to reduce, with reference to all risk groupings.

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